

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Executive Council's purchase of polling: (1) what are the extent of monies allotted to or spent on public opinion surveys prior to this session; (2) to which firms were the surveys awarded; (3) during what periods was this work conducted; (4) what were the questions asked; (5) what were the results of these surveys.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a former member of the legislature. Sitting behind the rail on the government side today is former member from Kinistino, Don Cody, who was a MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Kinistino for a number of years and former member of Executive Council.

Just a couple of words, Mr. Speaker, with respect to Don. I'm sure all members will recall his days in the legislature and his hard work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. What's been brought to my attention over the years is how Don really did stand out in a crowd when he was a member of this Assembly, canary yellow sports jackets, navy blue, lime green, I guess were the order of the day. I'd like all members to welcome Don.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and to the Assembly in the west gallery, Mrs. Eileen Clunie. Eileen was from Tisdale and is now from Saskatoon. But Eileen was my official agent in the last election and I wish everyone to give her a welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roy: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the legislature again Mr. Don Cody who was the elected representative for Kinistino for many, many years. And certainly I'd just like to add to my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote that Don was a very colourful individual during those years as a representative and worked very hard and diligently for the people of the Kinistino constituency.

We thank him for those years of dedication and I'd like to welcome him here to the Assembly today and to Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like

the Assembly to welcome through you in your Speaker's gallery, Mr. Myron Luczka and two gentlemen who are accompanying him today. Myron ran for the Saskatchewan Liberal Party in the last election and is very knowledgeable and works in the labour movement.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, seated in your gallery, Svitlana Melnyk, who is a visiting school principal from Odessa in Ukraine. She's accompanied by George Zevebecky and Vera Labach, employees of Sask Ed.

Svitlana was a participant in the Canada-Ukraine conference in 1991, which was attended as well by our Myron Kowalsky and the former Minister of Education. I'd like you to welcome Svitlana Melnyk to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very much a pleasure for me, Mr. Speaker, to echo the words of the minister and welcome Svitlana Melnyk from Odessa in Ukraine. I had the distinct pleasure of being in Ukraine at the same time at this conference, and it was during that time that the coup occurred. We were all getting off a train in Lviv when we found out that the coup had happened. We were kind of glad that Boris Yeltsin stepped on the tank a day later.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Ukrainian.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman . . . or Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome the visitors here from the Ukraine. The Odessa is where my grandfather lived, in a city called Chortiza. He moved from there to here in 1904 and I was there in Kiev last February, and in September again. And I just want to welcome these people from the Ukraine to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Closure of Elbow School

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the next few days, teachers, administrators, directors, and all those with a stake in our province's education system will be celebrating Education Week. Unfortunately the NDP (New Democratic Party) government is giving these people very little reason to celebrate.

My question is to the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, your government's haphazard preoccupation with the closure of rural schools has caused a great deal of anxiety and concern among teachers, parents, and directors. Short of your government's strong . . . or standard political rhetoric, Madam Minister, can you tell this Assembly what your plan is for the K to 12 schools in this province? Can you tell us how many schools will

eventually close?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the configuration of the school system in rural Saskatchewan is within the jurisdiction of the local school boards. I would like to point out that the teachers and the stakeholders in the education field in this province have done a tremendous job and continue to do a very creative job in dealing with the funding cut-backs that have been brought about by the state of the finances that we were left with following your administration.

I would also like to add that there were less schools closed in this year than there were the last . . . even with funding cut-backs than there were in the last year of your administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, indeed education . . . schools are in the purview of the local school boards, but when the department through the minister cuts funding to them, she is having a direct impact and it's time she took some leadership on this issue. She's hiding behind the debt again, but as my colleague showed in his speech to the throne, the debt was mainly accumulated by the previous NDP government.

Madam Minister, school closures are already taking place. In fact your government's divide-and-conquer policy is pitting community against community, and local boards against regional boards. Your throne speech spoke of bringing people together, but your actions are tearing them apart. There are many examples of this; Whitewood is one.

But I wish to draw your attention to the closure of the school at Elbow. Your budget cuts have forced the regional board to make difficult decisions and the local board says it is a wrong decision, Madam Minister. The people of Elbow are asking just how much the government will save as a result of closing the Elbow School, and can you provide that information, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows and as I've stated previously, the configuration of the school system is within the jurisdiction of the local school divisions in the province. I do not have any jurisdiction over that.

The school division board members are elected by the people in the school division that they are closest to to serve their interests. And they address that responsibility very well in most cases. And I expect that in the Outlook School Division where Elbow is located, that the same kind of common sense will prevail.

I would like to point out that the interest on the debt that we were left with after your administration last year was twice — \$760 million — twice the amount that we allocated to school boards K to 12 in this province last year. If they hadn't run up that debt, we wouldn't be asking the education community to make these

adjustments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — There's one point there, Madam Minister, in which I will agree with you: no responsibility and no leadership in education from you and the department.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, the people of Elbow are wondering if your actions will indeed save money. In fact they think it will cost more money. The manager of the Elbow Credit Union said, and I'll quote: it's not a fiscally responsible way of spending money.

Elbow parents are wondering if you know what you're doing, Madam Minister. During the last session you committed to this Assembly that the cost of repairing the roof and relocating students from Elbow and Strongfield to Loreburn would be 438,000. On August 6 in this House you repeatedly stated that it would be no more than 438,000.

Madam Minister, would you care to stand in this Assembly and reconfirm that statement? Would you do that now please?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, last year we allocated certain sums for maintenance only; we did no new capital construction last year. I don't recall the specific numbers that the member is referring to but I will undertake to provide them.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you clearly stated — it's recorded in *Hansard* — that that move would cost no more than \$438,000. And yet over the Christmas period somehow that number jumped. That cost is now in the range of \$1.4 million, not 438. You stated in this House that those . . . there was no capital projects; that would only be emergency funding.

That's a big difference — 1.4 million to \$438,000. If the difference in cost is due to facility expenditures, I'm wondering if you can square with your department's ban on capital expenditures.

Madam Minister, your department is allowing for emergency expenditures only. How can the difference in costs for construction for this facility . . . What's the reason?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of capital construction, prior to the last election the previous administration went out and made promises for over \$51 million worth of new construction which they never budgeted for. We were forced to put those projects on hold because the money was not available. And what we did was allocate funds for what we called, and what the school divisions are calling, emergency funding only — roof repairs, portable, relocatable additions where there's a space problem — and that is what we budgeted for last year.

We wouldn't be in this kind of a crunch, and the school divisions wouldn't be forced to make these kind of decisions, if we weren't left with the aftermath of waste and mismanagement of your administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — But, Madam Minister, you said there was going to be no capital construction in your statements last summer when we were sitting in this House, and how do you square that away with what is actually going on there? Just emergency funding is what you said — roofs and leaks. In some areas of this province we have schools with fire orders against them. Why are those not emergencies? You don't wish to fund them.

Madam Minister, you're being inconsistent and your inconsistencies are very transparent and they're causing a great deal of concern around this province. The local board in Elbow is having to take the regional board to court because of your actions, pitting community against community. And that's the new NDP slogan.

Madam Minister, did you attempt to resolve this problem before forcing it into the courts? Or did you just wash your hands of the whole situation like your government has done with agriculture, like it's about to do with health? Did you do anything to try and avoid this confrontation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure what the hon. member refers to as a confrontation. But we made amendments last year to The Education Act to clarify the process that school divisions and local school boards should . . . the procedures that they should follow in the event that they feel a need to make a change in the configuration of their local school system. We tried to clear that for them and clarify that for them, at their request, after consultation with school boards and stakeholders in the education system.

Again I say that we wouldn't be faced, and local school divisions wouldn't be faced, with these kind of challenges if we hadn't been left to deal with the fiscal problems that their administration left us with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you may not call going to court a confrontation, but in a lot of people's mind that is indeed exactly what it is.

Madam Minister, the move from 438,000 to 1.4 million, when did that occur and why?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman . . . Mr. Speaker, we do not, the department, the province does not interfere in the affairs of school divisions where they have a local board which is duly elected to manage the affairs within that school division. When there is a funding request that comes forward in areas where the province pays a portion of it, then we are restricted to our interest in that portion. Otherwise the local school division makes their own decisions in that respect. They're accountable

to their ratepayers, and that's the way it should be. If you had been accountable to the people that voted for you, they wouldn't be faced with the problems they have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, are you saying you had no involvement in \$1.4 million that went to this school?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we had a limited amount of money available for maintenance and emergency repairs which includes such things as where there are occupational health and safety warnings, where there is a crowding or an enrolment problem. We have done our best to work with school divisions to meet their requests in those emergency situations.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I just want to ask the members to please come to order. Come to order!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, since you won't answer where the 1.4 million came from or what it was spent on, can every school board expect to receive the same kind of consideration if they have overcrowding in their schools?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, we do not — being the province, the Department of Education — we do not become involved with affairs that properly belong within the jurisdiction of the properly elected school division board that's elected by the local ratepayers to manage their affairs. That board is accountable to the people that elect them. The largest portion of the money that they spend comes from the ratepayers in the local school division, and that's who they should be accountable to. We do not interfere in those decisions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I agree again with the minister that there is no responsibility there on her part because there's no leadership on her part. Is she telling this House today that if a school board puts in a B-1 request for capital funding to do with closing, that she will honour that request?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, last year, after the budget, when the amount that was available for emergency repairs was announced, and we used an established list that was established by the facilities branch in the department during your administration, and we worked with those school boards, gave them the approval early in May. They went ahead, based upon consultations within their own school divisions, to use the money and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Will the member from Morse please come to order.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We worked throughout the balance of the year with the local school divisions who identified that kind of situation in their facilities to address the problems in the most efficient possible way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, did you make this decision in May of last year to fund the move of the Elbow and Strongfield schools to Loreburn for \$1.4 million?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the original approvals for the global amount that would be available was made in the spring of the year. Throughout the balance of that year we worked with local school divisions to refine those requests and to make sure that not only the provincial portion of the financial contribution but their own, the local contribution to the project, was done in the most rational way, always at the request of the local school division which represents the people it serves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, you're disclaiming any responsibility for this issue but I'm sure that you're acquainted with The Education Act. Section 10.01 gives you or your appointment the power to inquire into and report on appeals, complaints, differences, or disagreements arising from the decision of a board of education. The Act allows you to make a decision on that matter, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, we are not advocating intervention but support. Rather than having boards and communities fighting against each other in court, could you not have helped resolve the problems you created? How many more legal suits must be launched before you do something?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, this is not a situation that has been created by the province, the department, or the ministry of Education. This is a dispute at the local level which the Act is very clear, sets out jurisdictions for each of the players at the local level — the local school board, the division board, what their responsibilities are, what the processes are.

We would not invoke the section that the member refers to, section 10.01, unless it was a matter of very dire emergency. Because we believe in the process that local ratepayers are responsible to elect their representatives to the division board, and that the decision should be left at that level. We would not interfere.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, educators, directors, parents, can all be proud that they are celebrating Education Week. Madam Minister, the people of Saskatchewan will be recognizing something else during this week and that's your government's complete betrayal of education. Let me read you a statement which your Premier made during the election:

Increased education spending is a priority of the NDP. All I can say is we simply must find the funds, the money.

He also said in the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, and I quote:

Don't let any government tell you they don't have enough funds for education. The money is there.

Madam Minister, with your statements about the lack of money, are you now contradicting your Premier? Are you saying your government does not have enough funds for education?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, education remains — always has been — and remains a very high priority for this government. We recognize that the education and training of our young people and retraining of adults in the current atmosphere is a very important priority.

We have been left with a huge deficit. We have to deal with that. The education community has been very supportive and understanding in the way that they have dealt with the funding problems that they have been faced with as a result of trying to deal with, come to grips with, the deficit situation.

