

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here to present on behalf of diabetics:

To the Hon. Legislature Assembly of Saskatchewan in
Legislature Assembled:

The Petition of the undersigned citizens of the Province of
Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That Diabetics have recently been singled out by the
Government's Drug Plan as being unique by virtue of the
fact that they must now pay virtually the full cost for insulin,
syringes, and needles and;

That these costs, imposed without consultation, are an
undue and unfair burden on this unique sector of our society
and;

That Diabetics must bear huge costs associated with their
medication, treatment and sheer survival which is without
comparison to other diseases and;

That this unfair and regressive initiative is totally contrary
to the principles of medicare namely universality,
accessibility and comprehensiveness and;

That this measure is in direct contradiction to the
government's stated objectives of implementing a wellness
model.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your
Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the
Government to reverse its decision to single out Diabetics
in the drug plan by asking them to pay the costs of their
medication and that your Honourable Assembly withhold
consent from any government proposal to which will have
the effect of discriminating against Diabetics compared to
others whose use of drugs to sustain life is mandatory.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitioners are from Gull Lake area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have some
petitions and I will read the prayer.

To the Hon. the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in
Legislature Assembled:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the Province of
Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That the government plans to close hospital facilities with
ten beds or less or less average daily census;

That the government has already contradicted other
promises made to seniors by raising several taxes,
cancelling the Senior Heritage Fund, increasing the drug
prescription plan, and has made many other harmful
decisions that have caused undue hardship to Saskatchewan
senior citizens;

and that the decision to close these hospital facilities is being
made without consultation with boards, families, and
communities.

Therefore your petitioner humbly prays that your
Honourable Assembly may be pleased to reverse the
government's decision to close hospital facilities with ten
beds or less, which will seriously reduce the emergency
health care required in rural Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are mostly in the west-central part
of the province. I could name Wilkie, Landis, Unity, Kerrobert,
Macklin, and a few others, Mr. Speaker, and they certainly cross
the whole spectrum of the political scene. These are not all . . .

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of
petitions as well that I'd like to present this afternoon. They deal
with the gross revenue insurance program and how the
government has made changes in that program that have rendered
it ineffective.

The Speaker: — Order. If the member has petitions to table, he
should table them. And I just want to remind members that it's
been established fact that you only read the prayer and not the
preambles to the petition. That has been established by previous
Speakers and I just want to remind members.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I therefore would like to
present this petition this afternoon with respect to the GRIP
(gross revenue insurance program) program. They come from
primarily the western part of the province — Unity, Senlac,
Salvador areas of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions
to present on behalf of Saskatchewan people today. They deal
with the health sector, and it's one that's been previously read
into the record so I won't go through the preamble.

These people, Mr. Speaker, are all up and down the west side of
our province, towns like Wilkie, Handel, Tramping Lake, Unity,
Landis. As I said, Mr. Speaker, all over the west side of this
province. I so petition.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have

petitioners here from Wilkie, Scott, Unity, Fox Valley, and Golden Prairie. These petitioners are asking that the . . . they humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to single out diabetics in the drug plan. And that's what these petitioners have to present today.

Mr. Devine: — Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to join my colleagues and present petitions with respect to the drug plan. These people are from south-western Saskatchewan, Tompkins and Gull Lake area, and I'll simply read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the Government to reverse its decision to single out Diabetics in the drug plan by asking them to pay the costs of their medication and that your Honourable Assembly withhold consent from any government proposal to which will have the effect of discriminating against Diabetics compared to others whose use of drugs to sustain life is mandatory.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have as well a petition concerning health care concerns from the Fox Valley, Liebenthal, and Golden Prairie communities of my constituency. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to reverse the government's decision to close hospital facilities with 10 beds or less which will seriously reduce the emergency health care required in rural Saskatchewan.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order, the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7), they are hereby read and received:

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to reverse the government's decision to close hospital facilities.

And

Of Aldersgate College of the city of Moose Jaw, in the province of Saskatchewan, praying for an Act to amend its Act of Incorporation; and of Bethany Bible Institute of the town of Hepburn in the province of Saskatchewan, praying for an Act to incorporate Bethany Bible Institute, and to amend an Act to incorporate Mennonite Brethren Church of Saskatchewan.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

The Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Swenson, chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presents the third report of the committee which is hereby tabled and filed as sessional paper no. 73.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm only going to say a few words on behalf of my role as chairman of this report.

This report took some time to finish in it's entirety. I would like to thank all the members of the committee. Many of the government members worked very diligently at putting together the report. I'd like to thank the Provincial Auditor and his staff, the comptroller, those people that were able to help us contribute to putting it together.

I think sometimes, Mr. Speaker, that because this report is obviously almost two years behind, that sometimes it's difficult to deal with issues that are that far behind, and I think one should applaud the government for making moves to speed the process up.

I think our committee has put some things in this report that in the future will mean that taxpayers in this province will be able to view the *Public Accounts* of this province in a way that they can understand better, that they can understand the workings of government in a more cohesive fashion.

And certainly there's areas that we touched upon, thinking about the Crown corporations and in the future how they will report themselves. They are issues that didn't pertain to that particular year. But I think it was important that the committee be allowed to explore many options in reviewing its material.

And once again, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say on behalf of myself as chairman to those that worked so hard to put this report together, that it's been a pleasure to work with them on this report.

I move, Mr. Speaker:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts now be concurred in.

It's seconded by the member from Regina Victoria.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to associate myself with the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition in bringing forward this report and just to add a few additional comments if I might.

One, this report being tabled at this point means that the committee is essentially up to date in the matters that have been referred to it by the Legislative Assembly. I think that the committee deserves to be commended for having done the work to bring us up

to date and we look forward to dealing with the new auditor's report when it comes forward in April.

I think that's a significant improvement that we're now up to date in consideration of auditor's reports.

Secondly, the committee spent some considerable time dealing with the question of its mandate, operating principles, and guidelines. And I think that it's fair to say that the committee functions as well as any committee in Canada, or any Public Accounts Committee functions.

I think it's fair to say that there are disagreements on the committee and that the members of the committee have disagreements on issues of policy. But having said that, the committee does function relatively well, and again as well as any committee in the country.

One of the significant issues that confronted the committee and that the chairman talked about was the question of accountability for Crown corporations. One of the recommendations that the auditor made to us was that the Legislative Assembly should be presented with a budget or a financial plan for all of the Crown corporations, in fact for all 100-plus government entities which receive public funds, and that those financial plans then also be discussed by the Legislative Assembly at the same time that the Legislative Assembly now does the budget and the estimates for the government departments.

We agreed as a committee that the concept of a financial plan has merit and needs further review. We also felt though that the concept needed further discussion or needed further review. Even the auditor in his own words stated that the level of detail that would be presented in the financial plan is something that would have to be judiciously discussed, assessed, and the committee agreed with that, that although the concept has merit, that a lot of review needs to take place.

