

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Clerk: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, I wish to inform you that following the announcement of his resignation in the House yesterday, Mr. Speaker Arnold Tusa submitted his letter of resignation dated April 11, 1991 to my office, which I now read to you as follows:

In order to accommodate the wish of the House to elect a Speaker under the new rules adopted by the Assembly today, I hereby submit my resignation as Speaker effective immediately. I wish to thank the Legislative Assembly for the privilege of serving the Assembly and the province in the Office of Speaker.

The letter is hereby tabled.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber at 10:03 a.m.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — I am commanded by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to call upon you to proceed to elect a Speaker in order that the Assembly may be properly constituted according to law.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 10:04 a.m.

Clerk: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that only one candidate has declared his intention to stand for election to the Office of Speaker pursuant to rule 21.3(1). Therefore, it is my duty to announce that Arnold Tusa, the hon. member for the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood, is declared elected as Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, I beg to express my grateful thanks and humble acknowledgement of the high honour the Assembly has been pleased to confer upon me. And while I leave the floor of this Assembly to take the Speaker's chair, I feel that I also leave all political partisan feelings in order that I may discharge with impartiality to all and to the best of my ability the various and important duties pertaining to the high office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan.

Fellow members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, I thank you for having elected me as your Speaker. The Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan has been at the leading edge of change in our country. Examples such as early radio broadcasts in our history and television coverage to allow our proceedings to be accessible to the people of the province demonstrate the will of our Assembly in the past to adapt and change.

As noted in yesterday's Rules Committee report, the election of a Speaker, who is the servant of the House, symbolizes one of parliament's earliest assertions of independence. To uphold that important principle, your Rules Committee has recommended that this House duly

elect a Speaker. You have followed the committee's recommendation. By so doing, you have taken the important step of ensuring that Speakers will be elected by members of the Legislative Assembly.

I have had the honour and pleasure of acting as your Speaker since 1986. This morning members have chosen to elect me without opposition. May I convey to you the deep appreciation I feel for your confidence.

I wish to reiterate that I will continue to carry out my duties as your servant to the best of my ability. I now accept my responsibilities as your Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor re-entered the Chamber at 10:11 a.m.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly has elected me as their Speaker, although I am but little able to fulfil the important duties thus assigned to me.

If, in the performance of those duties, I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the Assembly, whose servant I am, and who, through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their Queen and country, humbly claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all seasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable consideration.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — I am commanded by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that she freely confides in the duty and attachment of the Assembly to Her Majesty's person and government, and not doubting that their proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temper, and prudence, she grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow their constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to Her Honour upon all seasonable occasions, and that their proceedings, as well as your words and actions, will constantly receive from Her the most favourable construction.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 10:14 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition to the Assembly for several hundred residents of Saskatchewan. These petitioners are opposed to a 7 per cent tax on restaurant meals and are urging the provincial government to reverse its decision to impose the 7 per cent provincial GST (goods and services tax).

These petitioners are from a number of communities in

Saskatchewan, including Saskatoon, Balcarres, Wynyard, Pilot Butte, Mankota, Indian Head, Rosetown, Dodsland, and Wilkie.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, I too have a number of petitions that I would like to present to this House. Pursuant to rule 11, I will do so. They are several hundreds in numbers. All of them, Mr. Speaker, these petitioners, are opposed to the 7 per cent provincial GST and have expressed those sentiments to us.

The ones that I will be presenting are from areas like Carlyle, Borden, Saskatoon, Grandora, and many other locations here in Saskatchewan. On behalf of these people, Mr. Speaker, I present these petitions to the Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to join with my colleagues in presenting several hundred petitions that were given to us to present on behalf of certain business people in Saskatchewan and consumers arguing very vehemently, I might add, that the 7 per cent provincial GST will not only harm families but also business people in the province.

Therefore on behalf of these individuals from Aberdeen, Waldeck, Rosthern, Viscount, Warman, Star City, Melville, I wish, pursuant to rule 11, to present these petitions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise pursuant to rule 11 to present the petitions on behalf of several hundred people who have signed, out of great concern about the 7 per cent provincial GST, concern about its devastating effects on small business, on restaurants in particular, as is stated in this petition, on Saskatchewan families, and on the Saskatchewan economy in general.

I present these on behalf of the people who have signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, in the hope that it will have some impact on the considerations of the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition to the Assembly for several hundred residents of Saskatchewan. These petitioners are urging the government to reverse its decision to impose a 7 per cent provincial GST. These petitioners are from a number of communities including Raymore, Semans, Archerwill, Wawota, and other communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Speaker, I rise along with my colleagues to present several hundred petitions of people who are opposed to the provincial GST and have indicated by signing this petition. They are from many

different places in Saskatchewan, many of them from the city of Saskatoon which I have the honour to represent, but also including Melfort, Hague, Creighton, and Cudworth.

It's with a great deal of sorrow that I have to lay this petition on the Table, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I too have several hundred residents of Saskatchewan who have signed petitions which I would like to table today pursuant to rule 11. The petition expresses what the signers describe as a deathly concern about the possible implementation of a value added tax on restaurant food. The petitions are signed by people from many centres in Saskatchewan, including Mildren, Meadow Lake, Eston, Swift Current, and Porcupine Plain.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise pursuant to rule 11 to present several hundred petitions on behalf of people who have signed asking the government to . . . indeed to listen to the wishes of many, many people around the province and remove this provincial GST. These people are from such places as Rosetown, Moose Jaw, Plunkett, Sovereign, and Bracken.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well, pursuant to rule 11, to present a petition to the Assembly signed by several hundred petitioners, Mr. Speaker, opposing the extension of the 7 per cent provincial GST beyond that which already exists.