The people in the education community recognize that they are part of Saskatchewan. They want to make a contribution to the recovery of this province from the disastrous 10 years of your administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Union Preference in Crown Corporation Contracts

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of addressing the Canadian Federation of Labour in Saskatoon. We had an open and frank discussion about government policies and where the official opposition stands on these issues.

However, Mr. Speaker, I and many in the business community were greatly disturbed by the pronouncement from the Premier following that same meeting, that his NDP government will be favouring union ... (inaudible) ... contractors in Crown corporation contracts.

My question, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Is your true belief that trade unions are the best qualified, as you said in the Saskatoon paper, or is it your belief that trade unions should get the work because they supported you in the last election? Isn't that the real reason, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Premier said to the conference was what I said to the conference and what we have been saying about the issue, and that is that both business and labour have raised with us the question of union-only contracting.

What we said is that we are reviewing the matter and will, as soon as can be done, be consulting with both communities and making a decision. We merely stated the matter was under consideration. No policy pronouncement was made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, I can understand that the Premier wouldn't want to answer when you have directly contradicted one another over the past weekend.

I'll direct my question again to the Premier. I'm sure that even you would agree that this is another fracturing of your promises of open tendering because you will close participation in non-union workers and favour those that support your political agenda. That's not open tendering, Mr. Premier; that's political patronage.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us if this is part of the pay-off to the unions in addition to the pro-union legislation that is about to be introduced in this Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we seek to promote in this province is not a pay-off to anyone, nor to take sides with anyone. What we seek to promote in the area of contracting, as in other areas, is a partnership — a partnership between business and labour which will result in a successful and efficient economy.

I know that the members opposite sought to promote . . . sought to divide and conquer when they were in office. That's not the approach of this government. We seek to have business and labour working together as partners, and we think that's what they want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can guarantee you that you will hear more from the opposition and from the business community on this matter in the days to come. Rest assured of that, Mr. Minister, because your remarks will generate that kind of response.

Nationalization of Energy and Mines

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a further question on the Canadian Federation of Labour's meeting to the Minister of Energy and Mines. Mr. Minister, I attended a meeting where you told 30 or 40 delegates that your government is considering the nationalization of the industries under your purview. In your comments you implied that your government did not have the capacity to borrow enough money to accomplish a re-nationalization, but that it would look to do so if feasible.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Mr. Minister, I ask you as the Minister of Energy and Mines, is it your government's long-term plan to spend billions of borrowed money just like you did in the '60s to buy mines that are already in existence? Is that your plan, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — No, that's not the plan.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that you've clarified that, Mr. Minister, because you left me and many of the people at that gathering with the distinct impression that you would, if you had the capacity, that your government would make the same mistakes in the 1990s that you did in the 1960s, and that your premier made in the 1960s.

I just wonder now, Mr. Speaker, if the labour people you spoke to, Mr. Minister, on the weekend will be equally pleased with the remark you just made. I doubt it.

Mr. Minister, the investment and business communities are already sitting on pins and needles because of your government's incompetence. And the musings about buying billions of dollars of existing private businesses do not help, Mr. Minister.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, to bolster your confidence, Mr. Minister, would you do that? Would you bolster the confidence of the business community by making a commitment in this Assembly that your government will not repeat the disastrous nationalization policies of the 1960s? Will you make that commitment firmly here today once and for all, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I thank the hon. member for his supplementary question. Apparently he was listening out of a different ear than I was at the Canadian Federation of Labour conference on the weekend. I did not have the same interpretation as the hon. member. And I can assure the hon. member that this government will not repeat any kind of policies that will mean disaster on the people of the province of Saskatchewan as did the policies of the Devine government over the past 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I want to remind the Minister of Energy and Mines that he is not to refer to people by their personal names but by their constituency.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day. March 8 is recognized around the world as a day to commemorate women's struggles and to celebrate women's achievements. International Women's Day recognizes women's historic struggles for better pay and decent working conditions. It is also the day we pay tribute to women's efforts to attain political equality and social justice. Finally, International Women's Day is a time for us to honour the countless women around the world who have dedicated their time and energy to working for peace.

This year's theme for International Women's Day is "Women's rights are human rights." This means that women's concerns must be addressed in the overall context of human rights. We need to recognize that gender inequality and sex discrimination practices violate women's human rights. Governments around the

world need to be more vigilant in safeguarding women's fundamental rights. This is particularly true in the area of violence against women.

Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day is also an appropriate time to turn our attention to the rights of women workers. 1991 census data released last week revealed that 60 per cent of Canadian women are in the paid labour force. Almost 80 per cent of women below the ages of 25 to 44 are working for wages. More than two-thirds of all women with children at home are in the paid labour force.

The changing face of the labour market has important policy implications for governments. We need to take action on the issue of employment equity for women and other disadvantaged groups. We need to re-evaluate and renew our commitment to child care services. We need to find ways to put an end to the all too pervasive problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.

And I wish to say this also, Mr. Speaker: while women in the paid labour force need support and recognition, so do women whose full-time work is unpaid. It is essential that we as a society respect and value the contribution of women whose primary work is in the home and in the community.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that on International Women's Day we commit ourselves to work together for the economic, social, and political equality of women. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in the opposition, we would like to take this opportunity also to recognize the International Women's Day.

This day is recognized as a time to celebrate the achievement and struggles of women throughout the world. We support women's rights to live with dignity, and we ask all people to take the time to recognize International Women's Day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Do you wish to speak to this? Does the member from Saskatoon Greystone have leave to make a comment?

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this day, some 80 years ago, 15,000 women marched through the streets of New York city demanding safe working conditions, equal pay, the right for women to vote, and decent working hours. Since that march occurred, progress has been made in many, many areas. We now have women leading political parties, being appointed to the bench, employed in almost every other occupation once regarded only as a male domain.

But there is still work to do. Women still earn 66 per cent of men's wages; women are still predominant in what is

called the pink arena — service industry-related jobs; child care spaces are inadequate. Home-makers' work is still unrecognized and pensions for them do not yet exist.

We need to encourage women to get involved at whatever level they can in order to bring about changes to the system so that a different perspective can be heard.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 8 — An Act to amend The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act and to make Related Amendments to Certain Other Acts

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an Act to amend The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 9 — An Act to amend The Emergency Planning Act

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that An Act to amend The Emergency Planning Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 10 — An Act to Protect Municipal Property Taxpayers in the Province of Saskatchewan through the repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that first reading of a Bill to Protect Municipal Property Taxpayers in the Province of Saskatchewan through the repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this Bill deals with taxation and the ability to raise money. I wonder whether or not, Mr. Speaker, you would rule on whether or not this would be considered to be a money Bill.

The Speaker: — Order. Since we have no knowledge of whether it . . . what is in the Bill, I think what we should do is let the Bill proceed, and I will have a look at it and come back with a ruling later on.

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

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I wonder if I might ask leave of the House to make a brief statement pertaining to the Canadian women's curling championships.

Leave granted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Canadian Women's Curling Champions

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the members of the House. Mr. Speaker, as everybody here knows, Saskatchewan is honoured to be the home of the 1993 Scott Tournament of Hearts Canadian women's curling champions, and a marvellous job too.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — For the first time since 1980, Saskatchewan competed in the tournament's final — too long a wait, Mr. Speaker — and then went on to win the title of Team Canada. Skip, Sandra Peterson, and her team, are to be commended for the hard work and dedication that led to this achievement.

On behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, and I'm sure the members of this House, I'd like to extend the warmest congratulations to Sandra Peterson, and her Callie rink mates, Jan Betker, Joan McCusker, Marcia Gudereit, and the team's fifth, Anita Ford. We wish Team Canada, now Team Canada, continued success as they advance to the world championships in Geneva, Switzerland later this month. And we hope at some appropriate time to honour their great achievement before the legislature with all the members present.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members will join me in extending congratulations and best wishes for that world championship title to Sandra and Team Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Premier, the opposition joins with you wholeheartedly in extending congratulations to Sandra and her team. I think many, many of us who have the slightest interest at all in sports and certainly some of us who are not, simply because we had a Saskatchewan representative out there doing her best for Saskatchewan, we were all glued to the TV set, I'm sure, and hanging on every shot. And it'll take a long time for me, Mr. Speaker, to forget that last shot that Sandra made when she not only took that rock out but had enough of a roll to win. And she is on a roll. And I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that she will become and her team will become the world champions.

But before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, I would also say, let's give three cheers for Randy Woytowich that he will also be able to duplicate the feat that Sandra and her gang did.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to two written questions, no. 78 and 79, I hereby table the answers.

The Speaker: — Questions 78 and 79 are tabled.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to motions for returns (not debatable), items number 1 to 101, I would request they be converted to motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Motions for return (debatable).

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Stanger, seconded by Mr. Renaud, and the amendment thereto moved by Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Assembly would recall the discussion that we had on Friday and where the discussion left off in the debate. I was outlining at that time the progress of the previous administration and its track record directly and related to farm income.

Today I want to carry on that discussion but in another vein and that is the connection the previous administration has with the present federal government, and the goals and aspirations that government has for agriculture and the problems it leaves for the province of Saskatchewan.

Clearly and unequivocally, for the past few years under the leadership of Brian Mulroney the federal government has undertaken the area of deregulation in the area of agriculture — without question the deregulation of the transportation area, deregulation of marketing, and deregulation of regulatory review in terms of grading and that for agriculture.

(1445)

These have serious impacts for agriculture in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Let's first talk about the deregulation of transportation. As the argument has taken place under the guise of the federal government who continue to push for a change in method of payment, and as my colleagues clearly outlined in a debate earlier on that took place — an emergency debate that took place in this House — outlined the federal government's objective of making a change to the method of payment. Clearly and unequivocally, to make a change like this to the grain transportation system will lead to a deregulated system that similarly exists in the state of Montana. Clearly that is not the face of rural Saskatchewan that we want.

And I raise the same question that I asked on Friday, in terms of the previous administration that ruled here in the province for 10 years, where was the previous administration during this debate of transportation? Where were they? Did they say anything? Did they raise an eye or did they criticize the federal government?

An Hon. Member: — Not a word.

Mr. Whitmore: — Not a word. Not a word.

An Hon. Member: — Silent support.

Mr. Whitmore: — Silent support to a change of deregulation of the transportation system that would see literally the demise of rural Saskatchewan — literally — and money taken out of farmers' hands. And they argue about short-term things and politics, where we tried to take a view that it's much more long term that will protect rural Saskatchewan.

The other question of deregulation that has popped up recently by the federal government, that of deregulating of grain standards or standards of grading in Canada. This has dramatic, serious implication for Canada and the province of Saskatchewan.

One of the things that we have prided ourselves on, Mr. Speaker, in terms of being an exporter of high-quality grain, is our standards. We are the only country in the world that can ship a boatload of grain to China or wherever, they will pay for it before shipment. They know the quality of that grain and they do it on a single sample of that ship — a single sample, Mr. Speaker. They know the integrity of our system.

An Hon. Member: — As opposed to every carload from the U.S. (United States).

Mr. Whitmore: — As my member has said, as opposed to every carload . . . every shipload that is sent from United States. From United States, they will not even pay a nickel until they have unloaded the ship entirely, to make sure what the grade standard is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the federal government brought down a regulatory review committee review on the side of the grain commission. They've talked about changes, changes I feel, Mr. Speaker, that will attack our high standards, that will loosen the rules, that we will not be in the same competitive position that we have been to sell our grains into the world market.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that is dangerous. And I ask the question again, as we know this has been going on for several years: where was the previous provincial administration? Where were they? Silent support. Silent support.