And therefore the committee made the recommendation in the report to the Legislative Assembly, and hopefully the government will follow through on this, that this question of a financial plan be discussed by the Provincial Auditor in conjunction with the Crown Investments Corporation, the Minister of Finance, and also to seek the opinion of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan and the provincial audit committee.

We think that such a report and those discussions will help move us forward in the area of Crown corporation accountability. That was a significant issue; it's an exciting proposal. It's also a new proposal, Mr. Speaker. It's not something that's been raised before by the Provincial Auditor. It's not something that's been raised before by the government as to Crown corporation accountability, and we look forward to dealing with the issue.

I also might mention that it's not one of the standards or principles of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants whose standard and principles we

normally follow or hope to follow in the presentation of *Public Accounts*, but it's a new undertaking, not one that's been discussed by them; nevertheless we feel comfortable in looking at this issue further.

Mr. Speaker, I think all in all, the improvements that have been made in the last year of public accountability are significant. A great distance has been covered in a short period of time. I think it's fair to say that, as in the case of the financial plan, that more needs to be done to improve accountability and that standards and principles will always evolve and the committee and the Legislative Assembly will always have challenges before it in terms of trying to achieve the bottom line, and that is accountability of this Assembly and the government to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan as to how their dollars are spent.

I also want to thank the auditor and the Clerk's office for their participation in the committee, and the comptroller's office, and also those previous committee members, Mr. Speaker, who have left the committee but have made their contribution.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this falls within the rule of anticipation and whether I'm letting the cat out of the bag, but I anticipate that there will be further changes on the committee, one of which may implicate the present chair of the committee. And I don't know if I'm telling any secrets, Mr. Speaker, but certainly I think the chair has come into a situation for the last year and a half as chair of the committee under very difficult circumstances and trying circumstances without any experience in the committee and I must say that he has performed his job well and is a credit to the committee, and we should thank him for it.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — And that concludes my remarks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Regarding the Department of Economic Development in Saskatchewan's attempt to attract Piper Aircraft to our province: (1) how many consultants were hired to help attract Piper; (2) which firms were involved; (3) what are the names of their principals; (4) how much money was paid to these consultants; (5) was Owen Mitchell, the former acting president of SEDCO, involved; (6) how much did Mr. Mitchell charge in expenses for travel, lodging, entertainment, communications, while involved in the project?

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and members of the Assembly, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, in your gallery, Mr. William N. Witting, the Consul-General of the United States responsible for Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Witting is a career official in the foreign service of the United States with at least 17 years experience, both abroad and at the State Department in Washington. He spent the 1990-91 academic year pursuing national security studies at the Canadian National Defence college in Kingston.

In previous experience he's been posted in Cairo, Egypt; Damascus, Syria; reporting on a variety of matters of concern to his home country — macro-economic and energy developments among other things. He has a master's degree, a Bachelor of Arts degree in international studies from Johns Hopkins, and speaks French and Arabic.

It was my pleasure to meet with him this morning to discuss a number of matters of mutual concern. I found him in the short time that we were together both insightful and very courteous.

And on behalf of all the members of the legislature I'd like you to welcome our guest today, Mr. Witting.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Mr. Speaker, I would just like to join with the Premier on this side of the House and welcome Mr. Witting to our legislature. I want to particularly welcome him here on St. Patrick's day because an awful lot of us, with some Irish background, know that we have a lot of friends in the United States. I want to congratulate Mr. Witting and the people of the United States on the election of their new President and wish them very well.

We are the largest trading partners in the world and we look forward to expansion of trade and more trade. I know there are some serious deliberations with respect to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. But all parties are looking seriously at it and I just want to tell you that we are very supportive of the kinds of things that we can do that are mutually beneficial between Canada and the United States.

And I'd like to welcome you here, sir. Good Luck.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, happy St. Patrick's day to you. I was sort of expecting you dressed in green today, but that didn't arrive.

Anyway, it's so very rare that I get to introduce guests from Meadow Lake because nobody seems to want to drive that far. But it gives me a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to

the Assembly some people who are responsible for the reason I'm here. And I don't mean in this Assembly; I mean the reason I'm here on this earth. I'd like to introduce to you my parents, Mr. Speaker — John Sonntag, on the left — if he'd stand, please — and Dorothy Sonntag on the right. And if you'd join with me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — And with them, Mr. Speaker, is some long-time friends of our family as well, from Goodsoil, Saskatchewan, John and Erica Gurski. If you'd stand too, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, a couple that's seated in the west gallery, Greg and Kelly Mikolas from Melville, presently.

I, a number of years ago, had the pleasure of teaching Greg. He comes from the community of Gerald and he attended school at Esterhazy High School. He was also active in the 1986 campaign, on my behalf.

And so I'd like to wish them as well a happy St. Patrick's Day and welcome to Regina. And I hope that your stay here has been fruitful. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Impact of Tax Increases and Lay-offs

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier of our province confirmed the fact that his government has no plans, no analysis, and no idea, Mr. Speaker, of what tomorrow's tax grab will do to Saskatchewan's economy or the people that live here.

And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier seemed to take great pride in that. He didn't know the answers; he didn't care. He doesn't care what his tax grab will do to Saskatchewan's economy or the people that are in it. I mean there it was. We start up the rhetoric, we start up the blame thrower, we add a little humour and everything will be okay, thinks the Premier.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not okay. Mr. Premier, it's not okay. There's some real effects out there in your massive tax grab is having on the real people of this province. Business groups are saying that higher taxes mean certain death for the provincial economy. The Saskatchewan Association of Taxpayers is saying raising taxes is like using kerosene to put out a house fire.

Now, Mr. Premier, my question is: don't you agree that Saskatchewan businesses, Saskatchewan farm

families, Saskatchewan families that are being taxed to death by your government, don't you agree that any further tax increases will put it — to be very mild about it . . . would be slightly counter-productive? Don't you agree, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question. And I obviously agree that no government wishes to impose tax increases or, for that matter, have expenditure reductions.

However I would say to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition that this is something he should have thought of, together with his colleague, the member from Estevan, instead of embarking on a nine-year binge of wild spending, bankrupting or almost bankrupting the province of Saskatchewan. In fact in the words of Mr. Grant Hodgins, yes in the words of Mr. Grant Hodgins, he used that word exactly, the case when he was on this side of the House, saying that the province was on the verge of bankruptcy from the inside Treasury Board.

Now what we have to deal is with this mess that you have left behind for us. We have to deal with that. That's our lot in life. I didn't create it. The people of Saskatchewan didn't create it. And we're doing it in a sensible way with compassion, with stimulation where possible, with economic activity. We're doing it in expenditures, we're doing it in reorganization of government.