These petitioners represent a number of communities, Mr. Speaker. Some of them are Young, Regina, Davidson, Unity, Wakaw, Dundurn, and Borden. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to rule 11 to present petitions on behalf of many people in the province who are exercising their democratic right to have their views known to the members assembled here. These people are from Biggar, Herschel, Chaplin, Fiske, Martensville, Vanscoy, Warman, Langham, Delisle, and other communities, and all of them are very deeply concerned about the negative effects of the 7 per cent provincial GST which they now have to pay.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly for several hundred residents of Saskatchewan. These petitioners, who are members of families and businesses, are urging the government to reverse its decision to impose the 7 per cent provincial GST which has provided them with a crushing blow in this time of tough economy. These petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are from a number of communities including Coleville, Smiley, Clavet, Alsask, Kindersley, Wynyard, Outlook, and the area I represent,

Regina. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition to this Assembly representing several hundred residents of the province of Saskatchewan. These citizens are opposed to the 7 per cent provincial goods and services tax on restaurant food. The residents come from communities such as Watson, Martensville, Tisdale, Kindersley, Aberdeen, Melfort, Bruno, and Whitewood, as well as the city of Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise also pursuant to rule 11 of this Assembly. I would like to present a petition today signed by several hundred restaurant patrons from the communities of Simpson, Bruno, Eston, Harris, and Melville. And they're calling on the government and this Assembly to find a remedy to the very unfair and the harsh goods and services tax that the provincial Minister of Finance is trying to impose upon Saskatchewan people. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition from several hundred residents of the province of Saskatchewan. These petitioners are urging the government to reverse its decision to impose a 7 per cent provincial GST. These communities include: Leroy, Tisdale, Kelvington, and Fort Qu'Appelle.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise as well pursuant to rule 11, and in defence of the democratic right of the people of this province to communicate to their government by way of petition.

Mr. Speaker, in this petition I have the names of several hundred Saskatchewan residents who express their deep concern — in fact they use the phrase in the petition "deathly" — that they are deathly concerned about the devastating impact that the Saskatchewan GST will have on many, many Saskatchewan families and many, many small businesses in our province. Mr. Speaker, these petitioners come from communities like Balgonie, Meadow Lake, Glenbain, Esterhazy, Martensville, Saskatoon, Melfort, Regina, Tisdale, Hudson Bay, Harris, and others as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I join my colleagues today, pursuant to section 11, to present several hundred petition names of Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker, urging the government to reverse its decision to impose this unfair 7 per cent GST, which will create further hardship for families.

These names, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Torquay, White City, Pilot Butte, Weyburn, Waskesiu, Luseland, and Shaunavon. And, Mr. Speaker, this initiative and these hundreds of petition names are a very

important expression of democracy in Saskatchewan, and I'm proud to present on their behalf.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise also pursuant to rule 11 to present to the Assembly a petition signed by hundreds of people from across Saskatchewan who are protesting the imposition of an unfair and what they say is an unnecessary tax burden on them. The people represented in these petitions come from Biggar, Glenbain, Fiske, Prelate, Pike Lake, Mayfair, Gray, as well as Meadow Lake, and I might say from my own constituency of Regina Rosemont.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, because of the particularly harsh effect of this provincial goods and services tax on consumers and on workers in the restaurant and hospitality industry and on restaurant owners and small-business people, I am pleased to present several hundred more names in a petition opposing the provincial government's goods and services tax.

The names that I present today in the House, Mr. Speaker, these individuals live in the communities of Hodgeville, Weyburn, Humboldt, Mossbank, Canora, Shaunavon, Moose Jaw, and others, and they are united in their opposition to the provincial goods and services tax.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise pursuant to rule 11 of the rules of this legislature to present a petition on behalf of around six hundred people from throughout Saskatchewan who are opposed to this government's decision to implement the provincial goods and services tax on restaurant food. These people come from communities such as Rosetown, Paynton, Elrose, Kindersley, Outlook, and Middle Lake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too join my colleagues in rising pursuant to rule 11 to present nearly six hundred petitions signed by people who are concerned that the imposition of this harmonized provincial GST on restaurant food is going to mean the loss of many hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs across Saskatchewan. These petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are from Vonda, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Saskatoon, Martensville, Stockholm, Kerrobert, Uranium City, and Regina. It gives me some distress in having to present these petitions, but some joy in the democratic process that allows people to be heard in making their views known to the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I rise too pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition to the Assembly for several hundred residents of Saskatchewan. These petitioners are urging the government to reverse its decision to impose the 7 per cent provincial GST. And these petitioners are from a number of communities including Hardy, Unity, Shell Lake, and Theodore.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to rule 11 to present a petition to this Assembly on behalf of several hundred residents of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the regressive provincial GST, particularly as it pertains to restaurant food. These individuals represent communities as diverse as Meadow Lake, Kindersley, and Smeaton. And I also note that one individual from Lethbridge felt compelled to add his name to the signature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too have a series of petitions to present pursuant to rule no. 11. I thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. This set of petitions amounts to the order of several hundred residents. Like my colleagues who have presented the petitions before me, these too are urging the government opposite to reverse the decision to impose the 7 per cent provincial GST. The ones that I'm going to table, sir, represent names from people located in Cudworth and St. Benedict, Birch Hills, Kinistino and in Saskatoon. And I might say, Mr. Speaker, that this morning the total number of signators on these petitions that have been tabled, are in the approximate number of 13,400 Saskatchewan residents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — There will, of course, be many, many other petitions tabled in this legislature as the revolt and the opposition to what the government is doing mounts across the province. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Tuesday next I shall be moving an order of the Assembly do issue for return of the following:

For the period May 2, 1990, to the date this return was ordered: (1) a list of all advertising firms employed by each department, board, commission, Crown corporation, and agency of the Government of Saskatchewan and; (2) the total amount paid to each firm over the said period.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move:

That an order of Assembly do issue for a return showing the total amount paid by each government department, agency, and Crown corporation for the period July 11, 1989 to the date this return was ordered, to commercial airlines and travel agencies for air fares, including in each instance: (1) the names and position of those for whom the fares were authorized and; (2) the cost,

purpose and destination points for each trip.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday move an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

The total amount paid by each government department, agency, and Crown corporation for the period April 1, 1990, to the date this return was ordered, to Dome Advertising, Dome Media Buying Services, and Roberts & Poole Communications.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday move that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

For the period of June 19, 1990, to the date this return was ordered, the number of public opinion polls and market research projects ordered, performed, or commissioned, by or for each government department, agency, and Crown corporation, including in each case a brief description of the purpose of the poll or project, the total cost of the poll or project, the method by which the work was awarded, and the names of the individuals or companies who performed the work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, a number of restaurant owners and managers and employees from different communities throughout Saskatchewan, who are in the gallery today to witness the tabling of the petitions indicating opposition to the provincial goods and services tax. It clearly is their right to let their views known and their opposition to this unfair tax, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to the hon. member's words of welcome to the restaurateurs here today. I know over the past few weeks I've had a chance to meet with many of them. I know it's been a difficult situation that they've faced, but I too would want to welcome them on behalf of this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, 10 grade 8 students and teacher Peggy Warren, chaperon Diane Booth, from

Turtleford, Saskatchewan. It certainly is not in my seat but close to it, but anyway they live in that beautiful parkland, the same as I do, and I feel very close to them. I've been in their town many times. So I'll be meeting them later for pictures, and I would ask all members to welcome them to Regina and to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to other members of the Assembly, Mr. Chris Banting, who is sitting in your gallery. Mr. Banting is the secretary-treasurer of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, representing over 5,000 workers in this province.