Now the latest attack in terms of deregulation, Mr. Speaker, has come in the area of the Canadian Wheat Board. The new Minister of Agriculture, who is now also the minister of state responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, has stated barley will go off the board. That is a serious mistake, Mr. Speaker, a serious mistake.

An Hon. Member: — And who'd he appoint to the Wheat Board?

Mr. Whitmore: — That's right. As the member from Kinistino has outlined, who has he appointed? Mr. Ken Beswick, the federal government has appointed. Clearly one who is in charge — the fox is in charge of the chicken coop.

An attack like that, Mr. Speaker, to the Canadian Wheat

Board, I think clearly shows what the federal government thinks of the Canadian Wheat Board. A vehicle that has worked effectively well for many, many years for producers in Saskatchewan, throughout western Canada, that has provided protection. And there are areas that the Canadian Wheat Board can enter into, I think, that can do greater benefits to the producers of Saskatchewan.

The Australian Wheat Board is looking at examples now where they're involved in value added industry. Why can't the Canadian Wheat Board do that? That goes against the philosophy of the federal government and the old provincial one.

As my next question is going to be again as I've said before: where have the previous administration been when we discussed these issues? Silent support. Velcro lips.

Mr. Speaker, this short-sighted view of agriculture, this attempt to deregulate the system in terms of agriculture simply for the corporate interest or agribusiness without the input of farmers, without the input of producers, spells serious trouble for agriculture in Saskatchewan.

And we as a government must react to that. We must develop policies by which we can deal with that change that is coming, how we can stop that change, and how we best can develop agriculture policies for our producers in Saskatchewan.

And we've undertaken that, as I outlined in the early part of my speech on Friday, Mr. Speaker, past — the question of a vision document going out and talking to the producers of Saskatchewan. Talking about these various issues. Talking about developing a partnership — not a competition amongst producers, but working together in terms of a partnership.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — We need to build an agriculture that is strong, based on cooperation between a federal and provincial government, and producers out there that will have the kind of agriculture and rural economy that we need for a healthy and stable rural Saskatchewan for the year 2000.

In the question of the role of government, we see a role for government in terms of bringing those people together; brightening policies of cooperation together where we're not fighting; where we need to discuss how we can strengthen the institutions that are out there that have benefited producers. The question of the Canadian Wheat Board, how we can strengthen its role to protect producers. How we can strengthen the grain commission.

And I think too we also have to look to the livestock industry because it is under attack under deregulation in terms of the grading standards. And I'm afraid when they talk about . . . the federal government talks about privatization of the grading industry in the area of livestock, that we will see an industry that will simply react to grade standards that exist south of the border or some place else to meet a certain market. And I'm afraid

then that producers, particularly livestock producers, cannot react to that kind of market. We must have stability in the livestock market because again, particularly in the hog industry, we have a product that other people want.

And how other countries are trying to attack that is to attack our standards and bring us down to their level. And I say shame. That is not the way we should do it.

We need also to look at the area of cooperation and cooperative development. The major cooperatives in this country in terms of the province, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Federated Co-ops, and the Credit Union Central system play a very active role in the economy of Saskatchewan.

And we want to look at opportunities by which we can work with those people to build the kind of Saskatchewan we want. We don't need to be bringing in the Peter Pocklington of the world. We don't need to be doing these kind of things. Our strength has always come from within. And that's the kind of things that we need to be looking at. And that's what we're talking about.

The cooperative system is talking about the area of land tenure. They feel it is important, as we do. And the question of working and the question of community-based land trusts — long term.

We cannot continue to refinance and refinance land within generations. This senseless activity has to end. So we have to be looking at things like this.

The other area too where we can build on strengths is the question of adding value to product produced within Saskatchewan. There are opportunities there in terms of labour employment, opportunities of using those products that we produce, adding value to it, and selling it to other countries.

We are seeing examples of that through the Saskatchewan Research Council, through the POS (protein/oil/starch) pilot plant in Saskatoon where they are looking at new benefits from crops that we presently grow and how we can use those things in industrial base. Something nobody else is doing. The question of herbs and spices and items like this — another activity that we can use that can provide benefit for Saskatchewan people. These are the kinds of things that we're talking about.

But as I've said earlier, these cannot be done within a scope of a short-term view. You cannot be thinking and continue to say this is next year country.

Farmers are now talking themselves, how can I make sure that people are living within this community 5 years or 10 years down the road? Older farmers are worried that they will not have people to take over their farms.

Younger people after 10 years of federal and provincial government rule that has simply decimated agriculture are now saying, we can't continue farming. This is not the kind of direction we want to go.

We look at the question of farm income support and looking at the kind of program that will be ideal for the province of Saskatchewan. And that's why we're going out and talking to farmers in terms of a farm support committee. Consultation.

The other day the member from Kindersley talked about the wonders of GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) '91, how wonderful it was. I know that the member from Kindersley comes from an area where a great deal of durum is grown. And I wonder how many producers were happy with the overpayment in durum, how many received bills instead of cheques in '91 GRIP.

That is the problem with GRIP '91, '92. We need to develop the program that is ideal for Saskatchewan, not ideal for the federal government's treasuries and not ideal for political expediency to get a government elected in one year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, as I've outlined, this is the kind of direction and vision that exists within the throne speech, as I talked about earlier, the documents in terms of economic development, the areas of wellness and health care, and, as I have talked about, the area of agriculture — the journey of renewal. To continue this journey of renewal, to build the kind of Saskatchewan we need, the kind of strength we need to rebuild it, to put the heart and soul that we need for a strong Saskatchewan to enter the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I was greatly honoured to vote in favour of this throne speech in the motion, but at the same time I will not be able to vote for the amendment that was proposed by the members opposite. I think they do a disservice to the province of Saskatchewan. They left the ashes behind. They fail to recognize what has gone on. In fact some of them take the attitude 10 years have not gone on, as one has outlined, that the debt was due to a government before 1982. And I feel that is truly a neglect of responsibility for what has taken place.

We as a government must look forward. We must look forward into the future, Mr. Speaker, to have the kind of direction that will get us over the short term and, I think, to a very positive, bright, long term for the people of Saskatchewan.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I am pleased and honoured to stand in my place as the representative for the Saltcoats constituency and enter the debate against the amendment and in support of the throne speech, because it vows to re-invent Saskatchewan's future. It charts the path of renewal and rebuilding, where before there was only rubble and moving vans.

I want to congratulate the mover of the throne speech, the

member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster, and the seconder, the member from Kelsey-Tisdale, both fine colleagues and good friends. Great speeches. Of course that's no surprise, because political movements like ours attract people of intelligence and vision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — I would like to compliment Mr. Speaker for his firm hand guiding an often unruly Assembly. I want to thank you for your guidance and leadership over the past year. I look forward to more of the same, and you can count on my cooperation during this session, Mr. Speaker.

At this point, on behalf of the Saltcoats constituents, I would like to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of three former members of this Assembly — Mr. Perkins, Mr. Broten, and Mr. Thurston — who have recently passed away. I wish to extend my condolences to the families of these distinguished members.

Also, on behalf of my constituents who spent many hours in front of their TV sets last week watching the Scott Tournament of Hearts, I would like to extend congratulations to the Sandra Peterson rink representing Saskatchewan on winning the tournament and going on to represent Canada at the world championships.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the people of the Saltcoats constituency and I want to spend a few minutes explaining why I feel this way. The key trait that I wish to illustrate is their keen sense of community. Constituents in Saltcoats are rallying around the spirit of community and cooperation.

Last session during members' statements, I reported to this Assembly that Rita Swanson of Churchbridge received national recognition because she was successful in having her design chosen by the Royal Canadian Mint for the new Canadian one-dollar coin. Rita had the honour of participating in the official unveiling ceremonies of the new coin design on Parliament Hill in Ottawa last summer.

As a result of Rita's accomplishment, she was honoured by her community at a reception held in recognition of her artistic ability and national achievement.

As a follow-up to those events, the community of Churchbridge is now planning to construct two large replicas of the coin design and erect them along the western and eastern entries to the town of Churchbridge. Not only will this project feature Churchbridge as the home of Rita Swanson, designer of the new dollar coin, but will serve as a tourist attraction to anyone travelling the Yellowhead highway. This is just another example of people working together to promote and strengthen their local community.

I would further like to congratulate a number of my constituents for their contribution to their communities, to their people, and by extension to our province and

ultimately to our country. These constituents have been recognized by their communities and will be receiving a Canada 125 medal very shortly. These constituents to whom I refer are Irene Adams, from Langenburg; Nyla Beckton from Esterhazy; Jeannine Howie from Tantallon; Dr. James Jowsey from Saltcoats; Elvid Lewis from Bangor; Judy Talbot from Dubuc; Wilfred Thies from Churchbridge; and Wilf Walker from Esterhazy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — Once again, congratulations and thank you for your unselfish contributions.

On a larger scale, another example of the spirit of community and cooperation and caring and sharing is the annual Kinsmen Telemiracle which once again this year was successful in reaching its goal, raising over \$2.1 million.

Many of my constituents are involved in this organization, and there are dozens more who volunteer their time and efforts in making Telemiracle the success that it is.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't mention an incident involving a young hockey player from Stockholm, Reg Banga. You may or you may not know that Reg Banga was injured in an unfortunate hockey accident in January of this year and has been paralysed from the neck down and is presently in the Regina Plains Hospital.

Just to show you the kind of community spirit that's out there in my constituency and indeed across the province, local communities in the constituency have organized benefit hockey games and events around the benefit fund for Reg Banga. At a hockey game in Esterhazy, a regular league game, over \$11,000 was raised. The Yorkton media became involved and shared the benefits of a media-MLA game, and each family received over \$800. The other recipient was the Todd Hubbs family.

The credit union system is becoming involved across the province. And the local credit unions of Stockholm and Esterhazy have initiated a jersey . . . a hockey jersey auction which will be held in Esterhazy on April 17 starting at 12 o'clock, all benefits going to the Reg Banga trust fund. And I would invite all members and indeed any interested people from across Saskatchewan to attend. I would like to wish Reg well in his recovery and wish him all the best in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a prairie boy. Like many prairie boys, I've always been fascinated by the sea. In fact the records are full of Saskatchewan natives who have served with distinction in our navy and merchant marine in peace and in wartime.

People will say it is because both the Prairies and the ocean offer unlimited horizons. And I suppose that's true. Even though we are thousands of miles away in any direction from an ocean, we're still fascinated and we still sometimes tend to think in nautical terms.

When I was thinking of getting into politics I looked at our

province and thought of it in terms of a ship on a voyage, an easy comparison to make when we realize that Saskatchewan was at sea from 1982 to 1991. More than that, Mr. Speaker, we had been lost at sea with a captain who had no sea legs and no compass.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — And the more the previous captain said we were on course, the more lost we became. But the captain's friends didn't care where we were going because they were getting fat eating the ship's supplies and having a high old time.

The ship wandered aimlessly on a sea of rolling waves comprised of debt, waste, greed, and mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1980s Saskatchewan was the economic Titanic of Canada. Fortunately in October of 1991, the old captain went down by himself — without the ship. Even more fortunately a new captain with a new crew took over, just before our ship hit the iceberg. This story is on the way to having a happy ending, unlike the original.

Mr. Speaker, it is because I believed in the long-term value of programs introduced by the CCF (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation)-NDP in Saskatchewan and because I was enthusiastic in support of the leadership qualities of our current leader, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, that I got involved and decided to run for office.

It was a perilous voyage our Premier was setting off on. He knew it; we all knew it. But I wanted to be part of the crew that would turn this ship around and put it on course and bring it into port. And for my Conservative friends over there, I remind them that port is French for "left."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — And, Mr. Speaker, this ship no longer lists to the right.