Unfortunately, given the huge profligacy and waste that is the legacy of your government, there will have to be some taxes. Those will be carried out compassionately, fairly, and competitively, and unlike you, sir, I do believe that the people of Saskatchewan and the economy is resilient enough to even — as they prove in this election — to outlast you and your doom and gloom.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, all due respect, you're not in opposition any more. The political rhetoric that you used to throw out in this House when you sat on this side simply doesn't work any more. Simple fact is, Mr. Premier, that you have instituted tax grabs; you are going to institute more tax grabs; and real Saskatchewan people are saying they've had enough.

The Saskatchewan taxpayers association says that your tax hikes are going to send more people out of the province, the very thing that you used to fight against, Mr. Premier. The chamber of commerce is saying that raising taxes is not an effective way of bringing the deficit under control, and I quote.

Now, Mr. Premier, your answers would indicate that you don't care. Mr. Premier, my question is: in the absence of any studies, Mr. Premier, will you not agree with people like the chambers of commerce, that increasing taxes will do more harm than good. In

the absence, would you agree with that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this is the same line of questioning that the hon. member endeavoured to discuss yesterday. The answers which I gave him yesterday — I might add unlike the answers that he gave us when he was on the treasury benches — are the same today; they're consistent two days in a row. And we have done the best studies that we can. We've taken into account the economic impacts.

But I do say to the hon. member opposite: the option that you would have us pursue, of course, is a deficit and a debt which is already out of control to such an extent, sir, that you would want to have, in effect, the bankers and the others of this world shut this province down, thanks to your actions. And I'm saying to you that that simply is just not on.

And I say to you and I say to your former leader: it is simply, wildly incredible for you and your party, knowing the tremendous damage that you've inflicted on this province and I say on this country as a result of that nine years, to take the position that you have. That is simply not credible. Please, in order to gain some credibility, give us a sensible question based on the reality or, if you will, at least some sensible alternatives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is asking for sensible questions. The questions being put today to the Premier are the questions that people all over this province are asking each and every day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — An example, Mr. Speaker, a small-business man, city of Regina, today in the paper saying that his industry is absolutely worried sick. And it was one of those industries, if the Premier cares to check into it, which he campaigned alongside of in 1991 saying that harmonization would hurt that particular industry in a big way.

Well this small-business man in Regina is saying everybody in his industry is worried sick about what the Premier is going to do to him tomorrow.

Now, Mr. Premier, my question. Do you understand what this gentleman is saying today, that he can't take another tax hit; his industry can't take another tax hit. Do you care? Or are you simply going to take a political shot at this small-business man in downtown Regina that's saying his whole industry is at risk because of you, sir. Are you going to do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the question that the member puts to me is do I care. The answer to that, simply put, is yes I very much care, as I'm sure the hon.

member opposite cares. And that's why last year in the budget we provided a reduction for small-business people. That is why in this budget, when it is read tomorrow, there will be, as best as we can, given our financial circumstances, further inducements for business.

That is why we are adopting a responsible attitude. That's why we're not going to have megabucks spent on megaprojects, because we can't do that. For example, like Saskferco, as an example that the former premier would know all about; something which he now apparently doesn't feel quite as strongly about given his acceptance of a board of directors of a . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I really can't hear the Premier's answer and I wish the members would give him an opportunity to answer the question.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I may say so, I can understand why they don't want to listen to the answer. I wouldn't want to either if I had nine years of record like that.

And finally I would say, to close off my answer, in addition to all of these things we've done and we're attempting to do, we have above all a realistic attitude toward financing. We are not going to adopt the attitude that the former premier did when he said in 1983 in New York, quote: Saskatchewan has so much going for it that you can afford to mismanage it and still break even. There's a change going around here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier stands in the House today and calls for a responsible attitude. Well maybe, Mr. Premier, when you were campaigning in this province in the fall of 1991 and you said to Saskatchewan people 4.5 billion is enough, there will be no new taxes, maybe the responsible attitude, Mr. Premier, should have started then.

Because you are doing exactly the opposite. That's called betrayal, Mr. Premier, betrayal. There was no responsible attitude at all.

Now at the same time you said to Saskatchewan people, you said to Saskatchewan labour, that you were there to protect them. The former administration had done some downsizing in government. You said that was absolutely the wrong thing to do.

Well surprise, surprise. Today, Mr. Premier, you're about to slash government employees — another betrayal of your own actions.

Question: Mr. Premier, this betrayal will also have effects on Saskatchewan people, on Saskatchewan's economy. Perhaps you could hearken back to your opposition days and tell us what effect these firings will have on Saskatchewan people. Would you do that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming by that question that the Hon. Leader . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Please give him a chance to answer the question, all right?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I was going to say again to the hon. members opposite, I can only assume by that question that there's an underlying assumption by the official opposition, the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, that there should be no attempt to try to rationalize or reorganize government services from the point of view of making it efficient. And that is his position; it is not our position.

He also asked me to hearken back to the campaign of 1991. Well I think of that campaign very, very often very favourably. I don't know whether the Leader of the Opposition thinks about that campaign very often very favourably. But if he doesn't, perhaps he should think about this letter which his Minister of Finance wrote to me at the time that I asked him to give us what the true budget figures were, upon which we could make our promises.

And Mr. Hepworth, who was the minister of Finance at that time, said as following on page 5 in the letter that he mailed to me, quote: As you can see, there are numerous factors at play that must be taken into consideration. On balance, however, I see no reason to alter our target of \$265 million deficit for '91-92.

That is what the minister of Finance in your government said, and that is what we predicated our statements on. But as you know, that the moment we won the election and opened the books, it wasn't 265 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. I want to ask the member from Wilkie to please come to order.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Now, Mr. Premier, what we're talking about here is the responsible attitude that you talked about.

I remember very clearly, Mr. Premier, that you said downsizing of government was the wrong thing to do. I remember the howls of derision from over on this side of the House when the former government was downsizing.

I would say to you, Mr. Premier, that that's not the type of a responsible attitude that Saskatchewan people want to see. I say that's betrayal. Perhaps we can have just one question answered today, Mr. Premier, just one. One question answered.

Obviously these job cuts that you're going to announce today are budget driven. There's no question about that. Then why are you making this announcement, this budget announcement, today instead of tomorrow at the budget speech?

Is it because, Mr. Premier, like you said on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio this morning, that you feel that the conditioning of the public attitude is important. Is that it, Mr. Premier? Is that the responsible attitude — the conditioning of the people today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the question, as I try to detect it from the speaker opposite, is why is an announcement being made today? And my answer to that is so that the public and the Leader of the Opposition and the House will know the details, today and tomorrow, because the Minister of Finance will address in her speech the same aspects involved.

I think that is only fair and proper and I think that a lot of people's jobs and occupations are at stake and they should know as best and as quickly as they can.