He also happens to represent the workers of Macdonald's Consolidated of the Safeway corporation, which have just lost their jobs in Prince Albert and in the city of Saskatoon because of the decisions by the Safeway corporation to centralize its operation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know Mr. Banting, doing a fine job representing these workers, will be speaking with other members of the Assembly to see if in fact something can be done to ensure that the jobs of Saskatchewan workers are kept here in Saskatchewan. I would ask all members to welcome Mr. Banting.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Klein: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome Mr. Banting in view of the historic moment we had earlier in the Assembly. Although we tried to have another meeting — had one earlier with him — I couldn't accommodate his request for that, but I did meet on behalf of the union and the Safeway employees. And I advised Mr. Banting that he would be well advised to meet with Safeway; that's what he requested of me. That can be arranged, and he should take advantage of it. And I welcome him to the Assembly. I hope he enjoyed the proceedings this morning as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tusa: — I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce some guests I have. I have some guests from my family here this morning who have come to witness this historic occasion and to enjoy the proceedings of the House: my sister, Carol; my sister, Rose; my grandniece, Melissa; my niece, Eulalia; my sister, Ann; and last but most important my wife, Larrissa. Please welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial GST

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election today.

Mr. Speaker, my first question of course today under the new tenure in your office is directed to the honourable,

the Premier, and it pertains to the provincial GST, the 7 per cent provincial GST that his government is imposing on all the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, as we know today in the gallery again today we have people representing the restaurant industry which is going to be extremely hard hit by this 7 per cent provincial GST. And we've tabled petitions numbering 13,400 in names, which I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, is kind of the tip of the iceberg as the tax revolt against this proposal mounts.

My question therefore to the Premier is a very straightforward one. Mr. Premier, you take the position that your government likes to listen to the people — although some of us are suspect of that, especially in the fifth and last year of your administration — but if it's true that you are listening to the people, my question to you is: sir, will you please stand in your place, recognize that this tax is being opposed by small-business people, farmers, and labourers, by the consumers in the province of Saskatchewan. Stand up and recognize that you made a mistake — stand up — that you could find the money elsewhere by cutting out the waste in your government and say that you're not going to proceed with this 7 per cent GST.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I would just reiterate to the hon. member, as I've said to many members of the food and beverage industry, is that we recognize that the decision to harmonize and leave the rate at 7 per cent was a difficult one, a difficult one particularly for their industry because they were hit with two new taxes within the space of three months of each other. No question about it, Mr. Speaker — difficult.

We have tried to ameliorate the impact to the degree that one can. I am not trying to suggest that one can ameliorate it totally in the transitional period, but we are adjusting commissions, change the liquor consumption tax and if they so chose to take up that room, it could mean something in the order of three and a half million dollars in foregone revenue from the provincial treasury, that they may well choose to pick up. And of course like every other business in Saskatchewan, effective January 1, '92 they will be eligible for the input tax credit, Mr. Speaker.

As well the hon. member talks about the consultation and the advice this government has received in various consultations in this House. As we said yesterday, we are all agreed on harmonization. We all agree to expand the base to include restaurant meals, Mr. Speaker. The argument, as the hon. member opposite has made himself, is the rate, whether we should have left it at seven or had some lower rate.

But the primary recommendation in terms of the groups that we're listening to, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I believe the hon. member has . . .

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a new question and this one I again direct to the Premier. And I

might say as a preface, Mr. Speaker, I know the government has an option as to who answers, but I really ask the Premier to pay attention to this and to answer this question because it involves you in your capacity as the leader of the government.

Mr. Speaker, just a very brief preliminary is required here, and I know the rules. On or about March 26 a delegation from the town of Maple Creek, involving the mayor and some counsellors and the Chamber of Commerce and some representatives, met with members of the government in protest on this 7 per cent provincial GST idea of the government opposite. And they were shrugged off by a joke in the course of the meeting by the economic development minister.

The Maple Creek *News* reports the following in the discussion about exemptions, quote:

This prompted Economic & Trade Minister Schmidt to read a poem, using biblical names, and noting how each person named requested exemptions for their respective causes. After the government officials quit laughing, they were told by one delegate that the minister's comments were NOT funny. The delegation was discussing matters that were vitally important to the survival of many businesses in the province, including restaurants . . .

The Speaker: — I realize the hon. member wishes to lead up to his question as well as possible, but I must inform him that truly his preamble is getting much, much too long and ask him to put the question.

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall take your request simply to say, by way of a preface, that this quotation refers to the joke and the effect that this had on the delegation and the small-business people.

My question therefore, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier — and I ask him to respond — is this: Mr. Speaker, do not members of your cabinet . . . do not you realize that this is no joking matter when it comes to the survival of people who have invested their life savings, and to the workers who work in the restaurants and the businesses. That this is no joking matter for the business people in the small towns? And if you do so recognize it, I think this calls for steps to discipline the Economic Development minister, and what steps have you taken to discipline him?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, part of the basis and some of the people that we listened to when it came to the issue of if there was going to be a federal GST — which there is — that we should then take that next step of harmonization, included an expert committee that was put together last summer. That committee included, among others, representatives from the Consumers' Association of Canada, the Regina Chamber of Commerce that represents restaurateurs and others, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. And their first and foremost recommendation, Mr. Speaker,

their first and foremost recommendation was — and they used those words, first and foremost — that the Government of Saskatchewan endeavour to participate in a joint federal provincial sales tax as soon as possible, with the objective of full integration by '92 or earlier, Mr. Speaker.

(1045)

This report . . . when we made a move on one of their other recommendations, which was side by side versus tax on tax, that member, the Leader of the Opposition, encouraged us to move forward with these recommendations. And in fact when we went side by side instead of tax on tax he admonished us for not moving forward totally with their main recommendation which was full harmonization.

He backed up his finance critic, who a year before had said if there is going to be a GST, let it be one tax. We moved forward with his recommendation and the committee's recommendation. Now for his own political purposes he chooses to take a different approach, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Now before we proceed to the next question, I would like to bring to the attention of members on both sides that here's an obvious example of a debate caused by lengthy answers and questions, and I'd like to ask members on both sides of the House to ask their questions and answer them according to rule.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the Premier. And, Mr. Speaker, I think you will recognize that the Minister of Finance did not even remotely attempt to answer my answer about the attitude of the government and the ministers on this extremely important issue, not only for the people of Maple Creek, but everybody.

