

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Acting Clerk: — Pursuant to rule 11(7), I have examined the following petitions and found them to be in order:

Of certain residents of the province of Saskatchewan praying that the Legislative Assembly may be pleased to urge the provincial government to stop the privatization of SaskPower.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and to other members of the Assembly, 24 students from Lakeview School in Regina who are sitting in the gallery behind me. They are accompanied by their teacher, Marie Anne Gutfriend, and Mrs. McCudden. I have met with the students this morning at Lakeview School. We had a very interesting and lively discussion, and they certainly are a bunch of bright young children, Mr. Speaker. I'll be meeting with them after for drinks and further questions. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to other members of this legislature, a group of students from the Dr. John G. Egnatoff School. This introduction is somewhat complicated today because the school is in my constituency; most of the students are in the Sutherland constituency. And not only that, but the students are split today — some are in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, some are in the east gallery. And Mr. Koenker and I will be having a joint venture here today during the discussions and so on, and picture taking.

So in the spirit of co-operativeness that is existing in the legislature, we will continue on.

I just want to add, Mr. Speaker, that Dr. John G. Egnatoff School has a special meaning for me because Dr. Egnatoff was my instructor in teacher's college many years ago, so I've been following his illustrious career over the years. And I would ask all members at this time to help me to welcome the students from the Dr. John G. Egnatoff School please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martin: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with my colleague from Regina Lakeview in welcoming the students from Lakeview School. I went to that school, as did our four daughters, and I surprised a few people by graduating from there, Mr. Speaker.

I recognized some of the students when I came into the

building, Mr. Speaker, so I want to join with my colleague from Regina Lakeview in welcoming them here to the Assembly. I hope you enjoy yourselves, and good luck for the summer holidays. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to my colleagues in the legislature, and of course to you, sir, 35 students from St. Timothy School seated in the east gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher, Kevin Anderson. I understand we'll be having pictures at 3 o'clock, following that a discussion on what they see here, and any other questions that they may have resulting from question period and so on.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming this group from St. Timothy.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wolfe: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, Greg and Aurore Faucher and their daughter, Leanne, who come from Lisieux, Saskatchewan. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask all members here to welcome them to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce through you, and to the members of the House, some 22 grade 7 and 8 students from the Annaheim School. They're accompanied by their teachers, Paul Kolenick, Les Kunz; chaperons, Mr. and Mrs. Niekamp, Mr. Nienaber. I want to take this opportunity to welcome the students here. I hope you have a very enjoyable trip here to Regina. I look forward to meeting you following the question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce some guests seated in your gallery. They come from Bishopbriggs in Scotland, which is part of Glasgow. They are Heather Lindsay and her niece, Yvonne Lindsay. They are accompanied today by some of their relatives from Canada, David Ferguson and Valerie Fleischacker. I would ask hope that they have a pleasant stay in Canada and enjoy the proceedings here today and a good visit in Regina. And I would ask all members to join with me and give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you, some students, grade 4, 5, and 10 students from Kistapiskaw School from Deschambault. There is 16 students accompanied by Mrs. Deborah Seib and Miss Janice King, and also Gregory Seib.

(The member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fertilizer Plant at Belle Plaine

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for Trade and Investment, and it concerns his betrayal of rural Saskatchewan by doing everything in his power to kill the fertilizer plants proposed for Rosetown, Melfort, and Yorkton-Melville.

Mr. Minister, after promising the developers of these plants that your government would never provide financial support for a huge fertilizer plant Cargill proposes for the Belle Plaine area, your government turned around and gave 175 million in financial support.

Can you, Mr. Minister, tell us whether the \$350 million price tag for the Cargill plant of which the government is on the hook for 175 million is a firm price, or is this just a ballpark figure that could increase substantially?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, this is the same question the hon. member asked before. The proposal with regards to the Cargill plant which is a state-of-the-art plant to be built between Saskatoon and Regina . . . between Moose Jaw and Regina, Mr. Speaker, is going to be a quality operation, as endorsed by the members from Moose Jaw, I note, in opposition to the various members from Regina.

Mr. Speaker, it is a venture that I thought the hon. members opposite thought that was a proper strategy where you had a joint venture operation between the government and the private sector, Mr. Speaker, to build a large-scale operation in the province of Saskatchewan to (a) supply fertilizer to farmers in this province; and (b) to export some of that product into the United States, which yesterday the hon. members were complaining that we weren't doing enough of, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat my question. Mr. Minister, are you telling us that the 350 million is going to be the full and final price of that project, and the taxpayers are only going to put 175 million at risk, or are you telling us something else? I want a guarantee today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, I believe when this project was in fact announced, Mr. Speaker, by the Premier and the Deputy Premier, that the intention was to go into a joint venture operation; that the government's involvement in it would be to kick-start this; that the government would not see their involvement as something that would last for ever.

Once we get that up and running, Mr. Speaker, then we take the particular share that the government has, put it out to public participation, let the people or other companies share in that operation, Mr. Speaker. Then government has served its function, and that is to get projects like that going, Mr. Speaker, get projects like that

built in this province, create jobs in the province, Mr. Speaker. And the money we were committed to is what we'll be spending on it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question. Mr. Minister, your personal attacks on the Provincial Auditor and your government's involvement in the GigaText scandal does nothing to increase any credibility that you might have. What we want to know . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . is, Mr. Minister, if you're willing to table any feasibility studies that you've done on this project or any cost estimates to back up that \$175 million figure. Why don't you put that whole package on the table and let the people of Saskatchewan decide?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, this particular project was developed, I can advise, through Crown Management Board and the Deputy Premier. But what I say . . . Let me say this to the hon. members. Let me say this to the hon. members, and the member from Prince Albert. The same type of attack came, Mr. Speaker, when we were proposing to do the Weyerhaeuser project in Prince Albert. The Weyerhaeuser project was built in Prince Albert, and it's a new technology and it's a good business, Mr. Speaker.

The same complaint came, Mr. Speaker, when we were going through the Co-op upgrader, that you shouldn't have had any money in it; or when we went into the Husky project, you shouldn't have had any money in that; or a number of other projects, Mr. Speaker.

The reality of what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is diversifying the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Every time you set about to diversify the province of Saskatchewan, the members opposite are against it, Mr. Speaker. They're against any diversification; they're against any new projects, Mr. Speaker. They want the **status quo**, Mr. Speaker. They want . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, part of the reason people are concerned is because that very minister has had involvement in it, and we know his record of throwing millions of taxpayers' dollars around.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Now what I want to know, what I want to know today and what the people of this province want to know is if the 50 per cent, the \$175 million that Cargill is supposedly putting in here, is backed up with any kind of a low-interest loan from the Government of Saskatchewan. Will you confirm or deny that there's an arrangement of that nature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member

launches in his first attack with the attack on the Deputy Premier, saying, why should we look at anything he did? Well, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier was one of the key ministers involved in putting the Weyerhaeuser deal together. The Deputy Premier was very much involved in putting the Meadow Lake . . . the new Meadow Lake pulp mill . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, order. Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — The Deputy Premier was involved in putting together the deal with regard to the Co-op upgrader, with regard to the Husky upgrader; the Deputy Premier was very much involved in the Rafferty-Alameda project — all things, Mr. Speaker, that I believe helped to diversify the economy, to create jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker, that are forward looking.

We cannot simply stand still, Mr. Speaker. We cannot be isolationists in this province. If we do, Mr. Speaker, we do at our own doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question, Mr. Minister. Does your refusal to answer in this House the question that I've asked you twice now, mean that in fact you have offered a low interest loan to Cargill? And if not, would you table those documents to prove that it hasn't happened?

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Well once again, Mr. Speaker, the member from P.A. gets into a wild barrage of what is going to be done. He's not consistent with his information. This particular minister put that deal together. There's not some hidden agenda whereby they have low interest loans, Mr. Speaker. That is not in fact the case, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure the House it is not.

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question, Mr. Minister. Would you in this House indicate whether or not your government has guaranteed a loan on behalf of Cargill for their 50 per cent?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order. Order. The member will not be able to give a good answer if he's interrupted constantly, if he's interrupted constantly — and that's happening. So let us allow the minister to give his answer.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, I can say to the House and to the hon. members that the project being put together with regard to Cargill and the Government of Saskatchewan is going to be an excellent project for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. What it is going to do is create fertilizer, Mr. Speaker, where the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan will be able to buy fertilizer, Mr. Speaker, made here in Saskatchewan, using natural gas that has been drilled, found here in Saskatchewan, creating jobs for the people of this province here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

More jobs, more use of natural gas, cheaper fertilizer for the farmer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — New question. Mr. Minister, Canadian "88", the proponents of the Rosetown, Melfort, Yorkton, Melville fertilizer plants have provided the news media with all of the copies of their proposal. If you have offered, sir, no loan guarantees — if you have offered, sir, no interest rate reduction, will you table the very proposals that are going to see this thing happen? Will you table that in this House today? We don't want you skirting around the question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, Canadian "88", Canadian "88" . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, Canadian "88" put forward a number of proposals to the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we found those wanting. And I think before the members opposite get on their great white charger and ride the banner of Canadian "88", they should talk to some of the people that used to work with Canadian "88" and might get a different story on that whole situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Final question. Mr. Minister, Cargill plans to market product from its Belle Plaine plant through the Cargill elevator network in this province. Do you not agree that this arrangement will put Cargill — backed by \$175 million of taxpayers' money, perhaps subsidized, perhaps with a loan guarantee — in direct competition with independent fertilizer operators and dealers around this province as well as Saskatchewan wheat pools. Can you explain to these dealers why their tax dollars should be used to help subsidize Cargill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Mr. Speaker, this particular proposal that you talk about was attempted to be done with a number of companies in the past, and we weren't able to quite put the deal together. Mr. Speaker, one of those companies was the Co-op, which I assume the hon. members are not against. One of those companies was the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, which I assume those companies were not against.

Attempting to do that particular deal, Mr. Speaker, the product that will be produced out of that plant, Mr. Speaker, will be sold both in retail and in wholesale, and will be made available to the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. They will no longer have to rely upon product manufactured in the province of Alberta.

Anybody understands, Mr. Speaker, what you're doing is using our natural resources to make fertilizer to go on the farmers' land of the province of Saskatchewan. And it's a great deal cheaper, Mr. Speaker, if you can buy the

product manufactured right here by Regina than having to bring it in from Lethbridge, or Medicine Hat, or plants north of Edmonton. The transportation costs are cheaper, Mr. Speaker, the product that this plant will produce will be cheaper, and in the end, Mr. Speaker, that will mean lower fertilizer crop costs for the farmers of Saskatchewan.

The Premier promised that in the last election, and we are delivering on that promise, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Translation of Statutes by GigaText

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address my question to the Deputy Premier, and we don't know what kind of a scheme that you have cooked up to try to justify your outlandish investment into this scam of a technology. We know that when you entered the deal that you said you'd have it proven in three months. Then you set June 17, and now you said, some time into the future. And I know the world is just holding its breath for that final date.

But my question to you, Mr. Deputy Premier, in light of the fact that you have blown \$5.25 million up till now, I wonder whether you could confirm that it's going to cost about 25 cents a word in addition to the 5.2 million that you've squandered in order to do the translation from English to French.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm quite happy to take responsibility for GigaText, and I'm quite happy, Mr. Speaker, to take credit for several others that I've been involved in, including Babcock & Wilcox and Phillips Cable and SK Turbines and the Shand power plant and Weyerhaeuser and Meadow Lake and a couple of upgraders, and even Pocklington's bacon plant, Mr. Speaker — I'd like to take credit for that one too. And Bondars in North Battleford, and rather than use up the whole of question period, I'll now deal . . . oh yeah, there's DuPont Plastics and Phillips Cable — what's that outfit in Swift Current? — and cattle farm and Athabasca transmission line, and the first underground distribution system in the world, Mr. Speaker, a 20-year program to . . .

Now having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'm told that the going rate for manual translation — manual translation is a kind of translation that Neanderthals opposite would expect that we should carry on with for ever — I'm told that the going rate there is about 25 cents a word, Mr. Speaker. If this technology proves up, and I'm optimistic that it will, Mr. Speaker, if this technology proves up, I hope that it can go into the market at 25 cents a word.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Well it's fairly clear the Deputy Premier was not prepared to indicate to the taxpayer how much it's going to cost in addition to translate the legislation here in Saskatchewan.

I want to go to a new question to the Deputy Premier, and I have here, Mr. Deputy Premier, a news clipping of

Tuesday, January 31, and this is from the School of Journalism newspaper in Regina, which . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order, order. Let's allow the member to put his question so we can all hear him.