Mr. Speaker, I am committed to this journey of renewal. I've signed up for the duration because renewal of our province depends on its successful completion.

I want to talk about some of the signs that indicate that our journey is on course. Mr. Speaker, as long as I can remember, NDP-CCF governments have made it a point to keep their promises. It could be because our first leader, J.S. Woodsworth, and our first provincial premier, Tommy, were both ministers of the church. They had some pretty strong ideas about the consequences of breaking promises. So they said what they were going to do and then they did it.

I remember Allan Blakeney travelling the province in the 1970s with a list of promises made and promises kept. As he said, you might not like what we do, but you're not going to be surprised at what we do.

As for those members of the opposition with no memory, I will just say that I and most other people in Saskatchewan remember their promise to eliminate the sales tax. In my

dictionary, eliminate does not mean the same thing as harmonize. And that promise was just one of the barrel full they made and broke.

This government made some election promises too, and we're keeping them. I say that categorically and bluntly. I say it particularly to the member from Saskatoon Greystone who imagined her own list of promises, then became quite self-righteous in talking about how they've been broken. She is good at that, I've noticed — being self-righteous.

What were some of those promises? What did we say that we would do if elected? Here's one: we said we would open the books and provide an independent audit of the province's financial affairs, to cut government waste and mismanagement. Did we keep that promise? You bet we did.

Nearly all the recommendations of the Gass Commission are already in place and the things we've done to eliminate waste and mismanagement are as long as all our arms put together. We talked about the big things we were doing last session — the big-buck savings. But we're saving pennies too.

The Public Service Commission has reorganized itself from five divisions to four at a substantial savings. It has also reduced its mailing expenses by \$50,000. The Public Service Commission reduced its systems budget by 167,000 over the past three years.

The Saskatchewan Communications Network phone lines at its University of Regina classroom were switched to government centrex service at a savings of a thousand dollars per year. And SCN's (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation) maintenance contract for its satellite receiver equipment was renegotiated for a savings of \$5,600 a year.

We're still a far cry from 15 billion, Mr. Speaker. But as I said earlier, we're sailing in the right direction.

Here are just a couple more, and there are dozens I could choose from. The Department of Rural Development eliminated one associate deputy position at a cost of \$100,000. The Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat cancelled its news-clipping service, saving \$800 per month. Do the pennies and the dollars will take care of the deficit, as the old saying goes.

Campaign promises, Mr. Speaker. We promised to repeal the harmonized sales tax, and that was done. Establish a new, community-based health care system — the wellness model. We promised that. And the member from Rosthern knows we delivered on that one.

Mr. Speaker, we promised and we delivered. In some cases we are in the process of delivering, as with the *Partnership for Renewal*. It was promised and it's under way. Tommy knew, J.S. Woodsworth and Allan Blakeney knew, and we know that it's easier to keep track of what you've said if you tell the truth, and that has been done.

(1515)

And now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention to agriculture. Agriculture continues to be one of the greatest concerns in the Saltcoats riding. Over the last number of years, we've seen a drastic offloading in agriculture by the federal government onto the backs of producers and the provincial governments.

My colleague from Shaunavon dealt with those issues very thoroughly during his address, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to remind the members opposite that things like the demise of the western grain stabilization program; the disappearance of the two-price system for wheat; the removal of oats from the Canadian Wheat Board; the move to completely eliminate barley from the Canadian Wheat Board; the withdrawal of funding for spot loss hail and crop insurance; and the undermining of the Crow benefits, are all just some of the offloading measures for which their eastern kissing cousins are responsible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — In my day-to-day discussions with farmers across the constituency, they continually point out to me the immediate cash shortage they are facing. They also realize the inadequacies of the support programs presently in place and the need for the federal government to fulfil its promise to deliver a third line of defence in order to provide cash flow for spring seeding.

There's a lot of worry and stress in the farm community, Mr. Speaker, and we, as a province, need the help of the federal government to get the farmers past this critical point.

Our government has taken the initiative to look at the second-line support programs in order to come up with programs which would provide adequate help and be designed to meet the real needs of farmers. We have appointed a new Farm Support Review Committee to guide us in developing new safety nets.

This committee has grass roots farmer representation which is what farmers were asking for, unlike the previous GRIP review committee. The committee began its work in January and is asking for public input over the next few months. Individual farmers may present briefs or ideas to this committee at meetings across the province, or they may submit them to the committee in writing.

In 1992 our government enacted the farm land leaseback program to assist farm families in financial difficulties. Many financial institutions have been active in providing six-year leasebacks, and we are encouraging the federal government to direct the Farm Credit Corporation to cooperate and comply with our program.

Saskatchewan has again this year taken a leadership role in agriculture by circulating a consultation paper called "Forging Partnerships in Agriculture" whereby we seek to engage farmers and farm organizations in positive dialogue leading to a new agricultural strategy which would hopefully achieve a commercially viable, self-sufficient, and sustainable agriculture industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to explain the

proposed changes to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, an issue that has come to light in the last three or four weeks because of a questionable and disgusting mailing which took place about the same time. I understand that this may be a difficult and controversial subject for some people across this province, including those in my constituency of Saltcoats. Hopefully I can provide some clarification as to the intent of the legislation.

It is most disturbing to find that some individuals are more interested in promoting anger than in providing any factual information. The promotion of discrimination, rather than understanding and tolerance, is most unfortunate — most unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. I would like to alleviate some of the concerns which have been raised by individuals trying to interpret and read more into this proposed legislation than actually exists.

Contrary to misleading statements, the proposed amendments will provide the same legal protection from unfair and often vicious discrimination for all Saskatchewan residents. Currently those of different sexual orientation do not have legal recourse if they are fired, evicted from public housing, or if they are denied public services, i.e., taxis, restaurants, university classes.

Unfortunately this type of discrimination does exist and therefore necessitates the proposed legislation. This legislation will also make the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code more consistent with those of other provinces. It is interesting to note that Quebec included this particular type of legislation in 1977. Other provinces which have also included sexual orientation in their codes are Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and the Yukon Territory.

This inclusion has not had the dire and negative consequences that some people like to claim. As well, the federal government has introduced legislation to include sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Code.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to point out that there have not been any proposals to change the traditional definition of marriage and family status. In other words, the changes will not legalize same-sex marriages or provide spousal benefits for homosexuals.

Neither will the proposed amendment have an impact on adoption rights and procedures. Adoptions are governed by The Adoption Act and will remain the discretion of a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, with the input . . . or with input from the birth parents considered. The best interest of the child is of prime importance in every case.

Mr. Speaker, the government does not wish to weaken the family, family values, or traditional family lifestyles in any way. Nor will this amendment dictate our school curriculum which will still remain in the hands of local school boards in conjunction with the Department of Education. In fact, there is a proposed amendment to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code to include family status to prevent discrimination against persons with children, an amendment to prevent discrimination against those in receipt of public assistance.

I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan, that this proposed legislation is not providing any special or preferential treatment to homosexuals, or promoting a particular lifestyle. It is designed to allow our fellow human beings to live without fear of discrimination and allow everyone to be treated with consideration, respect, and equality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — I was glad to see the members from Cut Knife-Lloydminster and Qu'Appelle-Lumsden speak in favour of the human rights legislation. I was sorry that the member from Saskatoon Greystone did not take advantage of her opportunity to support it.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other initiatives that our government has undertaken in the areas of education, economic development and job creation, health care, social justice, and the environment, just to name a few. Time does not allow me to deal adequately with all of these very important issues. However my colleagues have and will discuss these topics thoroughly in their address in reply.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am committed to this journey of renewal. I knew when I boarded the ship in October of 1991 that the journey would take at least four years. I also knew there would be turbulence along the way. Mr. Speaker, I don't profess to be a sea pilot or a navigator or a swimmer, but I think that I'm a heck of an oarsman and a heck of a crew member. And I, along with my colleagues, with the help of all the Saskatchewan people, will do all that we possibly can to get this ship on even keel and to its proper destination. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had almost fallen asleep in the last speech so I'll have to apologize for getting up so slowly. This NDP one-term government bent on rural revenge now attempts damage control, Mr. Speaker, on their own supporters who are feeling betrayed and deceived.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all, before I go into the rest of the throne speech and what it does or doesn't do, acknowledge the good people from the Maple Creek constituency. I'm very happy to be their representative, and as I've told many of them, while we may not be on the side of the government we might actually do more good for the people in our constituency and for the province by attempting to keep the government from doing too many things that will totally destroy our province.

I had the privilege, Mr. Speaker, of hearing the Lieutenant Governor deliver the address in her usual dignified and professional manner and way, and immediately set out to hear from my constituents. I went from this Chamber on February 25 directly to the community of Hazlet, a fine, small community in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

And it was quite a thing to have about 120 people gather on a Thursday evening in a small town like Hazlet to talk about the throne speech and what the government is

doing and planning to do. Mr. Speaker, I want the government to know that the people who showed up in Hazlet are a good reflection of all of the people of the Maple Creek constituency and I suspect of all of the people in Saskatchewan. They are very hard-working people, they are very sincere and caring people, and, Mr. Speaker, they are a worried people, a very, very worried and concerned people.

They want to know what the government has planned and they want to know what was in the throne speech. And I had to tell them, Mr. Speaker, the truth — not much, not much at all, no good news, an empty document, probably the emptiest throne speech that has been presented in this House in the last 10 or 11 years.

We see in this throne speech the threat of more tax increases and that worries my people, Mr. Speaker. We see references to some kind of review of the energy industry and that sends shivers down the backs of many of the people employed in that industry in my constituency. We see no reference, we see no hope, no help for agriculture or rural Saskatchewan, probably the most important industry, as many of the members of the government themselves have stood in their places and said during this very same reply to the throne speech. They have announced their recognition in their own ways from their back benches that rural Saskatchewan and agriculture are important and yet we have a throne speech that gives nothing whatsoever in recognition to that most important industry. A sad day for our province, Mr. Speaker. And quite frankly, that angers my people, Mr. Speaker.

You take the Maple Creek constituency, it lives and it dies on two industries: agriculture and energy. And the one industry is threatened with some kind of a review while the other is ignored in the throne speech. Is it any wonder that my people ask me what the government thinks it's up to? Mr. Speaker, I say it is a sad day when in this legislature a Speech from the Throne dismisses agriculture and dismisses rural Saskatchewan.

There are many, many people who believe — and I am one of them, Mr. Speaker — who believe that this government has a secret agenda to destroy rural Saskatchewan. I believe that when you look at the range of government policies and see how they all result in the destruction of rural communities, it cannot be an accident. There is in fact a plan, but it is a secret plan.

The education policy of this government is one of forcing communities to fight over who will keep their schools and even who will keep their school boards.

(1530)

And as we are going into the final days of this throne speech, we can refer back to the other speeches that have been delivered and the question periods and those things that have happened over the past few days, and already my colleagues, especially the colleague from Souris-Cannington, has pointed out some of the devastation that has been going on in the educational system in our province over the past year.

And it's disheartening to hear the Minister of Education not take the problems seriously, or pretend that she has no responsibility, or say in fact that she has no control and no jurisdiction. I sort of wondered at one point earlier today, Mr. Speaker, why we didn't just put a fence post in her seat and pay that \$80,000.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I just want to remind the member that those kinds of comments are not tolerated in the Legislative Assembly. And I would just ask him to refrain from making those kinds of comparisons.

Mr. Goohsen: — Please accept my apologies to the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that I get carried away sometimes when I deal with the problems of rural Saskatchewan.

The health policy, Mr. Speaker. Another area that we have to talk about is one of forcing communities to fight over who will keep their hospitals and their doctors. The very same plan that is being used in education, also being used in the health care system. "Divide and conquer" was used earlier today. That's one way of looking at it.