I guess I'm going to have to be frustrated in not getting answers, and therefore I have to have a new question for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, your Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation has budgeted some \$6 million for executive air services, some \$2 million for security services, and some other millions of dollars in other expenditures. Yet on the other hand this new 7 per cent provincial GST is going to collect approximately \$12 million from children's clothing and the new tax on reading alone.

My question to you, Mr. Premier, is this: where in the world are your government's priorities? A new provincial GST tax on reading and children's clothing, or eliminating the \$12 million on executive flying — where are the priorities? You had a choice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, as we all know, under the NDP, children's clothing as well as adults' clothing was taxed, Mr. Speaker. We took the tax off . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order! The Minister of Finance is trying to answer the question, and I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice to allow him to do that.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the NDP had the tax on clothing; we took it off clothing under \$300. And now yes, with this base broadening, the tax is back on.

But because this government does recognize that for parents with children, that they now will have an additional burden of the 7 per cent on clothing as well as on reading materials and whatever else has been expanded, Mr. Speaker, to offset that, what we did is this, Mr. Speaker. We put in place a \$200 per child family tax credit which will offset the tax, the 7 per cent tax on close to three thousand dollars' worth of purchases per year. And families with incomes of under \$24,355 will get that cheque in quarterly instalments, Mr. Speaker. And the first cheques literally, as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, should be in the mail before the end of this month, Mr. Speaker. That's how we're being fair to families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Premier, who is showing a tremendous abdication of leadership and responsibility. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this. Under this new, unpopular 7 per cent provincial GST which you and your government are imposing, you intend to collect approximately \$24 million by taxing medicines, some medicines, and electrical usage. For example, \$24 million — that, Mr. Speaker, amounts to about what the government pays by way of useless government advertising and propaganda.

Again my question to the Premier is this: where in the world is your priority? Taxing electrical bills which affects our people in business and elsewhere, and certain medicines; or cutting out the waste and the expenditures by cutting out Maxwell Smart --and all the money for paid propaganda — the American ad man and the American actor, Maxwell Smart, cutting out that expense. I say to you, Mr. Minister of Finance, and Mr. Premier, you had a choice; you had a choice to cut back and instead you taxed the people and the farmers of Saskatchewan. Shame on you. Where are your priorities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, just to repeat: the position of both sides of this House is that if there is going to be a GST, which there is, is that we should have one tax. It's been said many times in this House.

I mean June '89, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Finance critic from across the way — if we must have a federal sales tax then we should have one sales tax in this country, and not two. And then he went on to say but moments later, but if we must have two taxes, we must have a federal sales tax, then we should have one sales tax in the country, not two.

When the GST committee put out their report recommending food, restaurant meals and snack foods, they said yes. They said get on with it; do not delay. That's what we have done, Mr. Speaker.

And why we have done that and why we have left the rate at 7 per cent is to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we can shore up and revitalize the entire rural and Saskatchewan economy and every business in it, Mr. Speaker; and secondly, not let the debt and the deficit rise by \$125 million, which would be irresponsible, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've done those things, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Report of the Provincial Auditor

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Premier. Mr. Premier, I have before me the Provincial Auditor's report that was tabled yesterday. And in this report, Mr. Premier, the auditor tells the people of Saskatchewan that you had a choice. You had numerous choices, Mr. Premier, and I'll only refer to a few.

Mr. Premier, you like to tell the people of Saskatchewan that you run a very tight ship of state. But I'll tell you the Provincial Auditor tells you that your ship has sprung many leaks, many leaks.

And I refer you, Mr. Premier, to page 24 of the auditor's report. In it on page 24 the auditor says that Agdevco (Agricultural Development Corporation of Saskatchewan) lost \$534,000 in future contracts and lays the blame on shoddy operations and controls at the corporations.

Mr. Premier, I ask you: is this the kind of waste and mismanagement that you couldn't afford to cut out and that forced you to implement the 7 per cent GST tax on the people of Saskatchewan? Mr. Premier, you had a choice. You chose the wrong one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to take notice of the member's observations and bring answers back to the Chamber at a later date.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Premier, I have a new question to the Premier, and, Mr. Premier, I hope that somebody else doesn't take notice of another leak in your ship. Mr. Premier, that ship is going to be sinking, and it's sinking very fast.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Premier, I refer you to another leak in your ship, on page 31 of the auditor's report. And in that report, the Provincial Auditor says that the full-time chairman of the board of the Crown Investments Corporation, and other non-elected board members received \$394,000 in salaries and remunerations, despite the fact that you had no authority in legislation to pay those salaries.

Mr. Premier, I ask you: do you think that you didn't have a choice? I believe that you did have, and the people of the province think that you had. You could have done away with this waste. Instead, you implemented the massive 7 per cent GST. Mr. Premier, don't you believe that you had a choice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, obviously we will be taking note of the auditor's comments relative to that. I would just remind the hon. member that the practice there, relative to Crown corporations and the compensation issue that the member raises, as to my recollection the same practice has been followed for probably something like 25 years, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, we will examine that recommendation in full.

Mr. Rolfes: — Mr. Speaker, a new question. Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the ministers are taking note of these questions. Also in the auditor's report, he did say that he submitted this report last December to the government. Last December.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rolfes: — And they are taking notice of these questions.

My question is to the Premier, a new question. Mr. Premier, I find another example of your waste, your mismanagement, and your government's incompetence. On page 42 the auditor says you had another choice. He refers to the Economic Diversification and Trade department, who he says lost \$102,000 in a venture capital tax credit that it should recovered but it didn't.

Mr. Premier, tell me again, and tell the people of Saskatchewan, that you really had a choice but you didn't take the . . . you didn't do it for the people of Saskatchewan. Instead, Mr. Premier, you implemented the massive 7 per cent GST tax not only on restaurateurs, but also on families, on small businesses. Mr. Premier, you had a choice but you made the wrong one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Schmidt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister of Finance's enthusiasm in assisting my department, but I am responsible for the department and I'll answer for these particular allegations.

What we have here, Mr. Speaker, is a venture capital tax credit program that was in place and is being wound down. The problem pointed out by the auditor is particularly complicated. I am a lawyer and have some business experience but I have preferred to allow our lawyers and our accountants to try to solve this particular problem. It is not a major problem as a matter of technical nature.

If there's any money that is due to the government you have my assurance, Mr. Speaker, that we will take all measures to collect that money, but we are not at this time convinced that there is any money due to the province that is collectable under that particular heading. And we will take the matter up further with the auditor and if he has ways that we can collect any money that he thinks is collectable under the venture capital tax credit program, then we will co-operate to try and recover that money.