I would close, Mr. Speaker, by saying — I don't know how many times I've said it, but I repeat again — this is what we campaigned on, this is what we campaigned on. First things first, common sense financial management. Secondly, new direction . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I can't hear the answers either. I've asked members to please come to order.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I've never seen an opposition in the entire Commonwealth that is so allergic to a dose of truth as these people are. Take the dose of truth.

A little shot of truth and a little shot of reality is a hard thing for the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan to take, but I can tell you, you get used to it and you kind of get to like it.

I'm saying take a look at our campaign promises and you'll see what we're doing is we've turned the corner and we are rebuilding this province along the lines of compassion, growth, and cooperation. That's what we're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how do you know when the Premier of the province is using crass politics? It's when he smiles and laughs at Saskatchewan taxpayers. You know very well, Mr. Premier, that this is simply a feigned statement that the government is taking some hurt too, when you go chop the livelihoods of Saskatchewan workers away.

Well, Mr. Premier, perhaps you can answer this question then. Maybe you can do this without a smile on your face. How many cabinet ministers are getting axed tomorrow along with the hundreds of government workers that are being axed today? Can you tell Saskatchewan families, the ones that you stood on the steps out here and defended a couple of

years ago, that you're going to chop some cabinet ministers along with the breadwinners in their families? Are you going to do that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I hope I don't offend the hon. member for smiling, but I actually believe that my smile reflects not only my general belief that we're going in the right direction, but my belief that the people of Saskatchewan support us in the direction we're heading.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And when the hon. member says that when I got up and said to the people on the steps of the legislature that we're going to have fewer cabinet ministers, I remind the hon. member opposite, we did. Your former leader had 25 or 26 cabinet ministers. We are significantly and dramatically reduced. Now as a result of the reorganization, after the session is completed, there will be appropriate action taken by this government in consequence of our actions in this regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, we didn't get an answer. How many is it going to be? Is it going to be one, two, three, four, five? How many of your ministers of the Crown are going to share the pain with Saskatchewan taxpayers tomorrow?

You started with 10 and you bumped it to 18, Mr. Premier. And now you're saying to the Saskatchewan worker, to the government employees of this province, the people that make about \$30,000 a year, that you can afford 18 cabinet ministers which cost nearly half a million bucks apiece. That's what you're saying, Mr. Premier. Do you think that's a fair trade-off for Saskatchewan taxpayers tomorrow, to keep all 18 of your cabinet ministers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again I find this to be personally an incredible line of questioning coming from a party which I . . . was it 25 or 26, Mr. Leader of the Opposition? How many did you have loaded up at high levels? At one time in your caucus you had everybody either a cabinet minister or a Legislative Secretary. I think the only person who had no job was poor old Lorne McLaren, the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Yorkton. And I often wondered what he did to alienate the member from Estevan.

And you've got the audacity to get up and talk to us about size of cabinet. We've got one of the smallest cabinets in Canada. And I've said to the hon. member opposite, as I say to him again: first things first; let's define the priorities and the objectives as reflected in the departments and do it thoughtfully and carefully and then adjust in accordance to that. The session is

ongoing. We'll work through this session and make the appropriate decisions. And I can tell the hon. member, the people of Saskatchewan know for sure that our decision will be taken in their best interests and not what the member opposite suggests.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, in October of 1991 you said it was in the best interests of Saskatchewan people to have a total budget of \$4.5 billion and no new taxes. You said it was, sir, in the best interests of Saskatchewan people to have fewer cabinet ministers.

Now, Mr. Premier, you have an opportunity here. You have a choice to make to show that you care; that you care enough to downsize your cabinet as you chop hundreds of jobs out of the public service. You have a choice, Mr. Premier, where you can show some leadership. Not at the end of the session to look after your buddies in the treasury benches, but to do it at the same time that you do hundreds of Saskatchewan families. Mr. Premier, you're the one that made those choices a long time ago. Live up to them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again this is an absolutely incredible line of questioning.

Mr. Speaker, in 1992-93 fiscal year, operating expenditures for the government approximately were about \$4.25 billion. So that a \$4.5 billion budget, roughly speaking, should be enough to run the government, barring unforeseen circumstances. Unfortunately it's not enough, 4.5 billion. And the reason that it's not enough because of the debt built up by the members opposite.

The \$4.25 billion operating expenditures is eaten up by the \$750 million in interest payments as a result of your debt each and every year, thus the deficit that we have got to tackle. That's the circumstance. So don't say to me, we're not living up to our election promises — we are. We introduced a surplus budget of 225 million last year which would have been a surplus if it hadn't have been for the \$15 billion scandal that you left behind for the people of Saskatchewan. Shame on you for having done that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier: well, Mr. Premier, it's interesting how you always drag up the former administration. Well I can tell you, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that at least, at least, Mr. Speaker, the public service in this province knew where they stood with the former administration.

Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to quote from *Hansard* of April 22, 1991; this is the member from Riversdale talking about the record of the former government as far as downsizing a government:

What is equitable about your government's choice to cut . . . (jobs) . . . but at the same time your government has refused to cut one single . . . minister . . .

Your words, Mr. Premier, Mr. Member from Riversdale, such a short time ago. Mr. Premier, what is equitable about your government's choice to cut jobs but at the same time you, sir, refuse to even remove one of them — the very ones that you were over swearing in at Government House this morning — you refuse to remove even one. Why is that, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated to the hon. member with respect to the budget reorganization and how we propose to handle the government reorganization as an ongoing continuum, including a consideration of a number of issues, size of the legislature, and so forth. So I say to the hon. member, stay tuned as further things unfold.

But I also want to say to the hon. member that what I said then is absolutely true and fulfilled by me today because we have reduced the number of cabinet ministers from the size that you had. We reduced . . . Oh yes, you people, you people had 25 or 26 cabinet ministers, you had 13 or 14 legislative secretaries, everybody was on the public dole except poor old Mr. Lorne McLaren. You're doggone right we reduced it, and we did it responsibly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I say to you and I say to this House that it's absolutely a disgrace and a shame that a Premier of this province that such a short time ago would stand in this House and make this type of pronouncement now says, now says that he is not betraying Saskatchewan government workers, Saskatchewan families.

You had concern then, Mr. Premier, because you wanted to win an election. You had concern then because you wanted to be the Premier of this province. And I say to you, Mr. Premier, it's just like your studies on the economy and taxes. It's a charade and you don't care. And today you are willing to fire hundreds of Saskatchewan workers, and it's one more big charade, and you don't care. Prove it, Mr. Speaker, to those people today. One last chance today, Mr. Premier. Tell people that you're going to at least dismiss one of your 18-member cabinet for Saskatchewan voters today. Do that, sir. Show you've got the courage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite persists in his line of questioning which of course is his right to do. The answer which I've given, I've given through the entire question period here, which I believe is a logical and a correct answer — the comparison of records, what we have done by way of reduction, what we are doing by way

of reduction, what we will be doing by way of reduction.