Order. Let's just all settle down a bit and allow the member to put his question.

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know they're very uneasy about this here situation. I understand they're nervous, and I'll be very patient, because the people of Saskatchewan want the facts.

This is my question, Mr. Speaker: I have here an article from the School of Journalism newspaper, where it quotes the regional director of the federal Secretary of State, in which he states in that article, as he's interviewed, he indicates that the federal government does not believe in the feasibility of your technology that it can in fact do the translation, and if you attempt to send in Bills using computer translation, that they will not share the cost of the translation. Is that a fact?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, he made reference to the fact that there may be a little embarrassment on this side of the House. I can tell you that there's nowhere near the embarrassment that there should be by the members opposite, including the deputy leader, the group of technological wizards, Mr. Speaker, that invested \$5 million in Nabu, the boys who were going to become the IBM (International Business Machines) of the PC world, Mr. Speaker — those dudes. Five million, and what did they get for it? They got 12 per cent of a company that a group of entrepreneurs brought together and kept 50 per cent for themselves, and then through an executive share option they diluted it further to about 8 per cent, and the thing finally went into receivership, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what we got out of it? Zip. Saskatchewan people got not one job or one ounce of technology. And when they wrote it off, it had a book value of . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, I can understand that the Deputy Premier is enjoying these questions so much by his answers that I want to continue to ask another one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I want to read, Mr. Deputy Premier, from this article, and you know exactly what the director, regional director, said. He said that you asked them to invest in this project, that they refused. And he went on to say:

But if Saskatchewan government submits bills on the basis of computers, we basically are saying, we're not paying it.

Is this the deal that you worked out? Have you rectified

this? In fact, have you changed the federal government into paying a portion of the translation costs of the French?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know who speaks for the federal government, but it's interesting to note . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order, order. Order. It seems that the member should be given the opportunity to answer the question. And we'll give him that opportunity now.

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — I don't know who speaks for the federal government in matters of technology or translation, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps the Secretary of State hasn't talked to the Department of National Defence lately, because the Department of National Defence recently — when I say recently, a few months ago, Mr. Speaker — let a \$21 million contract to translate manuals for the frigate program to a New Brunswick firm whose technology, Mr. Speaker, has been demonstrated to be inferior to ours but acceptable to the federal government.

So I don't know who talked to the federal government. The Department of National Defence thinks it's great; Sec State doesn't. Perhaps we can persuade them all that our technology is superior.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — A new question to the Deputy Premier. Obviously if I keep asking enough questions, there might be one simple enough for him to answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I want to direct the question to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Deputy Premier . . . A new question, Mr. Speaker. Under the agreement, the federal government had said that it would pay 75 per cent of the cost of the first \$3 million spent on translation, and 50 per cent of the second million. That is a total potential investment by the federal government, in respect to the translation, of \$3.5 million.

I want to ask you: is it not true that you have, in fact, blown over \$5.2 million in this technological computer scam that you entered into and got fleeced? And is it not, in fact, true now that the federal government . . . you have jeopardized the federal government's contribution in respect to sharing the costs?

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, anybody that thinks that this technology was brought to Saskatchewan simply, simply for the sole purpose of translating Saskatchewan law, simply doesn't understand the technology, Mr. Speaker.

This technology, if it proves up, could translate all of Saskatchewan's law in an afternoon. Now then what do you do? Then what do you do? Lock the door? No, Mr. Speaker, this is a commercial venture for this company. I know members opposite don't want to hear this, but out there in the world, Mr. Speaker, there is opportunity for translation services amounting to hundreds of millions of

dollars a year. If we got a small percentage of that, the company would do very, very, well. I think that it is an opportunity. Mr. Speaker, already we have hardware, we have technology, we have jobs. Compare that to their \$8 million boondoggle. They just sent a cheque to Toronto, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — A new question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, are you aware that the estimated cost to translate all of the provincial statutes is approximately \$3 million, under \$3 million, if it was done the manual way; that the federal government was prepared to pay 75 per cent of that, which is \$2.25 million; and that means that the provincial share would have been less than three-quarters of a million dollars?

I want to ask you: do you really stand up here and say that that has been a good deal for the people of Saskatchewan when you already squandered \$5.2 million and now you have to pay for the translation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Berntson: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the estimated costs of translation is, Mr. Speaker. I'm told that the actual costs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, was between 12 and \$15 million. My guess is that ours wouldn't be much different from Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I don't know how much it takes to penetrate that thick head, Mr. Speaker, but I said a thousand times that this was not brought in solely for translation. We brought it here as an economic opportunity to diversify, Mr. Speaker; to reverse a brain drain, Mr. Speaker; to build Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — all of the things that is absolutely foreign to the mentality particularly of that member, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Talking about thick heads, we look at one across the way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I want to ask the Deputy Premier . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order! Order, order. Order.

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When they're embarrassed, of course they'll make noise.

But I want to ask the Deputy Premier: it has been indicated by the regional director of the federal Secretary of State that the provincial government in fact asked the federal government to invest in respect to going into a joint venture into this here technological nightmare that you entered into. He indicates here:

The province tried to convince us to invest in some computer system that would do it, and we so far have not been impressed with that proposal.

I want to ask you, in fact, did you have any negotiations with the federal government to enter into this here technological nightmare that you entered on?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 52 — An Act to amend The Queen's Printer Act

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Queen's Printer Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

MOTION UNDER RULE 39

Plant Breeders' Rights

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I would like to ask leave of the House to present a motion of urgent and pressing necessity. The issue is Bill C-15, an Act respecting Plant Breeders' Rights, which is going into second readings in the House of Commons.

I will ask leave of the House to move a motion along the following lines:

That this Assembly communicate to the Government of Canada its strong opposition to the recently introduced plant breeders' rights legislation which, if passed, will have the effect of shifting research from our universities to private, profit-oriented, international corporations, with the result that farmers will pay higher prices for seed and consumers will pay higher prices for food.

I ask leave, Mr. Speaker, because this is the fourth attempt . . . This is the fourth attempt, Mr. Speaker, to bring legislation on patent rights before the House of Commons, and on three previous occasions it has died on the order paper from public pressure.

This Bill would enable breeders of new plant varieties . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I've given the hon. member a little opportunity to explain the reason for his motion. I now ask if there is leave granted?

Leave not granted.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. I have to ask the hon. members to settle down. We're having a little difficulty here this afternoon, and we're having difficulty hearing each other — and hearing the Clerk in this instance. And I believe you know if you want to carry on a debate you should carry it on outside the Chambers. Let's calm down and allow the House proceedings to proceed.

MOTIONS

Resolution No. 16 — Poverty in Saskatchewan

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, the topic under debate today is the very pressing issue of poverty in the province of Saskatchewan. And at the end of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will be moving the following motion:

That this Assembly condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its policies which continue to cause widespread hurt and hardship for Saskatchewan families, which are forcing families and children into poverty, and which are depriving families of security and opportunity for their future, and calls on the Government of Saskatchewan to repair our social safety net and to introduce a program of full employment geared to alleviating the crisis of poverty in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we have seen in the last seven years, since the PC government was elected, an unprecedented crisis in the province of Saskatchewan with respect to poverty that we've not seen, frankly, since the 1930s. And we've also seen a government that's prepared to do nothing about it. In fact, the Minister of Social Services goes so far as to deny that poverty on a mass basis exists in this province at all. And obviously a government that denies that poverty exists is clearly not prepared to act to alleviate the serious poverty that many people in this province face.

And the people who are most affected, Mr. Speaker, by this sharp increase in poverty in the province of Saskatchewan are women, particularly single parents, Mr. Speaker, and children. Women and children have been hit hardest by the policies of the PC government when it comes to increased poverty in our province, Mr. Speaker. And in fact we see a situation today where some 19,600 children, or 70 per cent of the children who live in homes that are headed by single parents who are female, headed by single mothers, 70 per cent of those children, or 19,600 of them in this province, live in poverty, Mr. Speaker.

We have a situation where the policies of the provincial government over the last seven years have now resulted in us having the second highest level of poverty of any province in Canada, Mr. Speaker, both with respect to the rate of family poverty and with respect to the rate of child poverty. There are 42,600 families in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that are currently living below the poverty line, and that gives us the second highest rate of family poverty in Canada. Sixteen and a half per cent of Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, are living below the poverty line, as defined by Statistics Canada. And that compares, Mr. Speaker, with just over 12 per cent of families at the national level. So clearly, Saskatchewan has now a much higher level of poverty than the national rate of poverty, Mr. Speaker.

The situation is even more tragic with respect to children. And we should not be surprised that the rate of child poverty is higher than the rate of family poverty, because larger families tend to be hit particularly hard, Mr. Speaker, by the kind of economic circumstances that this government has created in the province of Saskatchewan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, one in four children in this province

— 25.7 per cent of all children in the province of Saskatchewan — now live below the poverty line in this province. And we have the second highest rate, not only of family poverty in Canada, but of child poverty in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Only Newfoundland has a higher rate of child poverty, at 26.8 per cent.

And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that these figures that I'm citing do not take account of the full impact that escalating poverty has had in our province, because these statistics do not include Indian children who live on Indian reserves, Mr. Speaker. And we have many Indian families in the province of Saskatchewan who reside on reserves.

They are excluded from these statistics, and I think everyone will acknowledge that Indian reserves suffer from very high rates of poverty in this province, Mr. Speaker. No one would deny that. And clearly, when Indian children are included in these statistics and they're excluded by the Statistics Canada figures that I've been citing, then I believe we have the highest rate of poverty among children of any province in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and that is truly a tragedy in our time.

It's also, Mr. Speaker, a tragedy that is unnecessary, and I think that nothing more clearly demonstrates that the situation that I've described has come about as a result of the policies of the PC government, nothing better demonstrates that than the formation and the dramatic increase in the use of food banks in the province of Saskatchewan, all of which, Mr. Speaker, have occurred since this government was elected. You know, in 1981, the last year that the NDP was government, and I might add in 1982, there were no food banks in this province, Mr. Speaker, and that's because there were no need for food banks in this province.

The New Democratic Party government of the day had put in place a policy of . . . a combined policy, Mr. Speaker, of full employment on the one hand, as full as you could achieve — an unemployment rate that ranged from about 4 to 5 per cent. We needed to continue to work at that, Mr. Speaker. I think we really only achieve true full employment when we get unemployment down to about 3 per cent in this province, which should clearly be the target of any government, Mr. Speaker. But at least, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government of the day, in the late '70s and early '80s had consistently kept the unemployment rate below 5 per cent in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1445)

And combined with that, Mr. Speaker, we had a policy where our social safety net — whether you looked at the family income plan, or whether you looked at workers' compensation, or whether you looked at social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan, or whether you looked at essential health programs like our prescription drug program — the social safety net in this province, Mr. Speaker, was in place in such a way that no family was pushed into dire poverty in this province, no family was forced to resort to the use of food banks in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, upon assuming office, one of the first things that the PC government made a conscious decision to do is to begin to erode the social safety net of the province of Saskatchewan. And they've continued that process of erosion, Mr. Speaker, now for seven years to the point where the erosion has created a crisis for thousands of families in this province. And that is best borne out by the statistics that we now see in terms of the use of food banks in this province, Mr. Speaker, though that is only one measure of the crisis.

We see now a situation in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where instead of having no food banks, as we had in 1981, we now have a food bank in Saskatoon and in Regina and in Moose Jaw and in Prince Albert. There's a small food bank in Assiniboia. There's a small food bank in Melfort. There's a food bank in Lashburn. There's a food bank in Lloydminster.

What a tragic record for any government, Mr. Speaker, to preside over the development of at least eight food banks in the province of Saskatchewan that were unnecessary in 1981, but are essential for the lives of thousands of people in this province in 1989, Mr. Speaker. That is truly a human tragedy.

And, Mr. Speaker, not only have these food banks had to establish themselves in this province, but since becoming established, Mr. Speaker, the numbers of people who depend on these food banks has steadily risen in this province. And now, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where in Regina, for instance, food bank use last year was up 70 per cent over the first full year of operation of the Regina food bank back in 1984, Mr. Speaker.

And there are now some 2,500 children a month depending on the Regina food bank. There are some 2,600 adults a month on average, in 1989, in the first months of 1989, Mr. Speaker, depending on the Regina food bank. In other words, Mr. Speaker, on an average monthly basis, there are well over 5,000 people who depend on the Regina food bank every month for their basic survival, Mr. Speaker.

And here we are in the city of Regina, living in the midst of one of the bread-baskets of the world. We're surrounded, Mr. Speaker, by a rich harvest of grain all around this city. Mr. Speaker, times in this province have not been easy over the last three years, but surely we have the resources in this province to ensure that at least our people can be fed and can have the basic essentials of life provided for.