But the reality, Mr. Speaker, in the health area is that we are now going to have a shift of responsibility in terms of the government being able to lay blame for the problems in rural Saskatchewan on the newly formed boards. While in fact the minister, when things go wrong, will duck responsibility saying, it's your fault, you did it to one another.

And I don't think that's what the people of Saskatchewan really want. And I believe in the days to come that they will be voicing their very strong opinions against the process.

And as we discover those protests we will be happy, Mr. Speaker, to deliver them to the minister in charge of Health.

The highways policy used to force communities to fight over who will keep their roads. Because here again we are saying we have so many dollars, we're putting it out into the rural community, and you choose which roads you want to build or not build.

And again if it goes right, the minister will accept for himself the credit. But if things go wrong, he'll say, it's your fault, you made the choices.

The entire policy of the government is directed to deceiving rural Saskatchewan and dividing it against itself. And then the Premier will stand up and say, well they couldn't cooperate, so they died. Don't blame me.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier had better realize that the rural people well understand where the blame must go.

I speak to reeves and councillors on a very regular basis, Mr. Speaker. At least a couple of times a week I visit with one or two of them. It has been a very important part of my life to be involved with the people in local government. And I have very much enjoyed the experience, as well as having attained a considerable education in how people have to work together in order to achieve good for

communities big and small.

And they all see the pattern developing, Mr. Speaker. Environmental regulations and taxes threatened that will nail rural communities and drive farmers off of the land, to almost a zero benefit for the environment itself.

Things like forcing people to bury fuel tanks in the place of all those that are already there that are not worn out. Things like forcing people to dig them up and perhaps put them above ground, when only a few years ago we were told very emphatically that we had to bury these tanks because they were a fire hazard.

Insurance companies and regulators within the industry told us loud and clear that if we didn't bury our fuel tanks, we were a risk to the communities. And so many individuals, as many companies that provide the services of supplying fuel, went to the trouble and the cost and the expense to bury fuel tanks. Lots of farmers buried them on their farms, thinking that if it's a danger in towns or their communities, it must also be a danger to them.

And they took that advice seriously and they buried those tanks. Now of course the regulations are being re-examined and we are being told that the folks who supply fuel in our small towns must now go to the expense of changing their fuel tanks. And my farmer friends are saying, are we next?

And of course they have to be concerned. Why wouldn't they be? What you do to our city friends and to our town folks most likely will be demanded of all of the people in society, and farmers will probably be next. And who can afford this kind of change, Mr. Speaker? I leave that question to the government.

Utility rates increase. That cannot be supported by small centres already in economic crisis. Political welfare, designed not to help but hurt rural Saskatchewan, all in the name of trying to win a federal seat or two for the NDP. Purely a political move, Mr. Speaker.

And the promise to force rural communities and rural municipalities out of existence, whether they like it or not. Mr. Speaker, there has been a knee-jerk response in some quarters favouring chopping down rural municipalities and hospital boards, for example. And even the business community has become a part of that response, hearing this NDP government's claim that if we get rid of local government, we can save some money.

But, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Premier to show me one, just one rural municipality that runs a deficit budget. It does not happen. I challenge the Premier to lay before the people his studies and information that shows that there will be any savings at all. There will be none.

The vast majority of local governments in rural Saskatchewan is done on a volunteer basis, Mr. Speaker, and the cost of governing is very little. Those governments receive the smallest of all remunerations of any administrative group in our society. Nothing close to what they sacrifice by leaving their homes and their businesses on the days that they work for their friends and their neighbours.

But the government is creating a smokescreen, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the more local that the government is, the more accountable it is and the less likely there will be tax increases and spending programs that cannot be properly supported. It's the old story, Mr. Speaker, of being able to keep an eye on those things that are within your vision range.

In a small community everybody knows everybody else, and when government gets too big and too far away from home, not only can't anybody watch it, but half the time nobody can understand it. And that's when the programs start to get injected that take away the accountability and also lend themselves towards costing more money for more bureaucracy and more communications and all of those things that go with it.

Having government as close to the people as possible has always resulted in more efficient and more effective government, Mr. Speaker, not the other way around. So I invite those who have bought into the NDP argument about getting rid of local governments, I invite them to challenge the Premier to prove his case, document where the savings will come from — show me. He cannot do it because there are no meaningful savings to be had in that policy. We need reductions in provincial spending and that is the only way we will deal with the challenges we face.

I can tell you as a former reeve that local governments have been taking it on the chin with cut-backs from both the previous government and now with this government. But this government has not reduced its own spending by one penny. It has increased its spending by a billion dollars. The municipalities, both rural and urban, have reduced spending but the provincial government has dramatically increased spending.

So do not get into this fairy tale that you will save some money by eliminating local governments. Mr. Speaker, how can anyone in Saskatchewan believe a single word contained in this throne speech, much less a single word that the members echo at local meetings and at public forums? Today they tell you one thing and tomorrow they'll tell you something totally different. And when asked about it, they conveniently can't remember.

After the course of deception the NDP have taken for the Saskatchewan people, or should I say the ride that the people have been taken on, who can believe a word that falls from their lips. Mr. Speaker, the NDP members across the floor have no regard or respect for the Saskatchewan people. They gave the Saskatchewan people no credit whatsoever. Do they really think, do they really believe that the people have forgotten the promises that they made previous to forming government? Do they honestly believe that they have the mandate to inflict such pain on the people of our province?

This NDP government has inflicted more pain on the people of Saskatchewan in 16 months than any government in the history of this province, than any government, any government ever in the history of Saskatchewan.

Last session the Saskatchewan people survived the NDP tax grab, the largest tax grab in the history of this province. I should probably qualify that statement, Mr. Speaker. What I should have said is Saskatchewan people who are still in the province survived the NDP tax grab.

A lot of people have moved or are considering leaving. They are most likely waiting for the NDP's budget to see if they can afford to stay in Saskatchewan for another year. But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that in some of our small towns, and I've talked to some of these people, if they could possibly sell their house or get rid of some of their assets, it would only be minutes before they'd be in their vehicles and gone. Alberta may not be that attractive these days according to some reports, but our people say that compared to what we have, it looks pretty good.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has already increased every tax imaginable. Last session they even created a new one — a 10 per cent deficit reduction surtax. They have increased every utility rate. In most cases they have increased these rates twice, SaskTel being the only exception.

Mr. Speaker, I am only referring to those increases which have been made public. I wonder how many of the people of Saskatchewan realized that the NDP increased the fees associated with getting married and divorced, last year. I didn't, quite honestly, know that until just the other day.

Mr. Speaker, all of the increases would not have been so hard for the public to swallow if the NDP hadn't said, no more taxes. And enough is enough, they boasted. Prior to the election: no more taxes, enough is enough. What a great way to go out politicking.

Well, Mr. Speaker, an election in the United States recently echoed the words, read my lips. The man who said that was remembered for a whole four years. The people didn't forget. They didn't get snowed over, did they? They remembered exactly what was said, and the people of Saskatchewan will remember: no more taxes, enough is enough. In four years time they're going to say, read our lips; you're a one-term government and you're out.

(1545)

In NDP land, no more taxes translates into increased rates twice in one year. For example, the gas and the power rates. Twice in one year, Mr. Speaker. And this NDP government that unilaterally opposed harmonization because Saskatchewan people were taxed out hasn't stopped its endless tax and rate increases since forming government. Saskatchewan people are prepared for yet another round come budget day.

They are prepared because the members across the way have not stopped talking about additional tax increases since their last gouge at the people's pocketbooks. Someone asked me at the Hazlet meeting: what do you expect in the budget? I said, well I'm not privy to know what's in the budget but if I were you I'd hang on to my pocketbook.

And that certainly seems to be the trend that the government is trying to establish in the minds of the people with the gloom and doom messages that they are sending out throughout the provinces.

And then they wonder why business interests from outside the province hasn't come clamouring at our door asking for ways to get settled into Saskatchewan. The highest taxes anywhere and more to come. No hope, only despair, and yet they're amazed that business doesn't come flocking to our door.

An Hon. Member: — No leadership.

Mr. Goohsen: — My colleague echoed it right. No leadership. That's what it's really all about.

But as I said, prior to forming government the members across the way said, no more taxes.

Then they straight out opposed harmonization. They opposed 7 cents on the price of a hamburger, Mr. Speaker. They claimed it would destroy Saskatchewan. They claimed that the people who lost their jobs . . . that businesses would close, that the people would lose their jobs and that the children would go hungry.

Mr. Speaker, they chose to eliminate harmonization, a selective tax, a tax that affected high income earners. They chose to eliminate 7 cents on the price of a hamburger and chose to increase the price for heating a home twice — twice in one year, Mr. Speaker.

And let's talk about that for a minute. Let's talk about a low income family, Mr. Speaker. How often, Mr. Speaker, do low income families treat themselves to a restaurant dinner? Not often, Mr. Speaker. It's not often that they can afford to do so.

Now, Mr. Speaker, how often do low income families pay their heating bills? Every month, Mr. Speaker. How often do they pay their phone bill? Every month, Mr. Speaker. How often do they pay their natural gas bill? Well if they still want to heat their home next month, it had better be paid this month.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our low income people in Saskatchewan now do not have a choice. They cannot choose as to whether or not they will heat their homes. They can't. They live in Saskatchewan. They have to heat their homes because we have this phenomenon — this phenomenon, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP seem to have forgotten about. It's called winter. And it does get down to 40 below. And if you don't heat your home, you're going to freeze to death.

So you've got them cold if you increase their prices on their heat and on their power. They have to have it. And so you can tax them through that utility and they can't get away from it. They have to pay it. They don't have a choice.

What is the alternative, Mr. Speaker? Well government had a choice. They did not have to increase the utility rates. They did not have to increase the cost of insuring a vehicle. They did it last year.

They could have done a number of things, Mr. Speaker. But they could have left those taxations in areas where people could make a choice. In the harmonization program, at least if you didn't want to buy a yacht you could say no, the tax on it's too high. But in the wintertime you will still have to pay to heat your home, and if the tax is there you're going to pay it, in spite of the fact that our Crown corporations in that area showed profits last year.

Hard to justify when I go out to my constituency, Mr. Speaker — very hard to justify. In fact I just won't try because it just isn't fair. SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) has a \$45 million rate stabilization fund and a profit of \$15 million, Mr. Speaker. Last year SGI's rates were increased as much as 10 per cent.

Who do the NDP think they're fooling? They're not fooling the people, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan will remember the NDP government's betrayal and the constant grab at their pocketbook. They will remember the NDP's empty promises. I can assure you of that. Because nowadays people remember for four years.

I'm curious to know how many of the back-bencher NDP MLAs knew that upon forming government all of the election promises that they were elected on would be broken. I'll bet that most of them honestly believed when they ran in the election, Mr. Speaker, that the things that they were promising on behalf of their party would be done. I wonder how they square that with the folks back home now.

How many of the folks across the floor knew that their colleagues in cabinet would kill each and every promise that was made to the Saskatchewan people? There are many unhappy NDP MLAs out there, but not as many as unhappy constituents, Mr. Speaker — particularly, Mr. Speaker, constituents represented by NDP MLAs, because they expected more from those people. They elected them to be in the government side; they elected them to keep their promises. These people were completely duped, Mr. Speaker.

Let me give you an example of just how unhappy these people are. Our office received a call from a Maidstone area person. One of the constituents out there was nominated by her neighbours to find out how many signatures it would take to remove their MLA from government. She actually wanted to know how they would or how they could force a by-election in their area.