But at present we take the position that there is no money that could be recovered and that there's nothing improper. But yes, there is a dispute that is highly technical and we will certainly try our best to look into it further.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1100)

Government Payments to Consulting Groups

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I too have a question for the Premier. I want to turn to the *Public Accounts*, Mr. Premier, and I see that in the fiscal year 1989-90, the people of Saskatchewan paid a total of \$680,000 to companies owned by your former political assistant and principal secretary David Tkachuk for direct mail campaigns. Now why not cut out these patronage plums instead of adding a tax to the food that people eat? You had a choice; why this tax?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises the question of direct mail and the nature of communicating with the public of Saskatchewan by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some of the examples of direct mail are in my own Department of Health: the direct mail of the health statement that went to all citizens of the province, the direct mail of the statement, the direct mail on the statement regarding the scourge that is around the world these days in terms of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and what that means to the public of Saskatchewan.

All of those kinds of campaigns are done through direct mail. Direct mail is a way in which — and a very effective way too — for a government to communicate its messages, but also to communicate information and the information that the public of Saskatchewan needs and frankly deserves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — New question, Mr. Speaker. I can see with explanations like that why we're getting more and more taxes in Saskatchewan. I want to draw your attention, Mr. Premier, to the \$341,000 that you paid for polling in the same year, much of it . . . or all of it which the public was never allowed to see, and all of it or most of it which went to the PC Party's polling firm, Decima of Toronto.

Now I want to ask you, why should Saskatchewan people pay an extra 7 per cent tax on the children's clothing so that you can continue to funnel money to Allan Gregg for diamond ear-rings? You had a choice; why a tax?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, every . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. It's obvious that several people in the House have the answer. However the Deputy Premier is in the process of answering. Let us allow him to answer.

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member well knows, at least I believe he well knows — his colleagues, some of them at least know — every government in this country in times . . . in public life of what it is, and the serving of the public what it is, and the very complex society that we are in, every government in this country, governments around the world will use polling firms. There's no question that that's true in the development of public policy.

We use a particular polling firm. We've readily acknowledged that for a long time. You have used particular polling firms, not with such great success during your term in government. During the hon. members' term in government they used particular polling firms, not with particular success, I might add. But I would say to the hon. members, all governments have used polling firms in the development of public policy and those are reasonable expenditures, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Report of the Provincial Auditor

Ms. Simard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, I would like to refer you to page 96 of the auditor's report, which shows how the Department of Social Services has failed to claim \$1.9 million in cost-shared money owed it by the federal government, and as I understand, didn't even make this claim after the error was pointed out.

Now why is it that your government won't go after your friend Brian Mulroney for money he owes this province, but you will threaten to fine businesses up to 10 per cent for any of the unfair provincial GST they refuse to collect? Why, Mr. Premier? You had a choice here, Mr. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a past member of Public Accounts and so on, I am quite familiar with what public auditors' reports look like and the discussion of them. I would like to point out that as far as the Department of Social Services is concerned, I am rather pleased with the auditor's report as far as the report is concerned. I think some of the concerns that he has raised are certainly legitimate. And as far as the Department of Social Services is concerned, they will be rectified. In fact we are in the process of rectifying the four concerns that he is expressing.

I might note at the same time that the particular concern that the hon. member has raised is a concern that has apparently been going on since 1985, was only noticed

by the auditor in this report for the first time. Certainly we are going after the federal government to get this money back.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 — An Act to amend The Provincial Auditor Act

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to ask leave of the House to move first reading of a Bill now standing on the notice paper at the back of the *Votes and Proceedings*. I beg to inform the Assembly that Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor having been informed of the subject matter of the Bill recommended to the consideration of the Assembly, and I move that with leave, first reading of a Bill respecting an Act to amend the Provincial Auditor Act, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

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

Bill No. 54 — An Act respecting the Tabling of Documents

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, with leave of the Assembly I move first reading of a Bill entitled An Act respecting the Tabling of Documents Act.

Leave granted.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 52 — An Act to provide for the Division of Saskatchewan into Constituencies for the Election of Members of the Legislative Assembly

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin my remarks I did want to indicate to the House that I have forwarded a copy to the Opposition House Leader, of a proposed House amendment dealing with the matter of public hearings by the proposed commission.

The legislation said "may." We are substituting the word "shall" for the word "may." It's our proposal. It was always the intention of the commission that they would hold public hearings, but for clarification, that is being made mandatory in the legislation and a House amendment has been forwarded to the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation expressly creates a new Electoral Boundaries Commission consisting of Dr. John Archer, the Hon. Mr. Justice E.C. Malone, and the Hon. Mr. Justice R.L. Barclay, who shall be jointly charged with the duty of drawing a new constituency

map for the province.

The Bill provides that the commission shall divide the province into 64 southern and two northern constituencies. This division will embody the presumption of voter equality. In determining the southern constituencies, the commission shall determine a provincial population quotient, and once this quotient has been established, the southern constituencies to be determined shall correspond as nearly as possible to this quotient.

With respect to the two northern ridings, the commission is directed to ensure that the two northern ridings be nearly as possible the same size.

In drawing these boundaries, the commission may depart from the quotient for the southern ridings or an equal split of the northern ridings only where it deems it to be necessary in light of density or sparsity of population in a region, geographical conditions in a region, or a special community of interests among or diversity of interests among inhabitants of a particular region.

Under the provisions of this Bill the commission is empowered to hold such public hearings as it deems necessary to allow adequate public input into the creation of the new electoral boundaries. No time frames for completion of the report of the commission have been included in the Bill. The commission is directed to establish its own rules in the conduct of its business.

In the event of a vacancy on the commission, the vacancy is to be filled by the order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council following consultation with the registered opposition parties who have received more than 5 per cent of the vote.

Upon completion of its report, the commission is directed to immediately provide the report to the Speaker for debate in this Assembly. If the report is accepted, a Bill to implement the report is to be subsequently presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this government is certain that the commission, in fulfilling its mandate under the proposed legislation, will produce a constituency boundaries map in a timely and thorough fashion.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, there remains obviously a distinct possibility that when a report is tabled prior to legislation, the Supreme Court could overrule the Court of Appeal, in which case I think it would be accepted by all that legislation wouldn't be proceeded with. So I do want to clarify my remarks on that, but I also suggest that that's a matter for further discussion between the political parties at that time.

The other provision in the Bill deals specifically with what happens if a writ is dropped while the commission is sitting, and again that is self-explanatory at that time.