And this government, Mr. Speaker, has failed to do that, not only for a few people in this province but for tens of thousands of people in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a situation last year where over 42,000 people at some point in the year depended on food banks in the province of Saskatchewan for their survival.

And in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, in my home city, there the use of food banks and the dependence on food banks has grown more sharply than in any other city in this province.

The use of food banks in 1988, Mr. Speaker, was up in Saskatoon 165 per cent over what it was in the first full

year of operation of the Saskatoon food bank, some five years ago, Mr. Speaker. And there are now in Saskatoon an average of 3,000 children a month this year, in 1989, who are relying on the Saskatoon food bank for their basic needs every month, Mr. Speaker. And there is an average of 4,400 adults a month using the Saskatoon food bank.

And these figures, Mr. Speaker, and the human reality that they reflect is being borne out all around this province. In Lloydminster, for example, in last year, 1,095 children and 1,207 adults in the community of Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, relied on the food bank in that part of the province for basic necessities.

And so we see, Mr. Speaker, a situation in which clearly the Government of Saskatchewan has chosen to use food banks as a substitute for an adequate social safety net in the province of Saskatchewan. They have basically said to people, don't rely on us to meet your basic needs when you are in a crisis situation, you have to turn to the food banks of this province instead.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province owe a great debt to the hundreds of volunteers across Saskatchewan who have made the operation of food banks in this province possible over the last seven years.

But, Mr. Speaker, the real test of a government, I believe, is . . . one of the real tests of a government is whether it is prepared to ensure that everyone in the province of Saskatchewan have their very basic needs met. This government has failed that test, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the New Democratic Party is committed, among other things, to making one very important promise to the people of Saskatchewan, and that is, Mr. Speaker, when we are returned to government and we have had a term in office, there will be no need for food banks in the province of Saskatchewan any more, Mr. Speaker. There will be no need for any community to operate a food bank to ensure the survival of the citizens in that community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to look at some of the causes of this crisis, but before I do that I want to talk for a moment about what these statistics that I've been citing mean in terms of the everyday life of people in the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, the crisis that I've been citing in terms of figures is reflected in terms of the casework that comes into my own office as Social Services critic in the province of Saskatchewan.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that an average day in our office means 80 to 120 phone calls a day? And I might add that the bulk of those come from outside my riding, Mr. Speaker, because I represent one of the more well-to-do ridings in the province. But we get between 80 and 120 phone calls a day into our office; the large bulk of them relate to families in crisis because this government's social safety net has broken down, Mr. Speaker.

I write to the Minister of Social Services. He hardly ever answers my letters, I might add. Writing to the Minister of Social Services on behalf of a constituent is like sending a . . . throwing a stone down a 200-foot well and wondering if it will ever come back. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the chance of hearing a reply from the Minister of Social Services on behalf of a constituent is about as high as winning a

lottery in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

But what this tragedy means, Mr. Speaker, in terms of families, is first of all, Mr. Speaker, many families having to make basic choices between whether they're going to provide food for their children, whether they're going to provide for the prescription drug needs of their children, whether they are going to be able to purchase . . . they are forced to choose on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, between whether or not they purchase a winter coat for their child or feed their child. That's the kind of choices, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Social Services is imposing upon families in the province today.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really strikes me, in terms of people who contact my office, is that this collapse of the social safety net in the province of Saskatchewan is resulting in a tragic inability of many families to participate in our society. A lot of people, Mr. Speaker, are just not able to participate in the society in any meaningful way any more because their economic means are now so limited.

It means, Mr. Speaker, that families are having to, for instance, say to their children,, no I'm sorry we can't afford to have you participate in sports at school, or, we can't afford to send you away to camp during the summer, or, we can't afford for you to take part in any of the recreational programs in the community, or to buy you skates, or whatever the case may be, Mr. Speaker. What being poor for a lot of families means, Mr. Speaker, is not only worries about the ability to provide basic requirements for the family, but also a real inability to participate in the society, Mr. Speaker.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, what this government has done is it has imposed incredibly dehumanizing circumstances upon thousands of families in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that kind of dehumanizing situation is a circumstance that no family in this province should have to face.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I say that the elimination of poverty in the province of Saskatchewan should be one of the very top priorities of the next provincial government. And if members on this side of the House are elected, it will be one of our highest priorities in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to examine what some of the causes of this tragic situation that I've described are, and also what some of the solutions are, because there's nothing mystical about how you solve the problem of poverty in the province of Saskatchewan. While it's not an easy task to address, it can be done. And it's only a lack of political will, as exhibited by the members opposite, that prevents governments from achieving this end, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I would say it's more than just a lack of political will.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker — and I will be substantiating this in my remarks as I go on — that this government has intentionally created poverty in the province of Saskatchewan; that this government has set about

carefully in a calculated way to make families, thousands of families, poor in this province. And that may seem like a rather dramatic charge at first, Mr. Speaker, but I think when you have finished listening to my remarks this afternoon, you will understand what I mean.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the major reasons, of course, for poverty in the province of Saskatchewan is the failure of this government to create jobs for people in this province and, when employment is created, the failure of the government to ensure that people are paid fair wages in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we now have some 15 . . . First of all, we have 43,000 people in the province of Saskatchewan who are officially out of work, and we all know that the official statistics always underestimate the real incidence of unemployment in any province, Mr. Speaker. Many people in Saskatchewan have given up looking for work. Thousands of people, Mr. Speaker, every month are leaving the province of Saskatchewan because they can't find employment in this province. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a situation where really the figure of 43,000 out of work very much underestimates the real extent of unemployment in this province.

But of those 43,000 who are out of work, 15,000 of those people are on social assistance because they're unemployed, Mr. Speaker. And they in turn have 21,000 dependants, Mr. Speaker, who again are relying on social welfare because their parents or their spouses have been unable to get work in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House believe that job creation is not the inevitable result of economic growth and that it cannot just be left to the market-place. Full employment, Mr. Speaker, must be an explicit goal of government, and full employment must be considered to be, in my judgement, the most single important objective that any government seeks to achieve for its people, Mr. Speaker.

This government, Mr. Speaker, has abandoned the objective of full employment. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a full employment economy, according to the PCs, both in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa, is not in the interests of their big-business friends, because it's difficult, Mr. Speaker, to pursue a cheap labour policy when you have full employment. If you want to pursue a cheap labour policy, Mr. Speaker, that relies in large part on having significant levels of unemployment in the province.

(1500)

If at the national level, Mr. Speaker, you want to keep interest rates down, as some governments have chosen to do, that could be done, Mr. Speaker, in one of two ways: either, Mr. Speaker, you can fight inflation through pushing up interest rates and presuming that you will maintain a high level of unemployment in your economy; or you can, as the New Democratic Party has maintained in Ottawa for years, have a "made in Canada" interest rate policy that will be set by the Bank of Canada, Mr. Speaker, with the objective of seeking out full employment in this land instead of with the objective of setting, as the head of the Bank of Canada suggested

earlier this year, an unemployment rate of at least 8 per cent in order to keep inflation down and to prevent interest rates from being pushed too high in this land, Mr. Speaker.

In other words, what we've seen at the national level, Mr. Speaker, is an intentional policy by the head of the Bank of Canada and by the PC government to keep unemployment rates at least a minimum of 7 to 8 per cent. And what we've seen in the province of Saskatchewan is an intentional policy, a cheap labour policy that is founded, among other things, on keeping unemployment reasonably high in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And that's a scandalous situation that I believe is unnecessary in this province, Mr. Speaker, and members of the opposition are committed to ensuring that when we form government, full employment will be our number one objective in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another reason for the high levels of poverty that we're now seeing in this province relates directly to the government's decision to freeze the minimum wage, which of course is part of their cheap labour policy in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation, you know, where many people who are on minimum wage in this province also have to rely on social assistance even though they're working full time, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that's really quite a scandalous situation. And that is because, Mr. Speaker, this government has allowed the minimum wage to drop below the poverty line. And it has allowed the minimum wage for individuals who are supporting families, Mr. Speaker, to drop very sharply below the poverty line.

If someone is working full time in this province, and they're a single person, Mr. Speaker, and they're working full time at minimum wage, they are still \$1,653 a year below the Statistics Canada poverty line for a single individual in the province of Saskatchewan. If that same minimum wage earner, Mr. Speaker, is trying to support two children, then that minimum wage earner, working full time, is \$10,012 a year below the poverty line, Mr. Speaker. The government in effect has forced many families who are working full time for minimum wage to have to rely on welfare as well in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and that is an insult to those families.

I see some of the members opposite snickering, Mr. Speaker. You know, it really is disgusting. We've reached a new low in this House, Mr. Speaker, when members of the government side of the House laugh about the poverty of families in the province of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, this kind of a cheap labour policy, one of the things that it does, Mr. Speaker, is it discourages people from working. I mean, why bother to work, Mr. Speaker, if you can actually make more on social assistance under this government if you're an individual supporting one or two children and you're earning minimum wage, or even 50 cents above it? Why bother working when you can actually get more on social welfare? That's the kind of a situation that the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have created in the province

of Saskatchewan.

You know, all the rhetoric on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is about how this government is committed to getting people back to work. But, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I get 80 to 120 calls a day into our constituency office, and one of the things that I have found in dramatic fashion that is displayed every day in my office is that rather than creating incentives for people to work, this government has put in place obstacle after obstacle for people to work in the province of Saskatchewan.

And the decision to freeze the minimum wage ever since 1985, and to increase it only 25 cents in seven and a half years, Mr. Speaker, is just one example of that. The minimum wage in this province, Mr. Speaker, has gone up less in the last seven years than it has in any other province in the dominion, Mr. Speaker. Every other province has increased its minimum wage by a higher percentage than the province of Saskatchewan has.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the first things, clearly, that we need if we're serious about eliminating poverty in our province is an end to the government's cheap labour policy. And the first place to start with that is a significant increase in the minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the first obvious things to do to alleviate poverty in this province because there are thousands of people who are working at or above minimum wage in this province, Mr. Speaker, who are poor and who need not be poor, Mr. Speaker, with a fair minimum wage in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now I want to elaborate a little bit on what I meant by some of the road-blocks that this government is creating to helping people to become more self-reliant in this province, Mr. Speaker. And as part of addressing that, I want to comment on the government's work-for-welfare program, because the government has used its work-for-welfare program for, I think, largely public relations purposes, Mr. Speaker. It wants to leave the impression that it is encouraging — in fact, forcing — people to get off welfare and out into the work place.

But really, Mr. Speaker, in my experience, and I have dealt now with hundreds of people who have gone through the government's work-for-welfare program and who at one point or another have contacted my office, and my experience is that basically all of these work-for-welfare projects, with the exception of the New Careers Corporation — and I want to point to that as the one notable exception, Mr. Speaker — but all the other work-for-welfare projects are basically 20-week projects, Mr. Speaker, at minimum wage that are just . . . their sole purpose really is to get people off welfare, working for 20 weeks, just long enough to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits, Mr. Speaker. Then they go onto the unemployment insurance rolls where they're no longer the responsibility of the PC government in Saskatchewan. Instead they become the responsibility of the federal government, and so they don't show up in the provincial government's welfare statistics any more, Mr. Speaker.

And that's exactly what the Government of Saskatchewan wants. They want their statistics to look a little better, Mr.

Speaker, because the statistics, as I've pointed out, have been . . . their record in the last seven years has been pretty dim.

But in my experience these projects are not designed, Mr. Speaker, to help people gain new skills; they're not designed, Mr. Speaker, to train people in order that they can move into full-time jobs; and they're not designed to create long-term employment opportunities for people, Mr. Speaker. They are simply designed to move people off welfare and, after 20 weeks of work, onto unemployment insurance. And that is a shoddy objective for any government, Mr. Speaker.

The real objective, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to be serious about addressing the problem of large numbers of people who are able to work and want to work but who have to face the dehumanizing situation of being on social assistance, the solution is to put permanent, long-term jobs in place at a living wage, Mr. Speaker. And that is what the government's Saskatchewan employment development program has failed to do. And it's failed abysmally, Mr. Speaker.

Now the only exception to that is the government's New Careers project, run not by the Minister of Social Services, but by the Minister of Parks and Recreation. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a project that has some merit. Unfortunately there are only 2 or 300 people in any one year who are involved in that program, but that's the one make-work project in the province for people on social assistance that has some merit, because it allows them, after several months, to obtain a living wage. They can earn wages of up to 8 or \$9 an hour.

There's opportunities for training through New Careers, Mr. Speaker. And while the New Careers Corporation has many shortcomings, at least, Mr. Speaker, it provides some opportunities for people to advance their situation and to gradually work their way out of poverty, that none of the other government's work-for-welfare projects do, Mr. Speaker.