Now that's an unhappy constituent, Mr. Speaker. The people in that area feel completely betrayed. I would like to know how many of our rural NDP MLAs realize the reinstatement . . . or the resentment, rather, out there in their constituencies. I think some of the rural NDP members should get out into the country and talk to the people for a change. Listen to the people. The people feel rural Saskatchewan is under attack, and I have to agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

Of course I wasn't surprised by the NDP's revenge on rural Saskatchewan. None of my colleagues were surprised. We expected it. But I'll tell you who was

surprised, Mr. Speaker. Those who live in rural Saskatchewan were surprised. After all, some of them helped to elect and voted for this government and its members. They believed the empty promises, Mr. Speaker.

And the NDP should have told them the truth. They should have told the people that they would embark in a wholesale destruction of rural Saskatchewan. They should have told them that they would totally abandon rural Saskatchewan with any agricultural policy, with any benefits.

They should have told them, Mr. Speaker, that they would forsake all of the financial responsibilities that would bring to the province the millions of federal dollars that both Manitoba and Alberta are presently enjoying. They should have told them that they would be the kind of financiers — I was going to say cheapskates, but that would be too strong — the kind of financiers who would not spend 9 million provincial dollars to get \$65 million into the hands of farmers.

I was talking to the Hon. Bill McKnight, the Minister of Energy and Mines for this country, the former minister of Agriculture, and he explained to me a little bit about how that process would have worked, Mr. Speaker. And I think maybe I should quickly go over that.

I wonder if the people realize how easy it would have been for this government to simply take a half a step back and grab off \$65 million that would have went directly into the pockets of Saskatchewan farmers this past year, and which incidentally, I'm told, is till on the table for the taking.

The provincial government's share would have been \$9 million up front. And the federal government would have allowed them to pay their extra 14,000 out of the 24,000 . . . or 23 million — I'd better say millions. They would have allowed them to pay that in two years time after this money and the '91, '92 GRIP programs had both totally played themselves through.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that would have meant that the federal government was putting up \$14 million of the provincial government's share along with their own share. And for the \$9 million up front by the provincial government, \$65 million then would have gone to the farming industry, to the farmers and ranchers out in the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that you have to be a mathematical genius in this world of politics in Saskatchewan to know that if you put \$65 million in the hands of farmers these days, that they would probably spend it all. They have to. They've got to seed a crop. They're trying to do it on the basis of \$2 wheat, half of it frozen, with markets shrivelling up.

Interestingly enough, I read in the paper this morning, Mr. Speaker, that the Canadian Wheat Board is having tremendous difficulty marketing our grain because of the frost. They may even have to sell it below the price that they set for the pool, and again that may cause a deficit. All the more reason why that \$65 million starts to look more and more attractive, Mr. Speaker.

Because as I said, it doesn't take a mathematical genius to figure out that if you spend \$65 million — and these people would be spending it; they'd be paying off their bills from harvest last fall, as well as they'd probably be paying for some of the things they need to put the crop in this spring like maybe some good seed that has good germination, because a lot of it that's frozen isn't good enough to be used for seed — that money would have generated itself right through our economy three to seven more times. That's the spin-off cycle of dollars that are spent by the agricultural industry throughout our society.

Now tell me that spinning \$65 million three to seven times through the economy would not generate \$9 million in revenue back to the government through the collections of various kinds of taxes. It has to have generated more than that by the economic spin-off that would have come as a benefit to all of our province. And with the kind of high taxation that we experience now, I'm absolutely convinced that the government would in fact have ended up with many times more than the \$9 million investment.

And the tragedy of it, Mr. Speaker, is that, the Hon. Bill McKnight tells me, that this offer was still available. And this uncaring government continues on its path of blindness, ignoring that money and those dollars. And then they sit there and make pious speeches about how we should cooperate — as an opposition we should cooperate with them, as though we have \$9 million in our pockets. Well where is the responsibility here?

This is an uncaring government, Mr. Speaker, that is conducting an assault on rural Saskatchewan — an assault that cannot be justified and an assault that is having far reaching effects.

I want to draw to your attention an example of the kind of effects we are now experiencing. In the city of Swift Current we've read in the local newspaper that the credit unions are in serious, serious financial trouble. Two major institutions there are now being asked to amalgamate because, I am told, Credit Union Central couldn't afford to back both of them independently.

(1600)

In order to get Credit Union Central's backing and to be able to sustain that backing on the monies involved that the creditors and the depositors have there, the Credit Union Central is saying that they will have to amalgamate.

I'm not saying that \$65 million would have cured all of the problems there. Certainly not. But certainly a share of that money would have gone to that community.

I guess as a side note, something that really frightens me is the fact that the deputy minister of Finance was in direct control of one of those credit unions over a number of years as the president of that board. I surely hope he brings to government a better plan than he left those credit unions with.

It is frightening to the people to the point, Mr. Speaker,

where we have already experienced a run on the money at those institutions. People who used to normally cash their cheques and leave most of the money in the credit union, only taking the amount of cash they needed immediately, now are cashing their cheques and taking all cash.

I'm not sure if all of the reports are true, but I have been told that cheques up to \$10,000 have been cashed for cash and people take a chance on walking out the door carrying that kind of money rather than to leave it in the credit unions. That's an overreaction, I feel, and I want to point that out very clearly that I personally don't think that the money is in jeopardy in the credit union system. Unfortunately there is no confidence in the people and they are doing these things whether I assure them or whether anybody else does.

The run on money became so heavy that I am told that one day the credit unions — the one credit union — had to close its doors for an hour during business hours while they sent a truck across town to get another load of money. That's serious stuff, Mr. Speaker. We haven't heard of that sort of thing in Saskatchewan since the Dirty Thirties, and I only read about them. I've never seen it in my lifetime before. And yet it's happening.

And does our Premier, Mr. Speaker, stand up in this Assembly and say to the people of Swift Current, I will back your credit union with the provincial government's treasury? Not a peep; not a word. The only thing that could be done to bring about economic stability to those two great institutions is ignored by our government. And I say that that is something that we have to have very soon. Because that problem won't go away by itself.

The deputy minister of Finance left it in such a way that it cannot resolve itself. Only amalgamation and other measures taken by those institutions and a guarantee by the Premier that will put confidence into the people's minds so that they will feel safe and secure to leave their money in those institutions, only that will work.

Without money to work with, they'll have to go broke. If there's no confidence for the people to put the money in there, then they have to run without capital. And a bank without capital is a bank that will have to close its doors, and a credit union is a bank in every sense of the word in those respects.

I want to talk, Mr. Speaker, for a minute about the wellness model. It's important to the people of our constituency. The wellness model, Mr. Speaker, is a front. The wellness model is an NDP cover for closing rural hospitals. Plain and simple. What is worse, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP government will be closing rural hospitals, or that they will be forcing the local boards to take the heat for it, might be a better way to put it.

Because the new program with local boards that will have members appointed by the minister — not elected as we, the official opposition requested last session, but hand-picked people by the Minister of Health to carry out their dirty work.

Rural hospital and rural health professionals are

outraged. They feel that they are being forced into joining new health districts, and they're outraged that many of the people that provide the services now have already been told that they're fired.

I have several letters, Mr. Speaker, and it is disheartening to read of the effects that will happen to our communities by the firings of the very people that could help to bring about wellness to the very people who this program is supposedly designed to help — counsellors, social workers, dieticians. People who talk to other people about their health, and show them how to live a healthy lifestyle, those very people that could convince our young people perhaps not to smoke, as a result saving millions of dollars in the health care system in the future, all of those people have been laid off. They've gotten their notices. April 1, I think, is the effective date.

Is it the intention of the government, Mr. Speaker, to perhaps try to force the local communities into funding the rehiring of those people? But of course not, that would be downloading, and this government wouldn't do that, would they? They wouldn't force the municipalities to make a decision either to cough up their dollars or lose their services, or would they? We will find out in the days to come, Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question. And for my rural friends I fear the worst.

The rural health professionals are outraged, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, because they feel that they are being forced to join these new health districts. The government is using interesting tactics. Let me use the regional counselling service issue as an example.

They are going to be eliminated, and the NDP rationale for cutting this program is that the new health district will be providing these services which include nursing and social services and dietaries and health recorders and diagnostic imaging and medical transcriptions. The new health districts will be providing these services, but the Minister of Health is forgetting that there's only one new health district in the entire province so far.

So what's going to happen in the interim? In order for rural hospitals to regain their services they so desperately need, they'll be forced to join this new health district now.

There's a word that describes forcing people to do things that they don't want to do, which we were told the other day is unparliamentary. And unfortunately I had written my notes before that ruling was made. So it lies there in black and white as I skate around it. But the people of the province know what it is. They know what it is when you're forced through manipulation to do something against your will.

They know what it's like if a person has a child that is kidnapped and someone says, give me \$100,000 or I won't give that child back alive. The same word that applies there also applies to this kind of strategy.

Another area under attack by this NDP government is our rural school system, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government started a low-key campaign to convince people of the need to close schools. Rural schools. Not city schools, only the rural ones. And the list of rural revenge goes on.

All through the last session the rural revenge was the battle-cry of the NDP government. And I wish it were over. But it doesn't seem that that's to be the way of it yet.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has reduced municipal revenue-sharing. They've eliminated Crown lease surface rights fees; increased breeder fees by 31 per cent. They cancelled Fair Share; increased all the pasture rental fees; capped fuel rebates on farmers; brought back purple gas. Can you imagine that? I never thought a government would ever go back that far in history to dig up a program that the communities, and the people that lived in them, found so absolutely repugnant as this one.

Over the years people have said time and time again that this was a folly that they would never tolerate. And here it is back again.

Well I have barely scratched the surface here, Mr. Speaker, of all of the things that have been increased in costs and all of the things that this government has said it wouldn't do. But this government is doing its best to tear down rural Saskatchewan. They are driving folks out of their towns and out of their villages. They deny the people of Saskatchewan the federal money that other provinces enjoy because they won't spend a few dollars in order to make millions back. It's choices, bad choices, that have gotten us into such serious trouble.

Mr. Speaker, they are preparing to redraw the electoral boundaries to reduce the number of seats. I'll bet my bottom dollar that those seats that will be eliminated will not be in the urban centres.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has stated that it plans to eliminate the Department of Rural Development. The government let this little bit of information slip out at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention last week . . . or last year rather, a convention which is about to start this week — tomorrow, in fact. Registration begins tonight.

The NDP intend to eliminate the Department of Rural Development and large numbers of municipalities. The NDP told the SARM convention last year through the speech from its minister that it is reviewing these areas internally and that these changes will happen whether or not the municipalities support it.

The government said it intends to take the same action against towns and villages. I'm not sure if the NDP back-bencher MLAs, who sit idly by while their powerful cabinet colleagues tear apart rural Saskatchewan, truly understand what's happening, Mr. Speaker. It is important for the rural NDP MLAs to understand how serious this will be. I really don't think that any of them want to just throw their seats away, even though most of them might be eliminated through the redistribution of the boundaries.

First, eliminating municipalities without their consent is a very direct and dangerous attack on people's rights. How can it be that the NDP Premier and the NDP Minister of Rural Development and the member from Prince Albert Northcote believe that they are close to rural residents —

closer to them than rural residents, reeves, and mayors and councillors themselves would be?

When is the last time the member from Saskatoon Riversdale was in a rural community? Mr. Speaker, even when he does visit a rural area, he doesn't realize it. I seem to recall that the NDP Premier visited Chamberlain and to this day he denies that he was even there. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's a pretty small town, but it's there. There are people and they remember seeing him, right there.

Mr. Speaker, if you live in rural Saskatchewan you never see this man. Lately he has been calling for a first ministers' conference on federal offloading. History may repeat itself. Last year he was in Ottawa more often than anywhere else. Who knows, we may not even see him again until the next election rolls around, if we're lucky.