The intent of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, is to meet the criteria as established by the Court of Appeal, with the latter provision I mentioned about what happens if a writ is dropped. It as well is designed to have as few changes

as possible from the previous legislation so that we can get certainty as quickly as possible.

I might advise the hon. members of the Assembly that the process can be accelerated. If, for example, the commission chooses to have a fewer number of public hearings, time is saved. I'm assuming that the commission will make that judgement call as to what is an adequate number, keeping in mind the need for all to have some certainty.

I might advise it's not part of the Bill, but the process can be further accelerated, and this becomes a function after the commission of the Chief Electoral Officer, assuming new boundaries, the process can be rapidly accelerated if all parties agree to use the same poll boundaries as existed in the '89 map. I know that if there are boundary changes, there may be some, I would suggest, relatively minor problems. Those can usually be dealt with with an A and B poll. My suggestion — and it is only that — that may be a small price to pay to accelerate the process. But the time saved for the Chief Electoral Officer to draw up new boundaries is substantial. And if the parties would agree to that, assuming new boundaries — and again it's an aside, it's not in the ambit of the commission, it's not in the role of the commission to do that, but I just throw that . . . suggest that for the benefit of discussion that the opposition may wish to have.

Having said that again, I've given what the intent is, the legislation, and some possibilities. I think we can debate some of the possibilities on the timing of decision Court of Appeal, what possibilities of the type of decision . . . I'm sorry, of the Supreme Court. Rather than debate those and the options by again . . . it's certainly up to the opposition. We can do that in second reading debate if that's the case, or some other form of discussion.

I'm certainly prepared to discuss those, but how the opposition wishes to proceed on that is up to them. But I'm certainly prepared to raise the possibility of some of the various options. I leave that in the opposition's hand.

(1115)

So, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to provide for the Division of Saskatchewan into Constituencies for the Election of Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin my remarks, if I could just take a second to congratulate you on your appointment and to indicate that . . .

An Hon. Member: — Election.

Mr. Pringle: — Election, pardon me, and to indicate a high regard for your professionalism and your commitment to making the legislature function more effectively, and I wish you all the best in the Chair. So if that's in order I would like to put that on the record and thank you very much.

I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to have the opportunity to speak to this Bill before us today. And I knew in some ways a couple of years that we may be very well back here again, as we are, as several others have said we may be, because these boundaries clearly . . . The writing was on the wall about them being unconstitutional to everyone except the government.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is significant, in my judgement, for three reasons at least. And firstly, it's significant because it deals with the right, the fundamental right of all of our citizens to have the free vote in a free society. Secondly, this Bill is significant because it is clearly this government's scrambling attempt to resolve the electoral chaos that was created by this government by their arrogance, by their incompetence, and by their flagrant disregard, Mr. Speaker, for the law.

And thirdly, this Bill is significant because the history of this Bill, it typifies and illustrates that government's record — dismal record, I might say — with respect to the basic democratic rights of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is more than just talking about democracy. Actions have to show that you're really concerned and sincere and committed to democratic behaviour. That has not been the record of this government.

In many ways, Mr. Speaker, the most significant provision of the Bill before us today is section 18, the section that repeals the government's 1987 legislation which was criticized by the opposition. That's a matter of public record. It was criticized by independent outside experts from across Saskatchewan and of course last month was found unconstitutional by the courts, validating those earlier concerns from 1987, '88, '89.

As all members know, Mr. Speaker, that Bill was passed in 1987, the same year that the government opposite made several other arbitrary and, I might add, harmful decisions as they relate to Saskatchewan citizens. That was the same year that the government eliminated the school-based children's dental plan and fired several hundred dental nurses from rural Saskatchewan, I might add. 1987 was the same year that the government undermined the prescription drug program in Saskatchewan and began their . . .

An Hon. Member: — What's this got to do with boundaries?

Mr. Pringle: — Well it has to do with erosion of democracy and arrogance and mismanagement, Mr. Minister. That was the same year that they began their relentless attack on medicare, and I refer specifically to underfunding of our institutions, our hospitals, our waiting-lists, and of course cuts to home care, just to name a few.

That was the same year that this minister opposite, this very minister who at the time was minister of Finance, announced his \$800 million error in the budget deficit. I mention this because this has to do . . . honesty has to do with democracy, Mr. Speaker.

1987 was the same year that the government opposite spent more than a billion dollars behind closed cabinet doors, undemocratically, illegally. And, Mr. Speaker, they're still doing it as of last week.

It is therefore not surprising, Mr. Speaker, that the government's legislation of 1987 deliberately tried to undermine the fundamental right to vote and tried to pervert the democratic process for the political benefit only of the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, was the government guilty of arrogance or merely guilty of incompetence? In the case of its undemocratic and unconstitutional behaviour and the electoral boundaries of 1987 which have been found to be unconstitutional, I submit that the government was guilty both of arrogance and incompetence. Political arrogance and incompetence, and this too, Mr. Speaker, has continued picking up yesterday and today again where it began many years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have come to realize that this government's sense of arrogance and this government's mismanagement has been a recipe for disaster for the province of Saskatchewan. It is important to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the government opposite was repeatedly warned about the shortcomings and the questionable constitutional validity of that legislation. Unfortunately, it's clear to everyone, Mr. Speaker, that they ignored those warnings.

In 1987, at the onset, the New Democrats in the legislature criticized the legislation and questioned its validity. That's a matter of public record. The government was opposed to entertaining amendments at that time. They knew best, and that's the part I'm referring to when I talk about this government's arrogance, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time, 1987, an eminent Saskatchewan political scientist, Professor Norman Ward, also expressed grave concerns about this legislation, but again the government continued to ignore that advice.

Then in 1988 an independent Saskatchewan constitutional lawyer also warned the government. This lawyer said that this legislation is very likely unconstitutional, Mr. Speaker. Then in 1989 after the British Columbia Supreme Court decision ruled the province's electoral boundary system to be undemocratic and unconstitutional, another Saskatchewan university professor warned the government. Well all those warnings, Mr. Speaker, were ignored.

Well was that incompetence, Mr. Speaker, or was it merely arrogance? Here again I submit that it was both. It was both, a dose of both. And this pattern, Mr. Speaker, has continued in spades ever since 1987.

Mr. Speaker, in mid-1990, almost four years into its mandate, this government began to feel uneasy and insecure about these boundaries and this legislation and referred the legislation to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal.

One year before that, Mr. Speaker, one year before that in

a *Star-Phoenix* editorial the government was warned in the following way. This is April 22, 1989; in fact it was over a year before that. The *Star-Phoenix* editorial says Saskatchewan should take note. And I just quote a couple of sentences here. It says:

The British Columbia Supreme Court ruling which says that the province must redraw its electoral boundaries could have serious implications for Saskatchewan, (in bold letters) despite assurances to the contrary by both government and electoral officials.