The hon. member can use any kind of words to characterize that. All I can tell you is that the actions of the members opposite spoke a heck of a lot louder and more effectively than their deeds. Our actions, in terms of trying to get control of this deficit, regenerate the economy and get the province of Saskatchewan turned around to a brighter day, speak louder than his words do too.

And I say to the hon. member opposite, he's got one of two choices. You know, if I were to give any free advice to the Leader of the Opposition and Conservative Party, it would be to say this. It would be to say this. The first thing you could do is finally admit to the people of Saskatchewan what you did from 1982 to 1991-92. Admit it, apologize, wipe the slate clean, and then you would have credibility in not only your criticism but your positions. And unless and until you do that, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, I'm afraid to say I do not accept anything with legitimacy of your questioning in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to questions 85 and 86 put by members, I would request they be converted to motions for returns (debatable).

The Speaker: — Motions for Returns (debatable).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Simard that **Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting Health Districts** be now read a second time.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and join in the debate on a very, very significant Bill, a Bill that is very . . . in significant ways going to alter the landscape of Saskatchewan, and not necessarily, Mr. Speaker, to the betterment or to the wellness of the people of

Saskatchewan.

It's interesting to note, I'm sure, that the viewers and those people who will be reading *Hansard*, the strategy on the part of the government in terms of doing some of their darker deeds as it were in the middle of the night, in the cloak, in the cloak of the hoopla that has been established with the upcoming budget. What have we witnessed this afternoon, Mr. Speaker?

We have witnessed a Bill which many of the members opposite would rather that it go away. And now we have the Minister of Justice introducing The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act right at the time when it is probably going to escape notice, probably going to escape as much scrutiny as possible.

And then secondly, Mr. Speaker, we find that the government, half an hour before the House started, saw fit to inform us that we would be resuming debate on The Health Districts Act on the second readings in the adjourned debates on that. So, Mr. Speaker, I find that kind of interesting that this would be a strategy that members opposite are adopting.

However, to proceed directly, Mr. Speaker, into the debate at hand, and I know that you were wondering when I was going to get to it, I will now share some thoughts with you that I have and the opposition members have on this Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in preparation for the few remarks that I have, I took the time to read *Hansard* and check up on some of the remarks made by the Minister of Health in her second reading speech. And I want to try to start off with something positive. I notice that the first thing positive that came out during her remarks happened in the second last paragraph of her remarks where she states, first of all, that health reform is a means to achieve our goal. I'll come back to that.

Then she continues on and says, Mr. Speaker:

We need a system that is more coordinated and integrated to deal with the problems that I've indicated to you, and a system that is capable of providing a broad range of comprehensive services within a district.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the face of it I would say to Madam Minister that I agree, and I think any reasonable thinking man and woman in this province would agree that those are admirable goals that we're going to have to have a look at if we are going to continue to deliver a top-notch health system in this province. So we have no particular problem with that statement.

We are apprehensive however, Mr. Speaker, about the statement that I introduced here first of all, that is that when she, the Minister of Health, says health reform is a means to achieve our goal. Mr. Speaker, that causes me concern. Our goal, I would interpret, is the goal of the Minister of Health, is the goal of the

Premier, is the goal of the government, but, Mr. Speaker, more importantly is the goal of the Minister of Finance. And that is where my concern is.

I don't think that that plural pronoun of "our" goal is inclusive of the citizens of this province. Therein lies our greatest apprehension — the motivation. What motivates these people to do what they are doing? And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that when the people of this province — and they are in great numbers — begin to question the motives of the government, then the government hopefully will be able to reassess some of the means to that end that they have, which I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the people of this province, has very little to do with wellness. It has very little to do with changing over the model of Saskatchewan from the sickness model to the wellness model, but rather, Mr. Speaker, to reduce the funding of the Government of Saskatchewan so that the Government of Saskatchewan can come in with a little bit better balanced books.

And I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the people of this province that the pain that is going to be inflicted upon communities and many of the residents and citizens of this province is going to go for naught. Because I don't think that at the end of the day, from what I've seen in the programs and in the plans of this minister, are going to do that. I don't think that we are going to find that there are going to be cost savings.

Because, Mr. Speaker, when I take a view of what this plan is all about I find that there are too many of the initiatives proposed by this minister, proposed by the Minister of Finance, too many of the initiatives that are counter-productive — counter-productive. They're not going to save money; they are going to cost money.

And during the course of my remarks I want to bring that to their attention, that if they are going to continue on this goal, that they listen to the people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but notice also in their remarks — and I'm looking at *Hansard* of March 10, page 243 and so on — I couldn't help but notice how the Minister of Health began her remarks. And she goes back, as the NDP (New Democratic Party) are tending to do, to the good old days of Tommy Douglas, 30 years ago.

She begins by saying, some 30 years ago, Mr. Speaker, our province showed leadership through Tommy Douglas to establish the medicare system. But then she goes on, Mr. Speaker, and tries to rationalize what this government is proposing to do to the current health care system.

And it's recognized by everyone that we do have a very valuable health care system that is probably in need . . . is in need of a continual updating to make sure that it will continue to survive in a form that is going to give qualitative health for the people — qualitative, affordable health to the people of the province.

But then they try to rationalize and cloud the issue and still stay in touch with Tommy where she continues to say:

Tommy Douglas recognized that this was only the first step in terms of medicare because more recently he pointed to the need to revamp and reorganize the entire health care system.

And I think people should be cognitive of the fact that the minister now is trying to rationalize this major, major restructuring and perhaps gutting much of the work that Tommy Douglas did. And she's trying to rationalize it by quoting Tommy Douglas or suggesting that Tommy Douglas had a two-tier kind of an approach to the health care system. First you set it up; then you try to destroy it by revamping it. Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that that is something that people will be able to look through.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, in her remarks, the Minister of Health also indicated that in Saskatchewan we chose a developmental and a consultative process. We tabled a vision paper, she says. A vision paper, I would suggest to you, clouded with many cataracts and diseases and so on, that diabetics are going to be having to suffer as a result of some of the de-insuring of insulin and so on, among other things that she has already done.

But she says that we are a consultative process, and I want to pick up a little bit on that. Did she consult with the optometrists? Did she consult with the diabetics? Did she consult with the chiropractors? Did she consult with the hard, grass roots level people? And I'm going to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that she did not. Although in her remarks further on she does indicate that she actually had meetings, Mr. Speaker, where she says: I have personally attended meetings at Langenburg, Shaunavon, and Neilburg.