Basically, work for welfare in this province has been a dismal failure, and you can see that by the fact, Mr. Speaker, that there are basically just as many people who are unemployed and on social assistance now as there were in 1987, Mr. Speaker. The numbers have barely fallen at all. And when they drop, Mr. Speaker, the only way that the government has succeeded in reducing the number of employable people who are on social assistance at all is by simply cutting them off illegally, Mr. Speaker.

And there are now at least 1,500 people in this province who have been illegally cut off social assistance by this government, Mr. Speaker, in violation of the terms of the Canada Assistance Plan Act. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a matter of great concern which I will elaborate on at some other point. But this government's consistent violations of the Canada Assistance Plan Act are something that I believe, Mr. Speaker, border really on a national issue, rather than simply a provincial issue.

And the only reason that they're able to get away with these violations, Mr. Speaker, is because the PC

government in Ottawa is prepared to turn a blind eye to them, Mr. Speaker. But no one can question that the Act is being violated. And, Mr. Speaker, I have dozens and dozens of people contacting me every month who've been illegally cut off in violation of CAP (Canada assistance plan).

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to elaborate on some of the other things that the PC government has done to place obstacles in the way of people being able to find work in the province of Saskatchewan. And one of the most obvious ones, Mr. Speaker, one of the most obvious things that the government has done which is a clear disincentive for people going out to look for work when they're on social assistance, is that they have changed the regulations governing the deduction of employment earnings from social assistance.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like members opposite, some of the back-benchers, to listen to this because I bet that none of them know this, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the back-benchers in the PC government who like to talk about creating incentives for people to work, Mr. Speaker, know that if somebody now, as a result of the changes that your government and your Minister of Social Services implemented last year, Mr. Speaker, someone working at a part-time job who's on social assistance, Mr. Speaker — a single individual — if they earn \$100 working part time, they can only keep \$40; the other \$60 is deducted from their cheque.

If somebody, Mr. Speaker, if somebody in a family with two parents and four children, who's on social assistance, goes out and gets a job at minimum wage and earns \$720 in a month, do you know how much they get to keep, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this government's new policy? — \$244. They earn \$720; they get to keep \$244. All the rest is deducted off their cheque.

And, Mr. Speaker, no account is taken of the fact that they will have additional clothing expenses when they start work. No account is taken of their additional travel cost to work. No account is taken of the additional child care expenses in the event that they are working. Mr. Speaker, they are not compensated for any of those additional costs, and they lose about two-thirds of their cheque, Mr. Speaker. Now what kind of an incentive is that for people on social assistance to go out and find work?

And yet, you know, to show how inaccurate it is, Mr. Speaker, when members opposite claim and try to paint a picture of people on social welfare being lazy, despite the fact that this incredible policy of disincentive to work has been put in place by this government, there are still thousands of people on social assistance in this province who go out and try to get part-time or full-time jobs so that they will have the dignity of working — despite this new policy, Mr. Speaker.

(1515)

You know, Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't even allow disabled people in the province of Saskatchewan, who will have to be on social assistance all their lives in many cases . . . When they go out and find work, even they, Mr. Speaker, at the very most — it doesn't matter

how much they earn — they're only able to keep \$150 a month. They can earn 6 or \$700 a month; they can be, because of their severe disability . . . I've got several examples of this — people who've come into my office. They're severely disabled. They're going to rely on social welfare all their life. They're out trying to earn 4 or \$500 a month, and they work very hard to do that, Mr. Speaker. And this government now let's them keep a maximum of 150.

You know, it's just insulting, Mr. Speaker. It's insulting to the dignity of these people. And it's an example, Mr. Speaker, of what I say is a policy that this government has put in place, not of incentives for people who are on social assistance to work, but they have intentionally created a new regime of disincentives for people who are on social welfare to find employment, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that this government has done to social assistance recipients that are obstacles to them looking for and obtaining work. Mr. Speaker, for instance, they have abolished the travel allowance for social welfare recipients in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, I attended a meeting with several people who were on social assistance who were looking for work and had in fact been out looking for work that day, Mr. Speaker. And they came to a meeting, Mr. Speaker, to meet with me in downtown Regina, Mr. Speaker. And you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that so . . . These people had been out slogging the pavement all day. Many of them were then going to have to make their way back five or six miles to the outskirts of the city where they lived from the meeting, Mr. Speaker. They were doing that on foot. I gave a couple of them a drive home.

But the point is, Mr. Speaker, what a humiliating situation! These people don't even provide somebody who's out searching for work and on social assistance with money for a bus pass, Mr. Speaker. And so their ability to do a job search and the number of people, the number of employers that they can call on each day, Mr. Speaker, is now dramatically reduced.

You know, this government, Mr. Speaker, has chosen to eliminate the clothing allowance and the personal allowances for all people on social welfare who are employable. And, Mr. Speaker, if you're out looking for work, you like to go in a presentable fashion. And it's very difficult to do that when you've been provided with no allowance for clothing by the Government of Saskatchewan on your social welfare cheque for months at a time, Mr. Speaker. It's a very embarrassing situation to be in. So no travel allowance, no clothing allowance, no personal allowance, Mr. Speaker, for people who are employable, and then this government expects those same people to be out searching for work.

And they go out and they try to look for work, and it's hard to find it when you've got an unemployment rate in a city like Saskatoon of 11 per cent, Mr. Speaker. But it's even harder to find it when you've got no means to travel around the city to look for work, Mr. Speaker, and no clothing allowance that would permit you to present

yourself in a presentable manner. And those are the kind of humiliating circumstances that this government has intentionally created for thousands of people in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, what's the obvious solution to this dilemma? The solution to this dilemma, Mr. Speaker, is to remove those disincentives to employment that the government has put in place, Mr. Speaker, and an NDP government will do just that, Mr. Speaker.

We will create a social assistance system that provides financial incentives for people to go out and look for work, rather than a social assistance system that deducts practically everything that someone who makes part-time earnings gets, from their cheque.

We will, Mr. Speaker, ensure that people who are on social welfare and out looking for work have bus money to travel about a city or about, if necessary, to different parts of the province to go to job interviews and to get work in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that a system is set up that rewards those on social assistance who are out seeking employment, Mr. Speaker. We will ensure that the system of disincentives that this government has created is abolished, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to a third area. To date I've touched on the need to establish a full employment policy in the province of Saskatchewan. I've talked about the need to abandon the cheap labour policy that this government has created, and to increase the minimum wage significantly in the province of Saskatchewan as a second vehicle for alleviating poverty in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I've talked about the need, Mr. Speaker, to reform the social assistance system so that work for welfare is dropped in favour of . . . Mr. Speaker, instead of the current work-for-welfare program, what we need is a policy of permanent jobs at decent wages for those on social assistance in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I've talked about the need, Mr. Speaker, to do away with the numerous disincentives that this government has created for those on social welfare to go out and look for work, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to examine the inadequacy of the income security system that this government has put in place in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that it's the inadequacy of this income security system that perhaps more than anything else is accounting for the dramatic increase in the use of food banks that we've seen in this province. As I mentioned earlier, we now have a situation where last year 42,000 people in Saskatchewan relied on food banks at some point during the year in this province, and 45 per cent of those people, Mr. Speaker, were children.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that this situation has occurred is because this government has chosen, over the last seven years, to not once increase social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan. Now the government opposite, of course, deny this. And the

Minister of Social Services about every two years puts out a little news release announcing that he has increased the basic allowance for social assistance recipients in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Weyburn is trying to get into this debate. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say something to the member from Weyburn. Mr. Speaker, I am getting tired of receiving calls from the constituency of Weyburn from people on social welfare in that constituency who obviously can't get any help from the member for Weyburn and have to phone my office in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I've had, Mr. Speaker, in the last six months, I'm sure I've had a dozen calls from Weyburn alone, Mr. Speaker, and I'm tired of getting those calls, Mr. Speaker. I wish the member from Weyburn would provide some assistance to those constituents, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, I wished he would, I wished . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd like to call the House to attention and allow the member from Saskatoon to continue his speech.

Mr. Prebble: — The member for Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, has said that he doesn't believe that I'm getting 120 calls a day into my constituency office. I invite him, Mr. Speaker, to come to my constituency office and to answer the 120 calls a day, the large bulk of which are from people on social welfare who call me because they can't get any help from your government. A lot of them, Mr. Speaker, I might add, are from rural areas.

An Hon. Member: — How many from Meadow Lake? Tell me about my riding.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, the member says, how many from Meadow Lake? How many from Lloydminster? I can assure the members from Lloydminster and Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, that in the last three months we have had at least 20 calls from those two ridings together, Mr. Speaker, at least 20 calls . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now, Mr. Speaker, the member is saying, name a social assistance recipient.

And I say to the members, they know full well that social assistance recipients in this province are to be protected with respect to their confidentiality. That if I named those names, Mr. Speaker, I would be violating The Saskatchewan Assistance (plan) Act, Mr. Speaker, which those members, Mr. Speaker, regularly violate, Mr. Speaker. They have chosen, Mr. Speaker, to violate the confidentiality of hundreds of recipients in this province, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. I am going to respect their confidentiality.

An Hon. Member: — I'm going to call you on this. Have you taken them to the minister? Has it come to the minister's attention?

Mr. Prebble: — And the member from Weyburn says, have I brought some of those cases to the minister's attention? And in many cases, yes I have. But as I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, I've virtually given up dealing with the Minister of Social Services because he never answers my letters, Mr. Speaker. He never does, Mr. Speaker. The

chances of the Minister of Social Services answering one of my letters is as good as the chances of winning Lotto 649 in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, I think I will return to the essence of my comments before I was interrupted by the members for Meadow Lake and Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. I want to address for a moment the tragic inadequacy of social assistance rates in this province, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, the rates have not increased at all, Mr. Speaker, in the last seven years since this government was elected. Every time that this government increases the basic allowance for those on social assistance in the province of Saskatchewan, it decreases some other part of the social assistance rate structure.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, last time that there was a rate increase in the province of Saskatchewan in the basic allowance, the government simultaneously abolished the transportation allowance in the province of Saskatchewan. It reduced the laundry allowance for people in the province of Saskatchewan. And those two cuts offset the increase in the basic allowance, so that people on their cheques didn't have a penny more than they had the month previous to the Minister of Social Services' supposed increase, Mr. Speaker.

And we have seen a situation now where single people in this province have had their rates cut from some \$540 a month in 1981, to a maximum of \$375 a month in 1989, Mr. Speaker. We have a situation, Mr. Speaker, where families have in effect, as I mentioned earlier, had their rates frozen for the last seven years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, during those seven years, inflation has increased in excess of 35 per cent. And so in effect what we have now, Mr. Speaker, is a situation in which a family on social assistance, in real dollar terms, is making 35 per cent less than they were in 1981, Mr. Speaker.

And that, probably more than anything else, helps to explain why there are now so many families who have to rely on food banks in this province, Mr. Speaker. And you'll see that, generally speaking, the use of food banks increases sharply at the end of the month, Mr. Speaker. And that is because the social assistance cheque has run out and people are forced to go to food banks.

Now I want to . . . so that members opposite will understand a little better why families trying to live on these terrible rates, Mr. Speaker, are having a difficult time, members may understand this a little better when you look at the rates that are now in place in this perspective.

If you are on social assistance and you are single, Mr. Speaker, after you have paid your rent and utilities, you are basically left living on \$16 a month in the province of Saskatchewan — \$16 a month for food, for clothing, for all household expenses and personal items.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are trying to support a family and you are relying on social assistance, the rates have

now got to the point where after you pay your rent and your utilities, you will be left to live on \$26 a month for each member of your household, Mr. Speaker — I'm sorry I said a month and I meant a week — \$26 a week; \$16 a week for single individuals, Mr. Speaker, on social assistance to cover their food, clothing, household and personal items; \$26 a week, Mr. Speaker, for each individual in a family.

Now, Mr. Speaker, simply put, no one can feed their family on \$26 a week as well as have to look after all clothing expenses, all personal expenses, all household expenses, everything other than rent and utilities. That's what the rates mean now, Mr. Speaker. That's what the rates mean. They mean, Mr. Speaker, trying to feed and clothe and provide all of the support needs for each member of your family on \$26 a week. And simply put, that can't be done and that's why the cheque runs out before the end of the month, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we see thousands of people lining up at food banks in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1530)

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the obvious solutions to this problem therefore is to try to increase the rates. No one, I think, Mr. Speaker, would deny that a seven-year freeze in the rates is simply shameful in this province and that there is an urgent need to significantly increase social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan as part of rebuilding the social safety net in our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's another very important income security program that I want to comment on and that is the family income plan. And for those, Mr. Speaker, who are not familiar with the family income plan, the family income plan is a plan that is an income security program that is available to families in this province, poorer families in the province of Saskatchewan who are working, who have at least one member of their household, Mr. Speaker, who is working, but who, despite the fact that they are working, do not earn enough to live on.