With the B.C. ruling as a precedent it is conceivable a court could find the rules governing the boundaries violate the equality provision of the Charter of Rights.

This is a year ago and I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker, the year before the court decision or the decision to refer this matter to the court. And I quote here:

But the Devine government would be wise to carefully consider the B.C. decision and possible repercussions on Saskatchewan. Perhaps it should look at revising the boundary rules to ensure a court challenge doesn't leave the province's voters in the lurch just before election time.

An Hon. Member: — Did they listen?

Mr. Pringle: — Well did they listen, Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Moose Jaw South says? Of course they didn't listen. The *Star-Phoenix* editor wasn't blinded like the government opposite, Mr. Speaker. In the face of evidence around us, this court decision was very predictable. Everyone but the Premier and his government saw the writing on the wall regarding its decision.

Now democratic practice, Mr. Speaker, accountability and honesty, as you know, is important to Saskatchewan citizens. Saskatchewan people are very forgiving generally, but they're not forgiving when it comes to government tinkering with their democracy or when the government deceives them. I think Ross Thatcher and the Liberals found this out a number of years ago and haven't returned yet.

And I think that this is a very serious matter, but the point being that even the *Star-Phoenix*, apart from political parties and the other constitutional experts, the *Star-Phoenix* saw the writing on the wall and predicted the true outcome of that legislation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the court's decision — I think it's clear to everybody in Saskatchewan — was unequivocal and it was unanimous. It stated clearly what Saskatchewan people knew and what the government should have known: that the legislation was unfair, it was undemocratic, and unconstitutional. And, Mr. Speaker, a number of people have said to me that that has created in their minds some embarrassment to Saskatchewan on the national stage, and they feel very concerned about that.

On the day after the court decision, one Saskatchewan journalist described the government's actions in these

terms in an article headlined — which I just have here — “Rigging electoral boundaries perverts democracy.” I'll just make a quick reference to this.

Now this was the day after the court decision, Mr. Speaker, in the *Star-Phoenix*, March 7, 1991, by Dale Eisler, the political editorial for the *Star-Phoenix* and the *Leader*. And he says, I quote:

It is simply incredible that, with a government four and a half years into its mandate (well beyond the tradition in this province), we now effectively don't have a legal electoral structure on which to hold a provincial election.

The Court of Appeal delivered its message in precise language without equivocation. When the 54-page decision was handed down Wednesday afternoon, it struck like a thunderbolt from on high.

What it said was that the new boundaries were unconstitutional because they failed the basic test of democracy.

As such (and I'm just about finished here) the government has to bear the full burden of this situation. Its attempts to rig electoral boundaries must be seen for what they are — a perversion of democracy. The court has . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: --

The court has called the Devine Tories on what is a case of the goal of winning re-election justifying undermining voter equality.

I'm quoting from the *Star-Phoenix*, Mr. Speaker. Of undermining the re-election . . . undermining democracy by its own political agenda, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is a very strong public condemnation of this government. It's a condemnation that has been well earned over the past nine years, and well deserved, Mr. Speaker.

Even yesterday, despite all that rhetoric about democracy, Mr. Speaker, and the need to be democratic, as if it's some new reality in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan people have always been concerned about preserving democracy. It's a new reality to this government. But what's important is not what they say, Mr. Speaker, but what they do. And the record is quite different than what they say.

This government has now clearly broken the public trust, Mr. Speaker. It's closed, it's secretive, it's manipulative, and it's undemocratic in the extreme.

(1130)

Mr. Speaker, the conclusion that the Saskatchewan people have reached is that this government is simply so undemocratic that, as my colleague from Moose Jaw South says, they've got to go. We've got to start fresh with

a clean slate and a whole set of meaningful, democratic reforms that begin a term in sincerity and in earnest and in the best interest of Saskatchewan people. If we're not committed, Mr. Speaker, to the principles of accountability, public accountability . . . and we saw the auditor express major concerns about that yesterday.

And I understand, Mr. Speaker, I understand, as the government was talking yesterday about the need for democracy as the new reality, they've been sitting on that auditor's report for five months, which is a very scathing report card. They tried to hold that auditor's report from the public prior to their April election plans, which were derailed because the boundaries were considered unconstitutional.

But the principles of accountability, of public access and input and participation and government openness are principles long since abandoned by this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that unfortunately this 1987 legislation of these boundaries are not an isolated example. Clearly this is part of an overall pattern, that we've seen since 1982, of arrogance and undemocratic acts by this government. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that in some ways the Premier has not accepted his accountability for this. This pattern of undemocratic behaviour, of arrogance and of mismanagement, has clearly got to be laid on the shoulders of the Premier of this province. There's no doubt about that.

The government members know their record is shameful, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan are rejecting this shameful record across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there is the issue of elections, and surely one of the most central and significant features of a free and democratic society is free and democratic elections. But what has been this government's approach? — and I'd like the members opposite to think about this — it holds an election for a Speaker. As important as that is, Mr. Speaker, it holds an election for a Speaker, when the position is not even vacant and no election is required, at the tail-end of the mandate.

Yet it refuses to hold by-elections, and has for some 16 months in Kindersley. But it refuses to hold by-elections when there are four constituencies that are vacant, and 40,000 people are denied access to the democratic process, to representation, in this Assembly.

So that's an interesting paradox. They hold an election for a vacancy that doesn't exist, and then they hold four vacancies, some 40,000 people without representation in the legislature of Saskatchewan. Now that illustrates, Mr. Speaker, this PC government's warped sense of priorities when it relates to democratic practice.

Or to pick another example that's very timely — certainly today with the tabling of some 13 or 14 thousand petition names, again an expression of will from people across Saskatchewan — if the government's really concerned about referendums and how the people feel, this is a clear expression of will by these petitions presented this morning.

But this is another example where the government's unfair tax increases and secret spending decisions, which are cooked up behind closed cabinet doors and not brought before the public or before this legislature, Mr. Speaker. And this has been done again and again and again by this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I was pleased to see the . . . to get the minister's commitment and paper today regarding his intention to amend the Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I thank him for that. Because leaving out the requirement for public hearings was a major shortcoming in this Bill and one that I quite frankly am surprised, with the process being so botched up before, that something so fundamental as leaving out the requirement for public hearings would have been missed.