I wonder how the members opposite would react if Ottawa said it wanted to consolidate us into Manitoba because it would be more effective and more efficient. Then imagine if Ottawa told the NDP Premier that it didn't matter what he thought, it was going to happen no matter what. He would never stand for that. The people of Saskatchewan cannot stand for the elimination of the Department of Rural Development and the entire RM (rural municipality) system.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, we need a department whose mandate is to work with rural people, to preserve and promote the rural way of life, especially in these trying times. Rural Development is no wishy-washy outfit, Mr. Speaker, with vague goals. In fact it has won the international reputation of innovative economic models, and the best support system in the world. It was the people of Rural Development who implemented the rural development corporation program, working side by side with municipal councillors and community leaders.

It was through this department that the old ag rep was replaced by the professional extension agrologist, involved in many areas of economic development and support for Saskatchewan's rural people. It was through the Rural Development department that rural service centres were built throughout the province. A network of communication between universities, between experimental programs, and the people who have to employ them for not only their livelihood, but to produce the food that everyone needs as an essential element to their livelihood.

The department is necessary to provide efficient, coordinated representation for rural areas throughout the government. There has to be a meeting place for health, education, economic development, infrastructure support, community development, and other things in rural Saskatchewan. A coordinating, central, focal point, that's what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker. And Rural Development as a department is the only way that you can effectively provide that.

Mr. Speaker, this has been the mandate of the department and the attitude of the government. From that attitude sprang such things as rural natural gas distribution, which

benefits towns, villages, and farms to this day. From it came the private telephone line service, distance education planning, and many other innovative . . . and innovations that benefit the entire province.

No, the Department of Rural Development has not existed just to serve SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and the rural municipalities themselves, as this government seems to think. It has been committed to a better future for our children. Are we to do away with this, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

It is astonishing that the NDP Premier that came to power promising to listen to people and to be more democratic, has so quickly established an uncompromising record of disdain for the people and total disregard for the democratic structures within our society.

First the NDP member from Saskatoon Riversdale said that it didn't matter who or how many supported energy research. He was going to break that agreement, throw it away, get rid of it. Well he kept his word there. He broke that agreement and then he restructured it, pretending that it was his and the NDP's idea. The sad thing is that many NDP members truly believe this. They think it was their idea now, with the exception of maybe the member from Rosemont who truly dislikes it.

Time and time again we see the NDP government throw the AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.) agreement out as an example of its economic development and job-creation record. This is truly a flip-flop beyond imagination, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The NDP Premier also turned his back on the people in regards to the funding of abortions. It does not matter that the people voted overwhelmingly against the funding of abortions; demanded a say in the constitutional amendment and want balanced budgets. They were only plebiscites, he said. It does not matter how the people feel about spending money on a third French education system in tough times.

To make matters worse, the review which will determine the fate of Rural Development are now being conducted in secret. The NDP never told anyone it was going to do away with municipal government. Not before the election. They haven't gone out looking for more public input into this matter. They have not sought the public's input, the input of reeves or mayors or councillors, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The deed will be planned in secret and executed over public protest. This is not a government the people voted for. The people voted for no more taxes and every other promise that the NDP campaigned on.

The member from Saskatoon Riversdale can wave around as many election pamphlets as he wants. He knows the people of Saskatchewan know and each and every one of the NDP members knows that they made these promises. They promised to stand behind rural Saskatchewan and rural families. If they had not, why would any rural person ever have voted for them?

The throne speech now contains very little for rural

Saskatchewan and farm families. As a matter of fact, one of the only promises contained was, and I quote: to rebuild the province's farm economy.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP had better rebuild because it's their wrong-headed policies that have torn it down — wrong-headed policies, Mr. Speaker, such as getting out of the GRIP program. The residents of rural Saskatchewan have suffered enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let's give them some hope. Instead of preaching doom and gloom, let's let them know that there is a little light at the end of the tunnel. I have confidence in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in its people, and in their capabilities to survive, to even survive this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to go back just for a minute in concluding my remarks and summarizing the reply that I prepared to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have had conversations with my constituents and they've told me that they feel that the NDP have been dishonest with them. They didn't keep the promises that they made before the election. They increased the taxes that they said they wouldn't. On and on the list will go. And they said the NDP is being unfair with them because they do not take the federal money that Manitoba and Alberta are taking for their farmers. And they believe that that is unfair.

And they have come to the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where they feel that this NDP government just doesn't care what happens to rural Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can assure you that the government does have choices. They have choices but they've refused to use them.

Taxes are a specific issue that will be tied to all other components. The increases are unfair, with spending cuts far lower than the tax increases, and the increases coming at a time when people can least afford them. They say out there in the country that by using these fear tactics, the government is escaping responsibility for its bad choices, attempting to escape.

The entire health care process is demonstratively unfair, treating people differently depending on the kind of illness, the location, and maybe even gender by now. The health care process is dishonest with clearly false information being spread. The government's choices in health care will not lead to cost savings for the taxpayer.

That's what my constituents are telling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They say that the government is totally abandoning agriculture and it is not fair that farm families are suffering from the Premier's admitted mistakes.

The government is misleading the people about it's ability to help agriculture because they don't care if thousands of farmers go under. Those are some of the things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my constituents have been telling me.

There are some other things that our constituents are telling us. One of my constituents, for example, told me the other day that one of the biggest problems we have is the lack of communication between rural people and the people who live in our cities. And I think he has a point,

although it's a difficult one to manage to solve.

So I said to him: how would we go about explaining to the urban people what the problems in agriculture and the rural communities is? He said, perhaps what we should do is to have the Premier say to the labour people — I guess through the labour unions would be the best contact — that in their negotiations that are presently going on, they ought to consider the possibility of taking the average of their last 15 years' wages, averaging that out and calling that average figure the figure that they would get paid next year.

I can see some union leaders rising right off of their seats straight through that camera. But the reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that that is exactly what farmers are being offered through the GRIP program. The average wage that you're going to get is the same as the average price of the grain that you're going to sell. The average price of the grain you sell next year is going to be based, guaranteed under the revenue insurance program, on the last 15 year's sales prices averaged, and you take the average.

Now if the wage earners want to understand why farmers are so frustrated and so upset and in such desperate, desperate financial trouble, take that average of your wages over the last 15 years and call that your wage for next year, and do the mathematics at how you're going to pay your mortgage, how you're going to pay for your light and heat bill, and then you will have an understanding of what farmers are going through.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that that is a harsh pill to take in trying to get people to understand one another, but it may be the only way that people will understand, is if they put themselves into the other fellow's shoes, compare it to the way it would happen to you.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that Saskatchewan will survive this recession. I only hope that we can survive this NDP government, its taxation policies, and its total lack of understanding of the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome all members back to the Assembly. I'd like to also welcome the staff back. In particular, to welcome the new pages that we have here. I'm sure you'll have a very interesting time in the Assembly, and hopefully you'll learn a great deal from it. There are many stories from the past that you'll not have the opportunity to see. But there are new stories that come from every Legislative Assembly sitting.

And I think of today, when the member from Maple Creek was speaking, of the former member from Weyburn. And in some respects I wish he was here today. I know the member we have from Weyburn now is a very good member. But it's the line that the member from Weyburn used to use when he came into the House and someone was speaking. He would holler, that's the worst speech I ever heard.

Now some of the members who sat in the last legislature

would remember that. And if the member from Weyburn . . . the previous member from Weyburn was here today, I think that his words would have never been more appropriately put than to the speaker from Maple Creek who was on his feet here just previous to me here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I don't know what it is about the official opposition, but they don't quite seem to have the grasp of what's going on today in Saskatchewan. And they have forgotten what created the situation we find ourselves in.

And I suppose part of it could be frustrating, in a time when we've just gone through a very relatively short period of time ago, through an election where the New Democrats won a very heavy majority. The Conservatives were almost decimated. And they must be thinking that they should be going up in the polls. But I think it must be the frustration they feel because they're not increasing in popularity in the polls; they continue to plummet. But they can't bolster their spirits in the Legislative Assembly to get that spirit there which they should be able to grab and they're just missing the boat a little.

I want to respond to some of the things that the member of Maple Creek alluded to in his presentation here today. I truly wish that Joan Duncan was back, because she at least could analyse the situation in an accurate way, even though it wasn't acceptable to the people of the province of Saskatchewan when she was in the provincial cabinet of the Conservative government. But I wish she was back here to do the analysis that the member from Maple Creek today just seems incapable of putting forward.

The member from Maple Creek said that we've dramatically increased our spending in the province of Saskatchewan. Is that correct? No, it's not correct. In fact Saskatchewan was the only province in Canada in the 1992-93 budget period that reduced their expenditures. The Government of Saskatchewan reduced their expenditures by 3 per cent. I don't know why the member from Maple Creek wouldn't know that. Why wouldn't he be aware that the government has reduced its expenditures? And why have we reduced our expenditures? We've reduced our expenditures because of the devastating debt situation that the former Conservative government left the province of Saskatchewan in. Shame on them for that.

In fact in '92-93 we projected a deficit of \$517 million. We had to make cuts in expenditures because if we would have let the status quo continue on, we would have had a deficit in '92-93 of some billion dollars. That's the road that the Conservative government was on. Does a billion dollar deficit seem like a lot? Well yes it is. But it wasn't too much for the Conservatives.

Back in the '86 period, where they projected a deficit in that particular year of some \$289 million, I believe it was, the minister of Finance, the member from Weyburn, Lorne Hepworth, said that they were right on target, there was no problem in meeting that budget projection.

The election came and do you know what the deficit was? — \$1.2 billion. That's why this government has taken the only direction available, and that is to cut expenditures and make sure that the revenues come in so that we can come to a position where we balance the budget in the province; not like the doomers and gloomers are preaching over there right now to let the economy of the province run wild and run the province into a situation where we'd have virtually no say in what we do in terms of delivery of government programs.

The member also talked about the deficit reduction surtax. Well I want the member opposite to know that there was another name for that tax which is going broadly across Saskatchewan, and the name has nothing to do with the member from Estevan because his name does not only mean the member from Estevan — many people called it the divine deficit tax.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The member is trying to do something indirectly which he is not permitted to do directly, and therefore I caution him to not use the names of members of the House. And if you want to refer to them to do so by their ridings.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I appreciate that ruling, Mr. Speaker. I know that when the members opposite use anguish in their speeches from now on that they'll be ruled out of order on that.

The situation in the province of Saskatchewan is a very serious one, and we're willing to take very serious action as a provincial government so that we know that down the road, when you look down the tunnel, that there's a light there. And up until October 21 of 1991, when people looked down that tunnel, they saw a light and knew it was a freight train coming; that it was loaded with Conservatives running over the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — By the actions that we take today, Mr. Speaker, there's a candle at the end of the tunnel. And once we get through the tunnel by the program that's been set out through the Premier of this province and the members of the Legislative Assembly, the sun will again shine on the province of Saskatchewan and we can forget about that freight train that tried to run over the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

The other inaccuracy that was pointed out by the member from Maple Creek, when he talks about the province not putting up \$9 million to get \$65 million from the federal government. Well why would we believe your federal cousins in Ottawa, members of the Progressive Conservative Party? It's an oxymoron itself, someone told me once.

Federal offloading by unilateral reductions in federal payments to Saskatchewan, it's been a result of an annual loss of \$538.1 million in 1992-93 — \$538.1 million unilaterally offloaded on the province of Saskatchewan. Even worse than offloaded, this is the reduction in federal payments to the province of Saskatchewan.

Had we received what was due to the province of Saskatchewan from the federal government, we virtually wouldn't have had a deficit this year. We would have had in the very first term of an NDP government in Saskatchewan a balanced budget. That's something that never happened in 10 budgets from the Progressive Conservatives of Saskatchewan, not once did they balance a budget. Shame on you for that. Shame on you.