And originally, Mr. Speaker, the family income plan was set up by the New Democratic Party in the 1970s, and we had really seen this family income plan as the first step towards a guaranteed annual income in the province of Saskatchewan for working families. It was a plan, Mr. Speaker, that would ensure that any families with children in this province would not fall below a basic minimal level of earnings when they were working and trying to support their family, but when they were earning a wage that was not adequate to do so.

Now what this government has done, Mr. Speaker, since being elected, is this government has, in effect . . . first of all, it has stopped advertising the existence of the family income plan in the province of Saskatchewan. It obviously doesn't want poor families in this province to know that the family income plan exists. And the result of that, Mr. Speaker, is that only about one-third of the families in the province of Saskatchewan who would be eligible for the family income plan actually take advantage of it every year because so many thousands of people in this province don't even know that it exists.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the government has chosen to freeze the family income plan now for the last four years. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's consistently cut back the budget of the family income plan. I can remember when in 1986, the family income plan had a budget of some \$19 million in the provincial budget. This year, Mr. Speaker, the family income plan has a budget of \$13.1 million — a cut of \$6 million, Mr. Speaker. And the benefits, Mr. Speaker, that are available to families have in effect now been frozen for many years despite the fact that there have been sharp increases in the cost of living during that time.

So we've got a government that has stopped advertising the plan. We've got a government that's cut back the total budget for the plan, and we've got a government that's frozen the benefits available under the plan now for many years.

And the result of that, Mr. Speaker, is that the thousands of families who could be benefitting from this plan don't get to take advantage of it, and that there are many other thousands of families, Mr. Speaker, who are still enrolled in the plan that would, if this plan had been properly maintained by the PC government, be getting significantly more in terms of an income security top-up to their wage than they do at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have not been able to understand is why any government, Mr. Speaker, would choose to set the cut-offs for the family income plan so far below the poverty line. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the member for Saltcoats, for instance, is aware of the fact that under his government's administration, for a family of four, the cut-off for receiving the family income plan in the province of Saskatchewan is \$14,265 a year of earnings, even though the poverty line for that family in urban Saskatchewan in cities like Saskatoon or Regina, would be over \$22,000 a year, and in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is over \$19,000 a year.

We have a government, Mr. Speaker, that has chosen to stop paying out family income plan benefits to families with children who are living more than \$5,000 below the poverty line, Mr. Speaker, more than \$5,000 below the poverty line. In effect, the intention, the original intention, the original purpose of the family income plan has been completely lost sight of by the PC government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, clearly when one looks at some of the reasons for poverty in this province — high levels of unemployment, a government that has failed to create employment opportunities for its citizens, the only province in Canada in fact last year, Mr. Speaker, where there was a net decline in the number of people employed in the province, Mr. Speaker; when you look at the policies of the government that have intentionally created a cheap labour policy for people, forced thousands of people to work at a minimum wage that has only gone up 6 per cent in the last seven years while inflation has been in excess of 35 per cent; when you look at a government, Mr. Speaker, that has chosen to watch food bank use increase in the province of Saskatchewan without doing anything to aid food banks in this province or to assist them in their work; Mr. Speaker, when you

look at a government that has put so many road-blocks in the way of people who are on social welfare finding work has intentionally created disincentives for people working, Mr. Speaker, as I've outlined; when you look at a government that has chosen to freeze social assistance rates in the province of Saskatchewan for seven years; when you look at a government that has chose to freeze benefits per child for working families in this province, under the family income plan, for five years, Mr. Speaker; when you look at a government that has chosen not to advertise the benefits available under the family income plan of the province of Saskatchewan to families in this province, Mr. Speaker — when you look at all those policies put together, it's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, that we've seen a sharp incidence in the rate of poverty in this province.

It's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, that when you ask families to live on \$26 a week, per person, in the province of Saskatchewan, that they're not able to meet the basic needs of their children, Mr. Speaker, and therefore we shouldn't be surprised at the rapid rise in food bank use in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on another important cause of poverty in this province and that is the government's failure to continue to ensure that decent housing will be provided for people in the province of Saskatchewan.

I think, to be honest, Mr. Speaker, that this government has not done a bad job with respect to the construction of new senior citizens' units in the province of Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, it's done a terrible job with respect to the construction of low income housing for poorer families in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I turn to the statistics, for instance, that were quoted by the Minister of Urban Affairs during his estimates a couple of months ago when we asked him to compare the low income housing construction record in the early 1980s under the NDP government, with the record of his government over the last two years. And you know, Mr. Speaker, in 1981 in this province — and these are the statistics that the minister himself provided to this House — there were 421 low income family housing units built in Saskatchewan under the NDP. In 1982 there were 320 units.

To show you, Mr. Speaker, how that policy of constructing low income housing for families has been abandoned in this province, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is turn to the 1987 and 1988 statistics. In 1987, Mr. Speaker, there were only 112 units for low income families built in this province, in contrast to the 421 in 1981 and the 320 in 1982. In 1988, Mr. Speaker, there were only 129 low income housing units built in the province of Saskatchewan.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this government, as part of its overall policy of abandoning low income people in this province, has chosen to stop building low income housing units for poorer families in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's cut back its budget very sharply for that, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that that is most unfortunate . . . (inaudible interjection) . .

. Now, Mr. Speaker, I note that the members opposite are wondering about the policies of the North, and the minister raises the question of northern housing units.

I'm afraid I don't have those statistics, but since the Minister of Urban Affairs seems to want to talk about northern Saskatchewan, I will entertain his desire to do that for a moment and provide another little example of the kind of game that the Minister of Social Services likes to play with poor people in this province. It's a rather cynical game, and I'm going to use a northern Saskatchewan example since he has baited me into it, Mr. Speaker.

I want to go back to December of last year, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Social Services announced that there would be a \$25 increase in the basic food allowance for social assistance recipients in seven northern communities, remote northern communities, Mr. Speaker, communities that are served by my colleagues from Athabasca and Cumberland, and, Mr. Speaker, communities where the expense associated with shipping food into the North is very great.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister announced that there was going to be a \$25 increase in the basic food allowance for people living in those remote northern communities where the price of food is very high, Mr. Speaker. And what he did, Mr. Speaker, is he issued a news release in December of 1988, announcing this increase.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we examined this increase, we found in fact that it wasn't an increase at all. The communities that were going to be affected, Mr. Speaker, were communities like Black Lake and Stony Rapids and Uranium City and Fond-du-Lac and Camsell Portage. These were all communities where food has to be flown in at very high cost.

And, Mr. Speaker, what the minister neglected to mention in his news release was that everybody in these communities was already getting the \$25 figure, Mr. Speaker, by way of a special needs allowance available to northern residents, Mr. Speaker. And all that the Minister of Social Services did is he announced that he was . . . when he announced, Mr. Speaker, that he was increasing the basic allowance of these people in the remote North by \$25, what he neglected to mention was that every one of those people was already getting the \$25, but they were getting it through another allowance, Mr. Speaker, which he was therefore cancelling.

That's the kind of game, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has been playing for some time. And what he neglected to mention, Mr. Speaker — and I'm going to provide these figures for the benefit of the Minister of Urban Affairs who asked about the North — what he neglected to mention, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that the cost of families living in these communities to feed their children, Mr. Speaker, is actually higher than the entire amount that they get from social assistance minus their housing costs, Mr. Speaker.

For instance, as an example, if you look at the community of Black Lake, Mr. Speaker, studies done by the Prince Albert district chiefs show that it would cost a family of four in the community of Black Lake \$867.60 a month to

feed that family. And that is because of the very, very high cost of food in that community, Mr. Speaker, the very high cost of food because that food has to be flown into northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and therefore food prices are, at a minimum, two or three times higher than they are in the South.

Now you know, Mr. Speaker, you know how much that that family gets to cover food, clothing, household, and personal supplies from the Minister of Social Services? They get \$780 a month, Mr. Speaker. The cost of food alone is \$867.60, according to a detailed study that has been done on food costs in that community, Mr. Speaker. The amount that they get from the Department of Social Services for that family is \$780. In other words, Mr. Speaker, there is a shortfall of \$87 a month just for food, and that assumes no money for clothing, no money for household expenses, no money for any other personal items, Mr. Speaker.

(1545)

And then, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite wonder why the people of northern Saskatchewan don't vote for them. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that after the next election, the members for Cumberland, and the members for Athabasca will be returned with the biggest majority ever in northern Saskatchewan, because of the policies of the PC government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to address another obstacle that the PC government has put in the way of many lower income people in this province, Mr. Speaker, who are trying to make ends meet, who are out working, Mr. Speaker, and who are finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet under the policies of this PC government.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the matters that I want to raise that I think is a real obstacle to many working people, is the changes that this government has made to its day-care policy, Mr. Speaker. Basically, Mr. Speaker, this government has abandoned the principle of helping low income people who need child care in this province, Mr. Speaker. And it has made the access to day care to middle income earners in this province, Mr. Speaker, almost impossible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has got the sorry record of having the second-lowest number of licensed child care spaces for our population in the Dominion of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Only the province of Newfoundland has fewer licensed child care spaces for its population, Mr. Speaker.

And this government, in addition to failing to provide new day-care facilities to families who are working, Mr. Speaker, has frozen day-care subsidies in the province of Saskatchewan. Again, just like it's frozen welfare rates for seven years, it's frozen the day-care subsidy for low income families in the province of Saskatchewan for seven years, Mr. Speaker.

And that has meant, Mr. Speaker, that low income families have to pay more and more of their weekly earnings in day care, because the subsidies

remain frozen for seven years, and the cost of day care during that time has increased at least 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

That, Mr. Speaker, for somebody who has two or three children in day care, can mean that often a third of their pay-cheque is being forked out in child care expenses, Mr. Speaker — expenses that in large part used to be covered through the day-care subsidy, but are no longer being covered by this government, Mr. Speaker. Now the combination of all of those policies, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in increased poverty in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I want to comment on just one more policy before closing and moving my motion, Mr. Speaker. And that is, Mr. Speaker, what this government has done with respect to workers' compensation in the province of Saskatchewan. Because I think that NDP members on this side of the House find that one of the most frequent complaints we have about government policy is what a difficult time many people who are working and are injured have in dealing with the Workers' Compensation Board in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

More and more people, Mr. Speaker, who are being cut off workers' compensation, more and more people who are having a difficult time, Mr. Speaker, in getting workers' compensation to begin with, and who then find it extremely difficult to stay on workers' compensation even though they have medical evidence showing that they are unable to return to work, Mr. Speaker.

This government seems to have made it a practice to constantly make life difficult for those who are on social assistance, for the working poor, for those who are on workers' compensation, for those who have inadequate housing and are seeking decent housing in this province, Mr. Speaker. The programs that used to be in place for those people, Mr. Speaker, have been steadily eroded in this province under the PC government.

And so we have a situation today in which poverty in this province stands at an unprecedented rate — one in four children are poor in the province of Saskatchewan. And I think that the remarks that I have made this afternoon demonstrate that despite the fact that we have faced some difficult economic times in Saskatchewan over the last two or three years, this kind of a crisis doesn't need to exist.

The reason I say, Mr. Speaker, that this crisis is a crisis shaped by government policy and not a crisis that is related primarily to the difficult circumstances we've faced in agriculture in the last two or three years, which is what the Minister of Social Services likes to put it up to, Mr. Speaker — the reason I say that is that the establishment of food banks in this province began within 18 months of the PC government being elected.

An Hon. Member: — Just a coincidence, I bet.