But again, that isn't surprising when one considers the pattern of not being interested in how the public feels about . . . so it's an indication of being out of touch and that the public hearing portion wasn't a priority for the government. Having said that, I do thank the minister for his commitment to co-operate with us in ensuring that that be amended accordingly.

The record of arrogance and incompetence by this government, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, that is an example, that is a record that there are many examples to. And I won't go on to make any more of them, but I would like to turn briefly to the Bill itself, and I'll just make a few comments here because I have another colleague who would like to speak to this.

But, Mr. Speaker, the reason for this Bill is clearly that the government has to, in some way, deal with the mess that they have created. This is clearly a desperate attempt to scramble, to get itself out of the mess of its own making. This Bill does not reflect the long-term plan, it does not reflect a long-term process that Saskatchewan people could agree to in terms of future electoral boundaries.

So it's an *ad hoc* Bill, Mr. Speaker, and there are many, many examples of that in the Bill, and I have a number of questions in committee that I'll want clarifications to. So that's all I'll say about it at this point, but it's an *ad hoc* . . . it's *ad hoc* legislation at best.

Secondly, it is noteworthy, Mr. Speaker, to note that the government has not included the Clerk of the Assembly on the commission, as one of the commissioners named in the Bill. And this is violating a long-standing tradition in the province of Saskatchewan, as they did last time. And, Mr. Speaker, in this case it would have been ideal, and an excellent opportunity for the government to show a sense of good faith and fairness, in that the Clerk would have allowed for some gender parity on the commission, which is noticeably absent from the commission, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I'm not going to talk too much about the commission itself, but the process, Mr. Speaker, the process is similar to a process that has been used by this government in other examples. For example, their process, or lack of a process, that is a process of consultation and input from the opposition, was very

evident when they did not seek our opinion or our concurrence on the appointment of the servants of this Assembly such as the Ombudsman or the Chief Commissioner or the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker, unilateral decisions.

And again if they are serious about working together — which they keep saying they are — then you would think that they would involve us in decisions regarding who should be on commissions or who should be servants of the Assembly. But you would think that they would have learned, Mr. Speaker.

The new commission, I'm not going to criticize the individuals, but I am very concerned that the Clerk is not on that commission. I'm very concerned that all of those commissioners are from Regina, and I'm very concerned that they are all men. That just does not make any sense, Mr. Speaker, without making reference to any of the commissioners themselves.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the glaring omission was there was no requirement for public hearings, something that I just can't even comprehend how that was missed.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us today symbolizes both the best and the worst of political democracy. In so far as it addresses the fundamental issue of the right to vote and the right of every citizen to have his or her vote count, it deals with one of the most important rights of our democratic society. But since it is a resolve of a painful and shameful history, Mr. Speaker, a record of arrogance and a record of incompetence, it also has exposed a political party that will go to any lengths, Mr. Speaker, to gain partisan political advantage. That has typified the PC Party approach in this whole electoral process, Mr. Speaker. And that's the view across Saskatchewan. Has the government's record, Mr. Speaker, been one of arrogance or one of incompetence? I think it is clear to Saskatchewan people that they're rejecting this government, Mr. Speaker, because they know that they're guilty of both. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few remarks to express my serious reservations about Bill 52.

I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that after the mess the government has made of the job of redrawing the constituency boundaries of this province, one would expect that they would genuinely try this time to do the job correctly. In my judgement the plan the government has for redoing the job as embodied in Bill 52 is just not good enough.

Bill 52, Mr. Speaker, does finally rectify the problem of very inequitable constituency boundaries in this province that we saw in the last constituency boundaries legislation that was forced through this Assembly by the government, and was happily rejected by the Court of Appeal as violating the principle of one person, one vote. So at least that problem has now been corrected and in effect we do have the principle of one person, one vote,

embodied in this Bill.

But what I would like to emphasize this morning is that both the process for the establishment of commissioners and the rules that they are asked to follow while drawing up boundaries is sorely inadequate. I believe that we need to have a group of commissioners who are as apolitical as we can possibly achieve, and this Bill does not accomplish that objective.

First of all the names of the commissioners are being put forward by the government side of the Assembly without having consulted with the official opposition or other opposition parties not represented in the legislature. That is just not good enough.

At the very minimum we need a process whereby all political parties in the province are consulted with respect to acceptable names for boundary commissioners prior to a piece of legislation such as Bill 52 being introduced into the Assembly.

With all due respect to the integrity of Mr. Justice Barclay and Mr. Justice Malone, they clearly have, prior to their appointments as justices, a history of political partisanship. I am not suggesting that they are unacceptable commissioners, but the process by which the government of the day puts their names forward to the legislature without consultation with all political parties in this province is unacceptable to me.

I challenge the Minister of Justice to change the process now while there is still time to do it. I'm sure all-party agreement on the names of commissioners could readily be achieved within a matter of a few days.

In the future, Mr. Speaker, the practice I would prefer to see is that we reach all-party agreement on formal positions in our society that are seen to be politically neutral, and then have those persons or their designates fill the positions on the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Just by way of example, Mr. Speaker, I would like to see the Clerk of the Legislature or her designate on the boundaries commission. The Clerk has a tradition of political neutrality, enjoys the confidence of all parties in the province, and is knowledgeable about the province.

Another desirable option would be to have the Chief Justice of Saskatchewan or his designate on the commission. I would far prefer to have the Chief Justice appointing a commissioner than having the provincial cabinet hand-picking the names of the boundary commissioners.

I am sick of gerrymandering, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that only by achieving a system in which we are seen to have totally apolitical boundary commissioners will we resolve the problem.

In addition to the process for appointing commissioners, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment about one other very important rule that is missing from the Bill that I believe should be there to restore faith in the process we are setting in motion here today.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there needs to be a provision in this Bill that specifically states that the boundaries commission must have no regard whatsoever for poll by poll voting practices in previous elections, and is to order its staff to show the same disregard of previous election results. Given the history of what happened in this province during the years of the Liberal government, and again under the current government in 1989, such a provision is very important.

In the case of those two previous governments, Mr. Speaker, ridings were drawn with a view to making them as politically desirable as possible for incumbent MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) and as undesirable as possible for the opposition party the government most feared. And that's exactly, Mr. Speaker, what the government did in their last boundaries legislation in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1145)

Mr. Prebble: — And what we need, Mr. Speaker, is a provision in legislation that prevents that being done again.

Mr. Speaker, the specific reference to the need for commissioners and staff and advisors of the commission to totally disregard voting results in polls is imperative to the work of this and all future electoral boundaries commissions being impartial and politically neutral.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied with Bill No. 52. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

The Assembly adjourned at 11:47 a.m.