What they did leave us with though, members of the Assembly, was interest payments last year of \$760 million. If you combined the \$760 million in interest on the debt that was left by these people with the 538.1 million that was reduced by federal payments, we would have had a surplus budget this year of about \$200 million-plus.

I can't believe that members opposite can stand in this House with no shame and say that the NDP Government of Saskatchewan is doing wrong by the people of this province. We are determined to correct the course of the past. We ask members of this Assembly from all parties to join with us and tell the federal government to honour their obligations to this province so we can bring back to the people of the province the standard and the programs that they are used to having under sound administrations, not in the administration that tried to decimate the province of Saskatchewan for their own personal greed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — In fact how bad was it? In August of 1992 — that's well after the last election — August 10 of 1992, Paul Jackson wrote in the paper with a headline, and the headline read, I quote: Many in the Tory hierarchy corrupt to the rotten core. That's a quote from the newspaper.

I want to tell you that the people of Saskatchewan will never forget the devastation left by the Conservative government, in the 10 budgets that they brought down to bring us to the situation today where we have to venture out on something very positive. That something very positive, Mr. Speaker, that's our journey of renewal. The journey of renewal will have tough decisions that go along with it. But we have to make tough decisions as we go through life.

Remember the great Chief Poundmaker. Poundmaker once was telling a story to his band members about as you go through life you'll have decisions to make. And he told the story about moving the tribe from one location to another and they came upon a fork in the road; some members went to the right, some members went to the left. One particular member of the band sat down in the forks of the road because he couldn't make a decision. And eventually the grass grew all up around and the member was lost.

Mr. Speaker, we are not prepared to have the people of Saskatchewan get lost by the grass growing around them. We'll make decisions to lead this province to a future that we can all be very proud of so that that light again shines on the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — And it's normal, I think, to have people be apprehensive to change. People like things to be the way they are, the way they have been. But to get to where we want to go as a province, Mr. Speaker, with all people of the province of Saskatchewan, there have to be decisions made that make change happen. Old solutions from the past will not necessarily meet the problems of the future. We have to learn from mistakes. And there were many mistakes made between 1982 and 1991. We've learned from those mistakes.

At one point today, the member from Maple Creek was talking about the record of the '60s and implying that our government had something to do with those programs. I'd correct him on the history of the province, and that for the majority of the '60s the Liberal government under Ross Thatcher was in power in the province of Saskatchewan. And we did not support those policies but we learned from them.

There was however some interesting initiatives that we are proud of during the 1960 period. That was the introduction of medicare in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We want to now extend, Mr. Speaker, to the next generation of health care in the province of Saskatchewan. And I predict that people across North America will take a lead from what we do in health care here by the actions of members of this Assembly and from the NDP government that's currently putting that plan into place.

In 1962, the changes that brought in medicare in the province of Saskatchewan, people were apprehensive about that. There were KOD committees — keep our doctors committees that opposed changes. They had funding from the American Medical Association to stop medicare in its tracks.

I see within the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker, those same reactionary forces again preaching doom and gloom and destruction, when we should have support from all members of this House and carry the people of Saskatchewan forward into that next generation of health care. They want the leadership and that's where we're going, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — What about some of our initiatives beyond the wellness model? How about fiscal management in the face of fiscal terrorism by the federal government, as I've already outlined earlier and won't further elaborate on that.

We've had the Gass Commission. We've taken actions to make sure that the province is on a sound financial footing and that it's open and accountable, so that the people of this province can see the financial affairs that the government has to deal with, and through the government all people of this province have to deal with.

In the department I'm responsible for, Mr. Speaker, we'll be putting together a comprehensive energy strategy to look at the future, to look at how we generate our energy and how we utilize our energy within the province. Those are exciting initiatives that will bring us great returns in the future.

We have the Saskatchewan Energy Conservation and Development Authority, also under my responsibility as a minister of the Crown, Mr. Speaker. We will look and strategically plan how we fulfil our energy requirements past the year 2000, past the end of this decade. That's much different than the previous administration where nothing was planned. Deals were made on the backs of cigarette packages and match packages. That's how the GigaText came about; that's how the Supercarts came about; that's how they devastated the economy of the province.

(1645)

We not only planned for the budget year that we're going into, Mr. Speaker, we have long-term plans for dealing with employment and the economy and energy strategies. We want to search out with the people of the province all the alternatives that are available to us, not only making those decisions that are best for a few elite. Decisions have to be made in the public interest of all, all people within Saskatchewan.

I would want to say that we have some very specific goals, Mr. Speaker. And one of the goals of this government is full employment. Everybody who wants a job and needs a job should have a job. That's what we're working toward. We can't stand to see people when they leave the province because of the lack of opportunities left behind by the Conservative administration. But we ask people to join with us in this journey of renewal.

One of our other goals is to balance the budgets so we make sure that we're not spending away our children's future. The previous premier of the province, the member from Estevan, once said deficits are nothing but deferred taxes. And he's correct. That's why we're going to balance the budgets in the province, so that we don't have this continual burden of interest on the debt.

It'll take many years to address the debt, but we are taking immediate action to address the deficit budgets. And once the deficit budgets are addressed, we will be able to look at retiring the debt. That's positive action and those are positive goals, Mr. Speaker.

And we want to provide as another goal and objective of our government, is to provide economic stability within the province. And that will come by funding megaprojects that are not planned. It will come by investing in the communities, by investing in the businesses, and investing in the people who are the province of Saskatchewan, who want to be the province of Saskatchewan.

And all those out there who want to join us in this journey, we ask them to please do join. Don't listen to the doom and gloom preached by the disillusioned members of the

official opposition. If you listen to the leftovers from the last period, they would have you believe that Saskatchewan is not a good place to live. They would have you believe that Saskatchewan is not a good place to do business. They would have you believe that Saskatchewan is a ruined province, and they should know about that because they nearly ruined it, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan is not a ruined province. We have a sound foundation. We have a sound foundation in our people, we have a sound foundation in our resources, and we have a sound foundation in our economy in this province. But we have to give it a chance to work. We're giving it that chance to work by the actions and by the initiatives and by the leadership. And we are providing leadership that was not taken by the previous government.

I did not want to necessarily dwell on what had happened under the previous administration. I don't think I've done that. But we can never forget why the province of Saskatchewan is in the situation we find ourselves today.

An Hon. Member: — A legacy of debt.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — It is the legacy of debt, as the member from Kinistino points out, left by the Conservative administration. But from this point onward, I want to speak in this Assembly of the positive initiatives, the positive decisions, the positive actions that are necessary to join in our journey of renewal. Not just joining together as members of the Legislative Assembly, but we ask that all people who want to join in our journey of renewal to come together, to follow the leadership of the government, to question the leadership of the government when necessary, because we believe in that consultation.

We don't think we're always right in terms of our own isolated decisions, and that's why we don't make isolated decisions. We have the broadest consultation of any government in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. And people don't always have to agree. We want to hear the positives. We want to hear the negatives. And through that consultation process, Mr. Speaker, we will provide the leadership that will have the sun again shine on the province of Saskatchewan as all of us join in a journey of renewal for this once, and again to be, the greatest province in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roy: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and fellow members of the legislature. I want to say at the outset that it's a pleasure to be back here and certainly I want to welcome all of the members of the legislature back to this particular session, and also the pages and also you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure with your guidance and leadership that we'll have a very fruitful session.

I also want to say at the outset that I'm happy to enjoin in this particular debate on the throne speech, because I think as the elected representative from Kinistino the throne speech clearly identifies goals and a plan for the coming session and the year.

I think in the wording of the throne speech there is an important theme . . . there is important themes, but one of the most important themes certainly is journey of renewal. And I think those are very important words. I think it is important to know that after the last 10 years that certainly we are reversing the direction of the province as a government, and I think it really is a journey of renewal for the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to tell you I think, Mr. Speaker, that each and every one of us in this particular legislature believe that the situation, the financial situation of the province, is very grave. And each and every one of us may have a different approach on how the solution should be taken, but I want to tell you that the fact is everybody in this legislature understands the magnitude of the problem and also the financial strait-jacket that the province of Saskatchewan has been placed in.

And this is not only a phenomena in Saskatchewan. This of course is a problem that is facing all jurisdictions in Canada. It's facing . . . a problem the federal government is facing. It's a problem that other major industrialized countries around the world are having to deal with. So this is not a Saskatchewan-alone problem.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that after we were elected in October of 1991 our government moved swiftly to try to return some accountability and honesty to the Government of Saskatchewan. And that's why we implemented the Gass Financial Review Commission.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand up here today and tell the people of the province of Saskatchewan that most of the recommendations of the Gass Financial Review Commission have been implemented, Mr. Speaker. So we've taken very seriously what the people in the province of Saskatchewan have told us about accountability and honesty and we've put those recommendations into place. And we're going to go further, Mr. Speaker.

I want to tell you that my constituents certainly are very much aware of the financial problems facing this province. And they're telling me, you have to take the tough, hard decisions. And they may not be politically favourable, Mr. Speaker, but they have to be taken and it takes political intestinal fortitude and it takes guts to get on with this — something, Mr. Speaker, that the previous administration could not bring themselves around to do.

It is very important to realize that if we do not make these very difficult decisions, the future of Saskatchewan programs is going to be jeopardized. And nobody in this legislature, I think, wants to see programs being eroded to the point of being eliminated entirely. We have to protect the integrity of these programs, of what they've meant for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

One of the problems that I see about the debt problem in Canada is that there is no national approach to dealing with this mountain of debt. And this is what is called federal-provincial cooperation. And, Mr. Speaker, whether it's debt, whether it's agriculture, whether it's economic development, the federal government has

failed the provinces of this country. They have abdicated their responsibility each and every time. And again on a grave situation like this debt crisis that we're facing in this country, Mr. Speaker, again the federal government is abdicating its responsibility. That is shameful. And they should be taken . . . They should be accountable for that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to again carry a little further on this, Mr. Speaker. We have just seen lately a province like Saskatchewan and other provinces in Canada, the have-not provinces of this country, being asked to pay back close to \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker; \$1 billion when they are facing the most difficult choices financially in their particular jurisdictions.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Humboldt mentions helicopters. Well let me tell you something about helicopters. The cost overrun, Mr. Speaker, on these helicopters, the helicopter contract that the federal government is going to be buying, the cost overrun is \$1.4 billion.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're asking the poorest provinces of this country to pay back close to \$1 billion. Now how is that for federal-provincial cooperation? I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, this problem has to be taken on at a national level. We should be asked to convene a national conference on debt. And let's get 11 heads together to try to solve this problem before we do go over the financial precipice, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roy: — Mr. Speaker, it is certainly important that we address debt and we address it quickly in this province. But we have to go beyond that. We all recognize, dealing with the debt problem and balancing our books is very important for the future and the preservation of all the programs that we believe in in Saskatchewan. But we have to do more. We have to stimulate the economy and we have to create wealth, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very proud to say that our government, in that area, has taken major initiatives and major steps forward with releasing the *Partnership for Renewal* document in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that I played a significant role in trying to set this particular document together and get it on its feet and running. And I want to tell you that our government went through a major consultative process across this province with all the major stakeholders in the economy — labour, business. Mr. Speaker, to this end we have been able to bring all of these stakeholders, despite all their differences, we were able to bring them together to forge this new document, forge a new economic plan for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that speaks of cooperation on the part of this government. And it speaks for volumes for the people of Saskatchewan wanting to work together to renew a better future for themselves and their families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roy: — Mr. Speaker, the *Partnership for Renewal*

document is very specific and it has specific time lines . . .

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

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.