Mr. Prebble: — Now the member for Elphinstone says, was that a coincidence. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that all members will appreciate that this is not a coincidence, Mr. Speaker, this is not a coincidence. Mr. Speaker, no

one can tell me, Mr. Speaker, that things changed so much between 1982 and 1983 in terms of the general state of the economy, and in 1984 and '85 when oil prices, you will recall, Mr. Speaker, were far higher than they were at any time that the New Democratic Party was in government. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, that . . . why it is when all prices were at record levels and when things in agriculture were still fairly good, shortly after this government took office, that we saw food banks establishing in Saskatoon and in Regina, Mr. Speaker. I wonder why that was, Mr. Speaker.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that that was clearly as a result of government policy and it had nothing to do with the difficult circumstances in agriculture that we currently face — nothing to do at all, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at how carefully the government has gone about ensuring that every time . . . Mr. Speaker, when you look at how carefully the government has gone about crafting its cheap labour policy and intentionally freezing the minimum wage now for some seven years; and when you look at how it has gone about so craftily ensuring that the family income plan will never be advertised in the province of Saskatchewan any more and the benefits will be frozen for the last five years; and when you look at how it has changed its day-care policy so that benefits, the subsidies paid to low income parents will be frozen for seven years; and when you look at how it has frozen social assistance rates for families for seven years; and when you look at how it has dropped all its winter works programs that used to be available under the New Democratic Party government; and when you look at how it has basically cancelled all of its employment programs, Mr. Speaker, with the exception of the student summer employment program, which it's cut back from 10 and a half million dollars in 1986 to \$3.1 million this summer; and when you look at how the only employment opportunities it provides to social assistance recipients are its 20-week work-fare projects, Mr. Speaker, primarily designed to get people onto unemployment insurance so that they will become the responsibility of the federal government rather than the PC provincial government, Mr. Speaker; when you look at all those policies together, Mr. Speaker, then it's plain for everybody to see why the Regina food bank had 2,500 children and 2,600 adults depending on it last month, and why, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon more than 6,000 — in fact, Mr. Speaker, more than 7,000 people last month — relied on the Saskatoon food bank, Mr. Speaker, for their basic needs, Mr. Speaker — for their basic needs, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I say that this situation is intolerable. I say that no civilized society can accept the level of poverty that we see now in the province of Saskatchewan. I say, Mr. Speaker, that an NDP government — I pledge to all those listening this afternoon and to all members of this House, Mr. Speaker, that a New Democratic Party government will make as one of its highest priorities the elimination of food banks and the elimination of poverty for children and for families and for all people in this province in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that the vehicles for doing this are clear. The vehicles, Mr. Speaker, are a full employment

policy and establishing full employment as the number one objective of the provincial government.

The second vehicle, Mr. Speaker, is a fair wage policy in the province of Saskatchewan and a significant increase in the minimum wage, Mr. Speaker.

The third key plank, Mr. Speaker, in such an initiative is the creation of decent housing in this province; the re-establishment of a vigorous program of constructing low-income housing units for poor people in this province, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, a program that ensures that houses will be well maintained in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need in this province to have a family income plan that will ensure that families who are low income and who are working, move significantly up towards the poverty line, Mr. Speaker, and get a significant top-up to their wages to ensure that they will be able to meet the basic needs of all their children, Mr. Speaker.

And we need in this province, Mr. Speaker, significant improvements in the pension system, and I personally would like to see — I don't say this on behalf of the NDP, but I say personally that I think that one of the things that we really need in this province that would go a long way towards easing the poverty of many of those who are sick and injured in this province, is a policy of a universal sickness and accident insurance program in the province of Saskatchewan.

When you look at other countries that have such a program, countries like New Zealand, for instance, Mr. Speaker, there you see that people who are injured or who suffer accident, regardless of cause, Mr. Speaker, are protected with respect to their incomes. Here we only have such protection if people have private insurance, Mr. Speaker, or if people are injured at work or through an automobile accident. And automobile accident coverage is often very inadequate, Mr. Speaker. So that if you are injured outside the work place, Mr. Speaker, in effect you remain unprotected unless you have private insurance.

And I think it's time that we had a program in the province of Saskatchewan, an insurance program that would protect all people in the event of injury or sickness, regardless of cause.

We have far too many people in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, who are disabled, for instance, and who were disabled in their early youth — in their teens or in their 20s — who are forced to live on social assistance at the deplorable rates that the government opposite has put into effect, Mr. Speaker, when really they ought to be able to live in dignity through an insurance program that would protect them, Mr. Speaker. And I think that a universal sickness and accident insurance program would do just that.

These then, Mr. Speaker, are some of the initiatives that I believe are required in order to ensure that those who are poor in the province of Saskatchewan need not continue to be poor, Mr. Speaker. And I believe, in closing, that the record of this government is such that in many ways the

motion that we're proposing, Mr. Speaker, is a mild one. It really is, you know. When you look at the government's record and you look at the things that I've talked about this afternoon, "condemn" is really a light term to use. But I will move at this point, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly condemns the Government of Saskatchewan for its policies which continue to cause widespread hurt and hardship for Saskatchewan families, which are forcing families and children into poverty, and which are depriving families of security and opportunity for their future, and calls on the Saskatchewan government to repair our social safety net and introduce a program of full employment geared to alleviating the crisis of poverty in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will move that, seconded by the member for Prince Albert. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, as I rise to speak on this motion, I want to tell the members of government that are sitting here opposite, particularly members from the cities of Regina, the member from Regina Wascana, the member from Regina South, the member from Saskatoon Mayfair, and the minister from Weyburn, I think, would be included in this as well, and that is that the record that you people have wrought on this province with respect to what it's done to those that are not quite always able to fend for themselves, is really going to do you a lot of harm.

(1600)

It's particularly incumbent on you, the member from Regina Wascana, I think, to bring to the attention of the minister, bring it to the attention of the minister some of things, I would say, all of the things that the member from Saskatoon University has brought up today, because he, more than anybody else, has had to carry the ball on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan who are in that poverty category. And he, more than anybody else, has carried it because that minister has fumbled it and fumbled it badly. He has accused him of fumbling it deliberately. I sometimes think he's fumbled it deliberately and I sometimes think he's fumbling it simply out of ignorance, out of ignorance because he's shrugging it off and not knowing what's going on.

You know, Mr. Minister, Mr. almost-a-minister from Regina Wascana, I think that what's going to happen to you is you are going to lose your seat, you're going to lose your seat along with the other member from Regina, if you are unable to convince the Premier of the province to either can this minister or convince that minister to change his attitude with respect to how he deals with the people in this province who are in difficulty.

You know what? I say that minister's attitude is best exemplified by the statement: I'll kick 'em when they're up and I'll kick 'em when they're down. Kick 'em when they're up and kick 'em when they're down. You know, if there is somebody that doesn't agree with him he kicks them, and when they're down he kicks them worse. And there were many examples of that that the member from

Saskatoon Sutherland brought up today, perhaps in more polite terms than I've just mentioned, but it effectively comes down to kicking them when they're down.

The problem is here that he has made himself completely immune from what is happening to people who are poor. Now I want to bring to your attention why I feel he's done that. See, in rural Saskatchewan — and I've lived in rural Saskatchewan — in rural Saskatchewan if you can't survive financially, you are eventually driven into the cities. You are eventually driven to it; you're forced to it.

If you're forced off your farm, where are you going to go? Where are you going to go? So slowly, what happens is that some of the people that are poor, end up poor, end up moving to the city. So what happens is the minister becomes immune from it. He becomes immune from it.

I think that if he took a week, one week, and actually mixed with people and listened, and sat down and listened to their problems instead of preaching from on high, preaching from on high from a perspective which is completely unrealistic, he would get a completely different picture of what his situation is. And it's a result of him not doing that that's going to hurt the member from Regina Wascana eventually. And it will reflect on you guys first, because you're the closest to it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It's interesting you should ask about a name, because this last weekend, as I joined some of the marchers who are protesting, protesting what was happening to the province of Saskatchewan, this fellow came up along side me and he says, by the way, he says, this Schmidt is always talking about names. That's a quote . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Rather tenuous. Just bring it to his attention.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. This fellow came up to me and he says, they're always asking for names. He says, give him my name. He says, I don't mind. He says, I'm not afraid any more. He says, I used to be afraid, but give him my name. Give him my name, he says. So I took his name and address and I'm reluctantly wondering what I should do with it at this stage. But I think what I'm going to do is ask him to write in himself.

But there are people out there, Mr. Member from Regina Wascana that definitely . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order, order. I'll have to ask both members to refrain from interrupting the speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Shame on you.

The Speaker: — Well you've been doing it for a while. I know it must be difficult to carry on when you're always being interrupted, as I'm sure you've experienced, and let us allow the member for Prince Albert to continue.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note by the members' comments opposite that they, you know, that they still want to side with the Minister of Social Services. And that's understandable, I suppose, you know, it's a colleague of yours.

But what I want to do is make a couple of points about how you have to really get a little closer to the situation of some of the constituents that you're supposed to be representing in order to represent them well. One of the most . . . I suppose, the closest example that I've had of a person giving me what it's like for somebody that's in poverty and what it's like to understand somebody that's in poverty if you're in the sort of middle income group, as you and I and everybody else is in this legislature. And the person gave me this example. If you take any group of students from a high school anywhere in the province, any random group of 50 students, and you took them and transported them from Saskatchewan and transplanted them in the business district of Tokyo, in the business district of Tokyo, and then see how many of them are going to survive — just test that.

Now imagine what they'd be up against. First of all, there's a language barrier, and many of the people that are poor in this province have a language barrier. First of all, there's that. Secondly, there's a visible difference of skin colour, very visible difference, so they'd stand out like sore thumbs. Thirdly, they'd know nothing about the economic system of Tokyo, absolutely nothing. Now you put them into that milieu and you say, survive. Matter of fact, if they don't survive, what you maybe should do is say, well look, you're not pulling your load. We're going to cut your services to you. Maybe that will give you an incentive. That's what I mean by kicking them when they're down.

The minister needs to grab a completely different perspective on the clients that he's supposed to be serving. He's not the Minister of Social Services; he's the minister of entrepreneurial services. That's what he's there for; that's really what his job is; that's what he's acting like. It used to be that the civil service, acting in the Department of Social Services, were able to act as advocates for two reasons. First of all, it was their attitudes. Their attitudes were such, when their clients come in, well how can I help you and how can I help you out of your situation. And secondly, they had time to do that. Now the civil service in that department is completely demoralized. All they have time for is to give out cheques — and mind you, they have to give out a lot because of the policies of this government, more than ever before, more than ever before.

But they even feel intimidated in being able to . . . in trying to go out and help, go out of their way to help people — intimidated because the minister's . . . the attitude that the minister is pushing on behalf of all of the members present. And that's why I'm telling you, because I think you better get a hold of him. The only place that that washes is places where you don't have to deal with people who are poor.

And I know what happens. I go out to the rural area that I grew up in, and people there very rarely come across anybody that's poor. And so it's very easy and very natural to say, well there's no poverty, because there isn't in that district — it's all been exported.

But you know, as minister, you're not just responsible for a certain portion of the province; particularly as Minister

of Social Services, you're responsible for everybody. That's your job, and he's not doing it. You guys got to get after him on that or it's going to weigh on your shoulders. It's going to weigh on your shoulders as well, those of you that are adjacent to the cities, and particularly the member from Regina Wascana and Regina South.

That's what's going to happen. It's going to weigh on you because his attitude is completely and deadly wrong. He's kicking them when they're up and he's kicking them when they're down, and that is not fair. That is absolutely not fair to do to people who are poor. That is not a Christian attitude. That is not a Christian attitude.

If you're walking down — and your grade 6 teacher would have told you this — that if you're walking along the road and you see somebody that's bruised and battered lying in the ditch, what should you do? Should you give him a helping hand or should you give him a kick? Well this is the minister of kicking. He does exactly the opposite thing that he should be doing because he thinks that if you just make it tough enough, that person will somehow get his way out of there — if you make it tough enough. But what it's doing is it's building up a whole series of resentments. That's what's happening. It's building up resentments and it's building up fears.

Let me give you another example. I think in one sense his objective is right. He's thinking that he wants to get people to establish the work ethic, and I agree with him there. He wants them to establish the work ethic. There's no argument there.

Now let me take the example of work-fare, and let's think about the work-fare that's going on right in your constituency, the member from Shellbrook-Torch. Let's take a look at that situation, the situation of the people that are doing the work-fare program at Candle Lake. Now I often travel to Candle Lake and I've driven by that place and, you know, it kind of impresses me when I see the ditches and the road all cleaned up and I see, you know, people out there working.

And I ask them, what's happening? Well it's people who have been on welfare. They've been asked to report by the department. They've been asked to report to a certain place. I think it's PAR Industries, in this case, who's doing the recruiting.

And it turns out quite well for those of us that are vacationing at Candle Lake. And it's turned out quite well also for the people who are doing the organizing, because they feel like they've got something done, and they feel like they're, you know, helping these people go to work.

And it's turned out quite well for PAR Industries because, after all, they're serving their purpose. They're providing the . . . you know, the bridge. They're providing the bridge so that those people who are unemployed can get temporary employment. It's turning out quite well for them.