Well whoop-de-do, Mr. Speaker. This is a huge province with many, many folks and she has, she admits, consulted with three of those particular communities. I know, Mr. Speaker; I was in Eastend at one of her so-called consultative meetings where she was not, but rather sent her bureaucrats to deliver the message. She was not there. The people of Eastend said to the member from Shaunavon, please get us a meeting with the Minister of Health. The minister of . . . from Shaunavon committed himself and said, certainly, certainly by the end of two weeks the Minister of Health will be here.

Two weeks later in question period I asked the Minister of Health, did you consult, did you acknowledge the fact that these people wanted to speak to you, that they wanted to talk to you personally? And she said no, not yet. Well, Mr. Speaker, this was in spring and here we are . . . or in fall, pardon me, and here we are almost six, seven months later and she still has not kept the word of the member from Shaunavon. So the consultative process I am very much in doubt about.

Mr. Speaker, the other point that I want to bring out on some of the concerns that I have picked up from her remarks are that she says:

For the first time in the history of Saskatchewan what we will have are boards that will have flexibility within global funding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is something that has to be raised; that is something that has to be picked up. We will have the "boards that will have flexibility within global funding". In other words, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing here is that she's saying the boards will get a global amount of money. The Saskatoon Health Board, the Regina Health Board, the west central, the P.A. (Prince Albert), those that have been established and others that are going to be established will have a certain amount of money, a finite amount of money.

And I stress again, Mr. Speaker, that finite amount of money is going to be less than it was last year. It's going to be less than it was the year before because, in actual terms, Mr. — not only in actual terms; in budgetary terms the money is going to be reduced.

So we're going to have a board now that's going to have less money, less money available. So the boards are going to obviously have to make decisions. If we have less money available, that's obviously going to mean that we will be able to render fewer services.

Assuming though, that with the amalgamation and so on that there will be some cost savings, there's going to be less money; there will have to be fewer services; we're going to have to cut back on something. What are the cut-backs going to be?

And therein lies the dilemma, Mr. Speaker, as far as the offloading of responsibility and the offloading of actual funding, which I will be getting into in a little bit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we are . . . it's unfortunate that we are called upon today to debate the principle of this Bill because this Bill clearly has no basis to be in this legislature, this principle that we're talking about. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the central principle of this Bill, in my opinion, is simply an extension of the principle of the entire NDP government's political agenda.

In my heart I think and I feel that this is the motivational driving force for what this Minister of Health is doing because of the orders that she has received from the Minister of Finance and from the Premier.

So the NDP government's political agenda, I am going to try to show — and I already have I believe — this agenda is based, unfortunately — and I say this not with any kind of glee — I think this agenda is based on unfairness. I think it is based on misinformation. It is based on hardship and blame — blame as we see in every question period whenever a question is asked. It's always blame the other guys, blame somebody.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is what this is about. This government proves it is prepared to go to almost any lengths to avoid taking the responsibility for public policy in this province.

So instead, this Bill reflects the NDP government's desire to shift responsibility everywhere, everywhere, except upon itself. And in this case, it's shifting responsibility onto the centralized health boards that I was talking about a little while ago. In other words, everyone else is to blame except the NDP government itself.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have here an article from the *Star-Phoenix* of March 4, 1993, where some of the people in the province are responding about the "Proposed health legislation too late, RMS claim."

And one particular quote is from a Richard Anderson who is the mayor of Kerrobert. He claims that not only is it too late, but:

"We've had no direction at all on how to do this . . ."

"It's tough. They (in other words the government) should have had some framework on how to do this a long time ago."

I've had also some people from the Melfort area have told me that yes, the government has handed a ball, but they haven't told us any rules and they haven't told us where we're supposed to go with this ball. There's a sense of uncertainty, a sense of lack of direction.

Now I know the Minister of Health chastises me when I say that because at one point she says we're accusing them of being heavy-handed, the next time we say, well you got to give us more direction. But the heavy-handedness, Mr. Speaker, comes in with the bigger framework — the bigger framework where these people, these boards and so on, are being forced, are being hamstrung to operate under. And within the framework, within the parameters of that, they are being told, oh yes, you can do what you want; you have the freedom to make your own decisions. You have the freedom now of either raising your taxes or closing this facility or doing away with that service.

That's the type of operation under which many of these folks are now having to operate and it's unfair, Mr. Speaker. It's unfair to these folks. They're not very keen on getting on with it.

Now I could talk a lot about a particular clause in the Bill that says that there must be 8 elected, 10 elected, and 6 non-elected and so on, the numbers of the make-up of the board so that the government can still ultimately keep control of the board.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's coming to my attention now that these boards are having a great deal of difficulty getting people who are willing to let their name stand on this board — not that they're not motivated to be private citizens that volunteer. The volunteers within

this province is extremely strong. It's well-founded; it's deep-rooted. But the problem that these folks are having is that they realize that they will be the front men. They will be the axe for the Minister of Health, so that the Minister of Health can say, well I didn't do that; I had no hand in that; that was not my decision.

And I know that the same member that I quoted before is also saying something in this article. I make the statement in this article, Mr. Speaker, where it says:

Neudorf said these unpalatable choices make it difficult for the government to recruit board members.

I was told that. And then the article continues:

Anderson agreed, saying he wouldn't touch the job with a 10-foot pole.

Now this is a member, the mayor of Kerrobert, who recognizes the extreme stress that a position like that is going to have when you have to be the axe man for the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance and the Premier of this province.

And it goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

And neither would Cliff Wright, chair of the Saskatoon Health Board.

Now I don't take any pleasure in raising in this legislature the names of men, and women for that matter, who have done a tremendous service for this province over the many, many years. But it just seems to me when people of this stature are saying:

"Who is going to run?" asked Wright, who said he definitely doesn't intend to run for a board position.

"There's no opportunity to raise money. You're caught between the electors and the funding agency (the provincial government). I can't see it being a pleasant job."

I can't see it being a pleasant job. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that that is probably a mild understatement. Because I think that underscores one of the fundamental flaws that we have in this entire business of the health reform.

Because what it's doing, Mr. Speaker, it's the greatest, in my opinion, one of the greatest divide-and-conquer strategies of our lifetimes, Mr. Speaker. And it is literally tearing our communities apart. Not just urban/rural. We're all familiar with the urban/rural split in the last election. It was a big issue.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, I believe now that perhaps in addition to that, it's where rural communities are looking across at each other. They're looking across at each other over their shoulders. Because they're all concerned which community is going to gobble up the other community. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

We have the Minister of Health sowing great anticipation in the larger communities that they will have their hospitals expanded and offer more services. But the smaller surrounding communities, Mr. Speaker, are in despair that their facilities will be closed or savaged.

We have a Premier, Mr. Speaker, running around the province telling people that this legislation is necessary because the people have too much access to health. They have too much access to health care. That it is the people's fault, Mr. Speaker; that they want too much; that they are expecting too much.