So you put all those together and you say, hey, this is a dandy program — until you go and start talking to the people who are in it. Or better still, just wait and see what they . . . let them come to you, because they've come to

me. And they say, you know, we don't mind this program, with a couple of exceptions. Says first of all one of the problems is, is that we get paid, and by the time we get finished, we end up with less money than we had to begin with. And that's what I mean by kicking them when they're down.

It would work if the guy paid them so that they had something to come out of there with. You know, if a guy went to work and come out with a couple of hundred dollars at the end of three months so that he could go home proudly and say, look what I done; I've earned a couple of hundred dollars, to his family — I've actually saved a couple of hundred dollars, and he was able to say that to his family. Wouldn't that be great?

And that's the only missing component. Why? Well they don't get paid enough, for one thing. And secondly, there's some built-in costs there. One of the built-in costs is they each have to pay \$3 a day for . . . \$3 per meal, which they have to dish out. Okay? They have to dish it out.

Now \$3 a meal isn't a heck of a lot for the member from Shell-Torch, and it's probably not a lot for me either, if we're quite frank. But when somebody is earning in the vicinity of — well, take it minimum wage: 4.50 an hour, eight hours, 40 bucks a day. And you put nine of that, \$9 away for food for yourself — let alone your family in the city or someplace else — then you might be thinking about better ways of spending that \$9. They'd probably, if they were given that \$9 and buying food themselves, they'd probably spend a heck of a lot less. Well . . . or even if that \$9 was paid for and the food was supplied, they'd have that little bit more money. But what's happening, it's a disincentive because that money's going out.

In addition, of course, they're into a situation where they're doing some work, rough work. If you're out there cleaning bush, and I've cleaned bush and the member from Shell-Torch I'm sure has — I guess he has, I haven't seen him doing it, but I would suggest he has — you know, that's not so darn easy on your clothes. And you can wear out a pair of gloves and a pair of jeans pretty quickly. And if you don't have a good set of boots, it's pretty hard on your toes and on your feet.

So what happens is there's another built-in expense of clothing. And if you're working where there's a lot of people walking back and forth and driving by, and you're working with a group of other people, you don't want to be dressed just in rags, tatters. You want to be sort of . . . you want to look decent. It's very natural. So in a program like that there's this built-in expense.

(1615)

So what I would ask the members opposite to tell the Minister of Social Services is they can make that program into a pretty decent program by adding two features. One feature is make it worthwhile so when those guys go to work they've got a dollar to come back with; and secondly, when they've got that program in place, not to cut it off after 20 weeks or 30 weeks just so they can transfer over to unemployment insurance.

What's the point of teaching people how to get on unemployment insurance? What is the point? Because that's exactly what's happening in this program. You're teaching them how to get on unemployment insurance. You're teaching them how to jump out of one kettle right into another one. It's no help — it's no help. All it is is just a kick over to another puddle. That's the problem.

And that can be straightened out fairly simply, as long as you get over the idea that you have to really be tough on these guys. A lot of of these people are people that are 18, 19, maybe 20s, middle 20s, people with a lot of energy. They're are looking for their first good job. They want a good reference. They try so hard.

I had a member of the work-force come to me and he says, look, here's the problems, but I don't want you to use my name or another couple of people's names on this because I really want to get a good reference. I says, well get your reference first before we do anything. Get it first, and then we'll take it up with the government.

But a couple of little things like that would go a long way to help eliminate poverty. And it would help people's attitudes as well, help their attitudes, because they wouldn't feel like they were always being kicked around.

Mr. Speaker, I want to dwell a little more about the way the minister has handled this whole department. And over the time that I've spent in this legislature since October '86, I've had several opportunities — more than one — to see how he's handled the Department of Social Services. And the members of the press have had ample opportunity to watch what's happened as well.

And it's really interesting to go back over a period of time and see what kind of things the minister has done to help or to hinder — and I say, in most cases, hinder — the people of Saskatchewan who have been trying to get somewhere. If he really had been helping them, things wouldn't be as they are. We would not have record numbers of unemployed — that's his department — and record numbers on welfare. What's happened, instead of helping them out, he's setting policies which have just hurt the situation, a policy of high unemployment and low wages.

And that's going to reflect on every one of the members here. It's reflecting on them already, but particularly it will reflect on the members that are in the cities. And I say the member from Regina Wascana and the member from Regina South and the member from Saskatoon . . . Saskatoon Mayfair, I believe it is. Why? Because they're closest and they're the ones that have to deal directly with the people in their constituencies who end up in the situation of poverty.

I'm going to go through a few clippings, Mr. Speaker, a few clippings about what has been reported about the minister, and I'm just going to do some of these selectively about this minister. And that's why I tell you, that's why I tell you that what you've got to do is you've either got to work on the minister to change his attitude about how he deals with people, or convince the Premier to change his portfolio, because that thing is not working.

Here is an editorial from the *Star-Phoenix*, June 14, 1989, and the headline is "Losing touch with reality." And here's the opening statement. It says, and I quote, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker:

When will Social Services Minister Grant Schmidt recognize people in this province are suffering from serious poverty, (and) not merely a collective inability to budget?

Why did they say that in this particular *Star-Phoenix* editorial? Because they quoted the minister glibly saying this, that:

"The people of Saskatchewan are not living in poverty," . . .

That's what he said. That's a quote of the minister. Somehow he seems to have ignored the fact that a single person earning a minimum wage makes about \$1,600 less than the poverty line. Somehow he's missed that point altogether.

You know it's interesting, Mr. Minister, that just recently, following that by three days, following that article, there was a cartoon in the *Leader-Post* of June 17 and this cartoon has got two figures in it here. It's got one figure representing somebody that's poor, with patches all over him, and then there's another person here that's sort of dressed as a voodoo magician. And this voodoo magician is waving his hands at this person that's poor here, and he's got his eyes blinded, as our minister does, and this voodoo magician says:

Ali zama, inkadoo (or something like that) . . . There is no poverty and there is no you!

Now written in alongside this cartoon here, Mr. Speaker, is the sign advertising this magician, this magician trying to make this poor person disappear. And the sign advertises "The Amazing Grant Schmidt's Disappearing Act." He wants them to disappear, or he believes they're disappearing.

That's why I tell you that you've got to get a hold of him, you've got to get a hold of him and change his attitude on that because it reflects on every one of you, particularly the city members where these fellows live, particularly on them. You've got to get a hold of the minister and get his attitude changed. Get it changed from kicking them when they're down to giving them a helping hand. You've got to help folks along. That's the Christian attitude.

Now there's another editorial here that I want to . . . no, I'll leave this one alone. This is the one I want to get at here, Mr. Speaker, and this is from the May 10 issue of '89 of the *Star-Phoenix*. And this one relates to another area that the minister was responsible for, and it's dealing with day care. And the headline here, and the headline is "Schmidt naive," and the lead line is:

There is still an acute need for rural day care services despite what (Social Services minister) seems to think.

And his name is mentioned in there too, but I don't want to belabour the point here.

What I'm getting at, Mr. Speaker, is the minister has been known not only to kick those that are poor when they're down, but here is a situation of day care . . . a lot of situations in the province of Saskatchewan, not only in the cities where there is an increased need for day care.

There is, in my own home town, been a pressing need for a day-care licence at the technical institute, the Woodland Campus, and it took the minister opposite, the Minister of Education, I guess a year and a half, and I tried to help him out with this, but the Minister of Social Services was absolutely too stubborn. It wasn't until he . . . to provide a day-care licence at Woodland, he was unable to succeed, so I think he ought to understand what I'm talking about that we've got to get the Premier to change this fellow's portfolio.

An Hon. Member: — Now it's fixed.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well the minister says now it's been fixed.

An Hon. Member: — Well sure it has.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yes, I hope it has, and I record you on that, Mr. Minister of Education from Weyburn. The Minister of Education from Weyburn almost . . . says that the day-care situation has been fixed, and it's supposed to come into place, I understand, July 1. Is that not true — July 1? That's when he was quoted for the day that it's supposed to take place, that he's supposed to give us a licence.

Now the Minister of Social Services was begged and pleaded with . . .

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What is the hon. member's point of order?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — The point of order is this, that in the Legislative Assembly, any member or each side wishing to speak has an opportunity to do so in debate, and to speak through you. Having said that, I think that a good heckle and *bon mot*, a good word is always in order because it enlivens the debate. But the incessant, aimless, and brainless chatter from the member of Weyburn is certainly not in order, and I would ask you to bring him to order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The hon. member's point of order is well taken. Hon. members should not be interrupting the speaker on a constant basis.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that very thoughtful ruling. I appreciate it. It makes it a lot easier to go on with what I have to say.

I want to carry on, Mr. Speaker, advising the members opposite about the difficulties that is being caused to the

many people in Saskatchewan by the present Minister of Social Services, and in turn, the difficulties that are being caused politically for the members sitting opposite, by the attitudes that he displays.

See, over the last year — and I've indicated here several examples of clippings of the attitudes that the Minister of Social Services has and how his attitude seems to be very single-minded. He's using a sort of a whip or a penal approach to trying to solve the problems in the province when he should know full well that those are not solutions.

I have an article here before me of April 20, '89, and this is again from the *Star-Phoenix* and it's on the third page. And the headline reads: "Welfare recipients lash out at Schmidt." And again in this article, the lead sentence says: "Grant Schmidt has found just another way to penalize people on social assistance by making parents line up to get welfare cheques . . ." a certain recipient by the name of Betty Sammy said Wednesday.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen this thing sort of develop over a year or two years of how it continually tries to use a sort of a disciplinary approach, and in some cases a discipline is what's needed. But I say the discipline that's needed has got to be internal, because it never works if it's external. You know what happens; you know full well.

And anybody that's dealt with Social Services or dealt with the class-room or dealt with people knows that the best kind of discipline is internal discipline. And trying to do something like this, by making people line up for their cheques or by reducing their cheques just doesn't help people, doesn't help people at all. And surely the objective of the Department of Social Services should be to help people, to give them a helping hand when they're in trouble. And what is he doing? — the exact opposite.

Sometimes when the minister has been confronted on this, on his attacks on people on welfare or people on food banks or people that are perhaps of a different colour, then his answer has been rather interesting. Here's one headline which kind of illustrates his point of view, or illustrates what kind of a defence he uses. And this is his response to some people who accused him of being prejudiced against homosexuals. His reply was, the minister's reply was, as this heading says, "Rules of God dominate homosexuality decision." The man goes and hides behind his interpretation of God. Now that's a very, very dangerous thing to do as a politician. Some of the greatest, gravest crimes in the world have been created by politicians who have hidden behind the word of God, so-called, or their version of God.

The Ayatollah Khomeini used God at every step of the turn, every step he went, to justify what he did, to justify every . . . and it's simply unacceptable in this country to turn, any time you've got a losing argument, to turn and give an interpretation, your own interpretation of a view of God.

(1630)

You know, around the world there's as many views of God as there are nations, and some of the views of God

that have been used to justify wars or homicides are just completely irrational to us here in Canada. So in the same turn it's just wrong — wrong, I say — for a politician in Saskatchewan to discriminate and justify some kind of discrimination on the basis of his religious views, not if you're a representative or a minister of the Crown.

Your values come from that. I understand that, and I think we all understand that. But to justify some kind of a put-down and say that that's because a person doesn't understand God just is not right. You see, it's very difficult for somebody that would have a slightly different background — many people in this country who don't necessarily have the same Christian background that I have — to be lashed out at with using my Christian values. We're at a situation where we've got to try to learn to live together regardless of what our interpretation of God is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, enough about the minister himself. I simply want to close this portion of my address by asking the members opposite, particularly again I say, the members from the cities, the member from Regina and that growing city of Weyburn, to carry the message to the minister and ask him to just change his attitude as to how he's dealing with the people that are poor. And if he can't do that, take the message to the Premier, because that's got to change. Otherwise not only is it that the people aren't benefitting, those people that he's supposed to be serving, but also it's going to hurt you fellows in your own seats.

I now turn, Mr. Speaker, to some of the problems that people are faced with in this province, and I'm going to speak mostly about things that I heard and was advised of at a forum that my colleague and I sponsored in Prince Albert on March 4. And we did this in response to the great number of calls that we were getting in our office about what was happening in the Department of Social Services and what was happening in . . . two people who had to go to . . . who found themselves in a position out of work or found themselves in a position going to a food bank. So what we did is we invited people from various agencies, social service agencies in town, governmental and non-governmental, to attend a forum and just give us some points of view.

And at this forum we were asking them for suggestions of what could be done to help the situation and help their situation or the situation of people they were working with. And even though we did ask him for that specifically, we found that people repeatedly wanted to mention, in addition to just solutions, they wanted us to understand they still didn't believe that legislators understood the situation that they were in. They didn't believe that we could really help them until we got a real grasp of what they were faced with.