And we have the Minister of Health chastising the former government for not being in touch enough . . . pardon me, for not being tough enough on the people. We were spending too much money. Yet she was the very same person, Mr. Speaker, that I remember very well in this same building here, chastising us strenuously for a meagre 4 per cent increase in Health; that we were destroying the health care system, the sacred health care system; we were destroying it by a 4 per cent increase in spending.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, she is on record now of having said, we will spend more on health. The Premier said, we will spend more on health. The Premier said, we'll spend more on education and we'll do it with no increase in taxes. We'll do it by remaining within our \$4.5 billion budget.

Those were the promises made, Mr. Speaker, by the folks opposite while they were so desperately seeking the highest office in the land, the Premier and the government of this province.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the people see all of this and they can hear the Premier telling them that they are responsible; that their diabetic mother is responsible; that their handicapped child is responsible; or that their aged sister is responsible.

And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that they hear this. And it hurts them, Mr. Speaker. It has to hurt them. And ultimately, Mr. Speaker, that type of an attack over a prolonged period of time as we have experienced, it's wearing the people down. It's wearing the people down.

And I go into my constituency on weekends and during the summer months and so on and they say to me, something has to be done. But what? What can we do? And they are almost on their knees right now, Mr. Speaker, they're almost literally on their knees, saying, should we give up? Perhaps it's time to give up.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you and I submit to the members opposite that what is happening here is that this government is taking out hope of our people, they're taking out the hope. We are, I am convinced, and I think the last little while has confirmed this — I am convinced that the government is determined to drive the people into such a state of despair that

there's no longer any fight left in them. And I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that we can stand for that. We cannot stand for that.

(1515)

When the budget is handed down tomorrow, if the Minister of Finance and the Premier are betting on the fact that they have knocked the people down often enough and far enough that they will not stand up to this government . . .

But I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and I submit to the Minister of Health and I submit to the Minister of Finance that they are not banking or betting on the resiliency of the people of Saskatchewan, that they will not stay down. And I submit to you that they will stand up, and I submit to you that they will fight.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and the Premier talk a good deal about cooperation, but they sow division. They talk a lot about consultation, but I submit to you that their actions are more of those of a bully — my way or no way. They talk about building, but I submit to you they are destroyers.

They impose restraint, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time are awash in patronage and cronyism. They speak, Mr. Speaker, of the future, but are living in the past. They print pamphlets about policy, but practice only blame. They speak of commitment, and break every promise made to the people.

Mr. Speaker, this government was won on deception and now feeds on despair. And the people are being asked, Mr. Speaker, to bear the burden of these betrayals through legislation.

And I submit to you also, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot stand by and watch while the people of Saskatchewan continue to be hoodwinked by the Premier. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I feel and I see that we are being presented a forced conspiracy, a forced conspiracy which has the potential of destroying our health care system that has been so fondly a major building block, as it were, of members opposite.

And I say conspiracy, Mr. Speaker, because many groups in our society have been unwittingly or in many cases forcibly caused to join in this campaign of pain as it relates to the health care. And today I ask all people to examine carefully the health care agenda of this government. Let's look at it in an objective way with a thoughtful approach and you will see, undoubtedly, the fallacies of many of their statements just jumping out at you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to this point the government has succeeded in a very important political objective for the NDP Party, and that objective has been to keep the public debate extremely narrow, very focused, and extremely confused. That I believe has been an objective, an objective that they've done very well in — to focus attention on one aspect of their strategy so that the real facts can remain hidden.

The focus that I'm talking about is the issue of centralization. The whole health care debate thus far, in my opinion, has been centred on that one issue, and that it has been extremely uncritical focus, in my opinion. And many people have taken it on faith, Mr. Speaker, that massive centralization will result in cost savings; massive centralization at first blush seems to indicate that there should be large cost savings.

And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to the Minister of Health, prove it. Prove it. I've asked that question in question period: prove it. There has been no answer forthcoming.

The Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, has not produced one shred of documentary evidence to support that claim. She throws out numbers about the annual costs of hospitals, and in the same statements, Mr. Speaker, in the same statements, absolutely promises that the same amount of funding will be available afterwards. The same amount of funding will be available.

Now I ask you, does that make sense? How is that reducing costs? Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the real facts are not being fairly reported nor debated as they relate to this Bill and the whole health care agenda of this government.

I'm told, Mr. Speaker, that 80 per cent of hospital spending — 80 per cent of all hospital spending — is expended on the seven hospitals in the major cities. Eighty per cent goes to seven hospitals. Now if that's an accurate figure, Mr. Speaker, it is absurd to suggest that large-scale closures of rural hospitals will save anything, even if the minister was not forthright when she promised continued funding. Eighty per cent is in the urban already, so where's your cost saving if you're talking about the remaining 20 per cent, and only saving a portion of that.

I'm also told that it costs many multiples less to treat a patient in a rural hospital than it does to treat the same patient in Regina or in Saskatoon. And if that's true, where's the cost saving?

Then, Mr. Speaker, let's look at what happened to the VON (Victorian Order of Nurses) here in Regina, and you know that this government is not saving money. We all recall about a week ago, maybe two weeks ago by now, what happened in Regina with the VON.

This Bill will give legal life to Regina's centralized health board which is the NDP basis for the destruction of one of our oldest, most respected, and most financially efficient health care institutions in Saskatchewan, which is the Victorian Order of Nurses.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the VON brings in almost 200,000 — I believe it's between 150 and \$175,000 — a year of its own money to the table, year in, year out. That \$175,000, Mr. Speaker, does not come from the taxpayer. It does not come from the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. That is out of the volunteerism of the people of Saskatchewan. The volunteer money of \$175,000, I am told is now not going to be available to the

Government of Saskatchewan.

Where is the cost saving in doing away with the VON? Important services, for example, that the VON was able to provide, like foot service — foot care. The general population is hoodwinked when they hear it only as being foot care. It's trivialized but many times when we mention this, by members of the NDP it's trivialized, and it's unfortunate that it has to be stooped to that.

Because the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that seniors who are denied access to foot care lose their mobility and end up losing a large part of their quality of life. And the VON did a good job of providing that service. The seniors then would more rapidly deteriorate and become a larger burden on the health care system for big dollars, not just a few that it takes to provide for proper foot care.

So what does this government do, Mr. Speaker? What does it do? It simply nationalizes the VON, nationalizes the VON; replaces their volunteer money with tax money. Is that saving the taxpayer money, Mr. Speaker? Is that rationalizing health care services? Is that the direction that this enlightened Minister of Health is taking us through this massive restructuring of the health care system of Saskatchewan?

That does not save money. It is counter-productive, as many of your initiatives are. And it's up to this opposition here to make sure that we point that out to you — not as eloquently as the VON can do themselves; not as eloquently as the folks from the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre and the people that access that service — but we must continue to keep trying to show you folks that not all of the things, in fact precious few of the things, that you are doing are going to be productive in the long run.