We know that we'll . . . we had the statistics before us before we started out. We knew that there were 40,000 people in Saskatchewan who were depending on the services provided by the food bank. We knew that nearly half of them, 45 per cent of these people, were children. Those are the statistics. They really can't be denied; they're there. They're there for anyone to see; they're there for anyone to question. But once you see a statistic

like that, I guess it's incumbent upon legislators like you and I to try to do something about it.

We knew another statistic, that there were 64,600 people or children in Saskatchewan — that's 25 . . . or a little over a quarter of the children in Saskatchewan — that are living in poverty at this stage. Those are rather alarming, so it was rather incumbent upon us to try to effect some ways of dealing with it.

We knew that there was an increase in the number of people that were receiving social services from 1982 to '87. It peaked in '87 and I think it's gone down slightly since then. But there was an increase by 13,665 beneficiaries, and that's people who were taking social service in Saskatchewan between 1982 and 1987. Rather a strong indictment in itself on the policies of the government which claims that what they're trying to do is improve things here.

As my colleague from Saskatoon Sutherland mentioned, there was an increase in the food bank usage in the province. I want to mention that specifically in the Prince Albert food bank, there were an average of 1,021 families per month that came for help, for assistance from the food bank. And this was up from 924 per month in 1987, and up from 689 a month in 1986.

So the trend is rather alarming. We were seeing a trend where the number of people attending the food banks, instead of sort of rising and then levelling off and perhaps falling, we saw the continual rise of people going to the food bank, a continual rise of people accessing the food bank.

It's interesting that we understand exactly how it is that people get food from the food bank. It's not just a matter of people arriving at the food bank and saying, I need some food. You just don't get food from the food bank that way. To get food there you have to go through a referral, and most of the referrals in our city came from the Indian-Metis Friendship Centre or the Salvation Army or the Native Co-ordinating Council or a couple of the churches.

So these people were first of all screened, so it's a matter of not . . . I don't want anybody to have the impression that the food bank statistics go up just because somebody happens to be walking down the street and instead of going and spending his or her money on a hamburger at a local cafe, they can walk to the food bank. It's not quite that simple.

The people that issue the references use a screening process, and they attempt to have only one food bank service per month, although at times they tell me that that's pretty difficult to do. In some cases, they kind of feel that if there's children involved, that they would like to do otherwise. But they try to employ the policy of only letting people go to the food bank once per month, although when they do visit the food bank, they do give them enough food to try to get them over till the end, until they get their next bit of income.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we knew those statistics, we knew what was happening. And so we were asking for what

people could do, what could be done, and what kind of help we could give. There's one of the suggestions, one of the things that was brought to our attention was brought to our attention by a Catholic priest from St. Mark's Church who has set up a soup kitchen on Saturdays along with the help of his social action committee, instigated by their social action committee. And there every Saturday, they simply put up a sign, and people from the community who want to come and have soup and sandwiches can come in and help them.

Now at first they thought that perhaps this would be a solution to some of the cases of poverty that they had become aware of over the last few winters, because in this particular case there were a lot of . . . in many cases the priest was telling me that people would come and knock on his door because his manse is right beside the church. So in that case it was very handy, and people knew exactly where the priest lived.

And he said he kept getting calls, and he'd get them at all times of night. People would come to him, and quite often they'd have young children, and he was put in a situation where he'd end up feeding them out of his own manse. And he thought that perhaps there was something he could do. So he organized this particular kitchen, or with the help of his parishioners, organized this kitchen.

He came to us and told us that as a result of this soup kitchen, that one thing he'd learned for sure was that the soup kitchen was not the answer. He says, it may be a temporary solution, he says, and it's helping me personally because I no longer feel that I have to turn people away, but it's not the solution.

And he says he hoped that we were able to do something that they wouldn't have to offer this soup kitchen, or have this soup kitchen every week. And he asked us to aim to create a system which would create jobs for the poor, where they would get some dignity from a job creation program. And that is what the critic for this area, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, dealt with extensively in his address.

We had a representative from the Gabriel Dumont Institute who came in, and he indicated that as far as he could see, that for those people who were in poverty and whose families had been in poverty for more than one generation, that we had to look at some kind of a different structure than we had now; that certainly the existing structure, our existing social structure and social service structure simply wasn't getting people out of the poverty cycle. And he says, we just have to admit, he says, that there are things that are not working. Throw them out the window. Or at least while we have them there, the social service net is not working, that we have to be bold and try getting some new structures in place.

Now unfortunately these things are hard to come by. And he admitted that, that it was difficult to come up with a new structure, but he says, and particularly — and he was representing to some extent the native community — he said that they're trying very hard to get a better understanding of how they can become self-governing in their own sense, self-governing for their own families, meaning that how they could become self-sustaining,

and that that's the way that they were now trying to define their system of self-government, or their concept of self-government.

We had a representative from the YWCA come in. The representative from the YWCA, the Young Women's Christian Association — a very long-standing and respected institution not only in our city but across the province, across the country, across the free world, Mr. Speaker — and they had been dealing with several problems that are associated with poverty and with violence, and there were a couple of suggestions they made.

One of the topics they dealt with was the topic of teen pregnancy and the need for some type of a system to help teen mothers not get into the welfare cycle. They themselves have a program at the YWCA, a teen mother program, where they try, and I think are quite successful, in teaching and helping young teen mothers with parenting skills.

(1645)

The thing that they feel that is missing . . . two things that they feel is missing: first of all, is their inability to help all of those that come to them because there is the cost of just running the YW, and they said if there was some way of helping just to meet the costs, they could help with a lot more; and secondly, the problem of once the teen moms leave them, where do they go.

And their suggestion was that the government has a role to play to help here, because too many of the teen mothers end up going into a poverty cycle where they end up staying at home, not having any training, or not having access to training institutions or work. And it's work really that many of them would like on a part-time basis and where their children would have access to day care. They cited the need for more day care centres.

And they thought that there was a long way that we could go, and they didn't want to see Social Services money shrinking in this regard; they wanted to see it increased because they felt that if they could just give this person a start, the person would not be a burden on society, number one; and secondly, wouldn't feel that they were a burden on society. And with this attitude they would be able to get up and out of the system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are quite a few other comments I could make on this. There may be other members that want to speak on this topic. I will just then make my final remarks on it within the next minute then, Mr. Speaker.

I started out by saying that one of the real difficult things in our province, the greatest problem that people face with respect to our Social Services net is the attitude and the methods being portrayed by the existing minister. And I stand by that, Mr. Speaker, I stand by that.

Those things have got to change and there's two ways to change it. Either the minister has got to change his attitude, or the Premier's got to change the minister, one or the other. Because we have given him enough, more than enough chance to prove that the system that he's

working on could succeed. And clearly it hasn't. It's been amply demonstrated. I used several examples today, and the member from Saskatoon University has given more than ample examples on this.

The second thing I've done, Mr. Speaker, is dealt with some of the possible solutions, some of the solutions that were mentioned. It's a topic that we could and should be spending more time on in this legislature, particularly the solution as related to the need for a full employment policy, something that the New Democrats and the members on this side advocate and stand for and will continue to fight for and we will put into place when we knock these people out of government in the next election.

Mr. Hopfner: — Mr. Speaker, it's nearing the 5 o'clock mark, and it's just too bad that the members opposite would not give people, the members on the government side, more opportunity to speak instead of stalling procedures in this legislature and filibustering, particularly on their motions.

I want to indicate that they do not want us speaking on the government side of this House because there is a good story to tell in regards to what the government . . .

An Hon. Member: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — Order, order. What is the point of order?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member is indicating that we don't give him opportunity to speak. Clearly, it's private members' day. If he wants to speak the clock till 5 o'clock and come back tonight and speak from 7 till 10, nobody can deny him that right. So if he wants to speak, he has every opportunity to do so.

The Speaker: — Order. The point of order is not well taken. It's a dispute between two members. The debate continues.

Mr. Hopfner: — Anyway, I will tell you that there is definitely a good, good story to tell in regards to our minister and the Progressive Conservative government.

I want to indicate to you first of all, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Prince Albert, in starting in his address, has not even got his story straight. In fact, he hasn't even got his member from Saskatoon University straight. He refers to him as the member from Saskatoon Sutherland. I want to correct this to the people of Saskatchewan.

I want to indicate that the member from Saskatoon University had been speaking, and I would like to indicate to him that the member from Saskatoon University was not at all accurate, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate to you that when the member from Saskatoon University had indicated that he was getting at least 80 to 120 calls a day in his riding, I want to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that over a period of a year, that would be 43,000 calls to his constituency office.

I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that it does not surprise me that the member opposite speaks this way, because basically we know that when he's quoting from his

statistics they are NDP statistics and they are not accurate statistics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that when you're looking at 43,000 calls to his office and the numbers, even on the NDP statistics, the numbers that that would generate, it does not even come up to the numbers that he's talking about. So it's just that that I'd like to point that out to the people in our province here.

I want to indicate to you, sir, that when we're talking about the member from Saskatoon University indicating that he, with these referrals, that with writing letters to the Minister of Social Services' office and he is not getting any replies, I want to put a challenge to the member from Saskatoon University. I want to challenge him to table the letters in this House, on the floor of this legislature, to table those letters that he's not getting answers to.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that he is not truthful when he's indicating that. I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Saskatoon University would get any of those answers. Any client-related letter that is sent to the Minister of Social Services' office would have a reply, Mr. Speaker, and I challenge him to put any of those letters on this table in this Assembly if that statement is not true.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — Mr. Speaker, this government has worked hard. It has worked hard to develop new programs, new incentives for people to be able to have jobs in this province.

I want to also indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that it has never been . . . And I've done so in other of my presentations in this forum, that I've indicated that on several occasions that this province has never had over a million people in the province of Saskatchewan in its entire history except under our administration, the Progressive Conservative government.

I want to say to you, sir, that these people are not . . . the newcomers that have come into Saskatchewan are not on welfare, that they are working. Our work-force has never been larger in the history of the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to say, I want to say, because it is a short period here, that when it comes to the direction of this administration and the incentive programs that we've set forth, I want to indicate to you that in housing, particularly housing, is just been a remarkable industry in the province of Saskatchewan. We've had new assistance for first-time new home buyers, Mr. Speaker.

And I just want to indicate to you that there's been hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been invested into housing in this province through just those particular types of programs. And I would just name you in my riding alone, in my riding alone, Mr. Speaker, there was \$336,000 just in the build-a-home program, for instance, you know, and that's just my riding of the Cut Knife-Lloydminster constituency.

I want to indicate to you that on a new-home buyer's program there was a 3, almost a \$400,000 input into my riding alone. These kinds of housing programs are for families. They're there to help the families, young and older. And I want to indicate to the member from Saskatoon University that when he does make statements in regards to the housing and things like this, that this information is available. It shows the hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars that are spent in the housing programs in this province from year to year to year.

And I say to you, sir, when you speak in this forum, in this legislature, speak with facts, speak with these facts that are information that are publicly able to be . . . are publicly documented. We deal with them from day to day. And, sir, when you're using these kinds of information, use the factual information, not the facts from an NDP rhetoric type of thing, fabricated facts . . . or statistics, I should say.

When our government had implemented the welfare reform program, sir, I want to indicate to you that that has put many people that were in the welfare role back into the work-force. It's given them opportunities that they thought they might not of ever have had. And I think that's important, and I think you ought to give the government credit for that by putting that kind of an incentive and that kind of a feeling back into those people that have taken advantage of that program. I believe it's in the neighbourhood of thousands of people already now back into the work-force because of that kind of programming. And I don't think you should stand in this Assembly and condemn any government for doing those kinds of things.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopfner: — I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it was the NDP that lost government in 1982 because they turned their backs on the people of the province of Saskatchewan. I want to say to you that they voted for this government because they knew that there had to have been a change in this province; they knew that there had to be some other answer to the direction that this province was being taken into.

And all the words and debate and verbatim that has taken place in this forum here today has shown and told us one thing, Mr. Speaker, has told us and indicated to us that the NDP would go back to the same old rhetoric prior to 1982. I want to say that the member is wrong by staying on that train of thought, because he knew he was wrong last time, and he knows he's going to be wrong in the future if he stays on that sort of a track.

I say to you, sir, the member from Saskatoon University, that if you're going to speak in this forum, you'd better hand out a lot more of a program incentive to the public and the people of this province before they'd ever vote for you, sir, and to get you back in the government, because there is nothing there. They don't want to return to the old rhetoric that they had to put up with prior to 1982.

Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to speak, and I move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would seek leave of the Assembly to move into Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Mr. Chairman: — Being near 5 o'clock, the committee is recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.