You save at one spot and cost the taxpayer money — more money — in some other areas. So nationalizing services, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you and to the people of Saskatchewan that are provided by volunteer agencies, is the most foolhardy, costly, and socially irresponsible action that any government could contemplate.

They have been proven time and again to save money by reducing the need for more expensive services and more expensive treatments.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government pulled these services out of medicare. They removed these services from health insurance, simply de-insured them. And now we are told it will be centralized boards that will carry the blame for these financially costly choices. Why would you want to do that?

The same thing that has happened for example, the decision time for VON in Regina. Well in Regina decision time for the VON apparently is too late. Volunteerism, counter-productivity.

We have here on Friday, February 26, in the

Star-Phoenix again, a headline that says: "1,000 respond to free eye exam offer". Mr. Speaker, another one of those de-insured services that this government, that this Minister of Health, on orders from the Minister of Finance, decided that these were no longer going to be insured. So they were de-insured. A counter-productive action taken by the government hoping to save money, hoping to save money.

Chiropractors — hoping to save money. And yet, Mr. Speaker, we know full well that the people now who are being denied this access, this entry into the health system through the chiropractic services, many times if that would have been accessible, the treatment could have been done at a low cost, very effective, low technology. As the petitions that we continue to enter into this House continue to impress upon members of the government, if this would have been continued there would be no need in many cases — certainly not exclusively but in many cases — no need for the more costly physiotherapists route.

Or the ophthalmologist route when it comes to chiropractors. And you compound that situation by de-insuring insulin where we know, we know that ultimately the diabetics are going to suffer some chronic eye disease. If they're not going to get proper treatment, if they are going to be dissuaded from using optometrists to make sure that they're on top of their eye condition, the members opposite are trying to tell us that this is a productive way of saving money. It is not, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you. It is counter-productive.

And even the optometrists in this newspaper article that I was referring to a moment ago, took it upon themselves to give free eye examinations — "1,000 responded to free eye exam offer" — 1,000. This was during the Vision Awareness Week. The need is there, Mr. Speaker, the need is there.

(1530)

Many people, the optometrist says:

... simply don't have the money for eye care.

I'm quoting here. This Dr. Cydney Hayes continues:

She said many eye conditions, such as cataracts and glaucoma, develop insidiously.

Without the people knowing about it, without them knowing that they've contracted this disease and that it's going to just continually get worse in their system.

So why would we use a system ostensibly to save money, full well knowing in the long run it's going to cost more money, it's going to be counter-productive — counter-productive, which seems to be a theme that this government is following, not only in health care.

I can give you oodles of examples in the agricultural field where programs are being cut and slashed, trying to save money and at the same time being

counter-productive.

And the same thing we will experience tomorrow when the budget is handed down, when we find out that departments are being slashed, cut, amalgamated, reduced — people being fired, laid off. Everybody except of course cabinet ministers. They've been able to convince the Premier that they want to keep their jobs at \$500,000, more or less, per cabinet minister. Counter-productive, Mr. Speaker, counter-productive.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of this, the Minister of Health has removed these services from Health. They've removed them for sometimes very costly and foolish, financially ineffective choices. And I wonder sometimes, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP members have any idea of the grief and the pain that they are causing, and ironically, not saving any money in the process.

It is not enough that a diabetic is driven to threaten cabinet ministers over the loss of his insulin coverage, yet they keep the steamroller moving, rolling over people that are becoming desperate.

And I say to the business community, Mr. Speaker, be careful before you buy into this fallacy that the government is saving money. It's not saving money through centralization and nationalization.

I submit to you however, Mr. Speaker, and to the folks opposite, regionalization can work, it can work if properly approached. I remind the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Finance, the Premier, that it was the previous administration that began this process. The difference I believe was that it was started in a sensitive and a developmental way.

It was not accepted by members opposite who continued to hoot and to holler and to chastise us for daring to reduce some of the funding, reduce some of the ways in which services were being delivered. However I remind you that fundamental to our process was one of sensitivity. I remind you that first of all what we did, as an example, is that integrated facilities were being put into place, integrated facilities. Home care funding was increased. And in fact I'm proud to say that home care funding was by far the biggest increase in the health budget — 10 per cent each year.

Now I know that even 10 per cent was probably — not only probably — even 10 per cent was not enough because of the need that was there. But we did extend as far as possible a 10 per cent increase, while the rest of the Department of Health was somewhere between 3 and 4 per cent.

And the government members opposite, in opposition at the time, railed against us for having the audacity to do this, and promised that when elected they would spend more on health and education. The Premier knew that there was a \$14.2 billion deficit at the time. He said that, he said that in the leaders' debate. He knew that. He said that \$4.5 billion was enough — any government should be able to operate within

those parameters. He knew that. He knew that.

But, Mr. Speaker, we established integrated facilities, we increased home care funding, and we encouraged volunteer services. We encouraged volunteer services, Mr. Speaker — we did not nationalize them.

Mr. Speaker, communities were given the space and the confidence to work out their own arrangements without government threats and intimidation. Indeed the first regional board that this minister opened was started under the previous administration — by the initiatives, I might add, by the initiatives of the community themselves, not big government, not Big Brother in Regina breathing down their shoulders, breathing down their necks. There was no blackmail, there was no threat. They were not told that if you don't do this, we'll chop your funding for basic services. They were not told this.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government has grander schemes — schemes that cost money, that centralize control. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, more importantly, schemes that do not address the underlying problems facing the system.

I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister publicly admits that she does not even know what the problems are, yet she is in the process . . . busily destroying community services and people in the name of solving those problems that she has not yet identified.

Now I know she's probably wondering what I'm talking about, but I say that because she admits she does not know what the problems because she clearly . . . she would not be appointing expensive study teams to find out what the problems are if she already had identified them and knew what they were.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill should not in fact be passed because the minister herself, by her statements and by her actions, the minister herself concedes that she does not have the information needed to be making the decisions that she is making right now. She says, for an example, that she is in the process of consulting with municipalities about how to fund this Bill. Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister is still consulting about such a basic, important issue, clearly the Bill is not ready for passage.

She said that she is consulting, or she has consulted, about what will happen to 800 severely handicapped children under this regime that this Bill imposes. Mr. Speaker, I say to you that if she did not know what was going to happen to 800 handicapped kids, if she did not know that anything was going to happen to them, then clearly, clearly, we can question what this piece of legislation is doing before the Assembly. It's a convenient way, Mr. Speaker, for the minister, as she did in question period when I asked her about it in question period, it's an attempt by the government to wash its hands of responsibility. It's an offloading of responsibility, and as before and as we will prove in subsequent debates, it's offloading of funding as well onto the property taxpayers.

She says that she is consulting and has even commissioned a study to find the answers about what will happen to Whitespruce under the system that this Bill proposes. Mr. Speaker, if the minister does not have the answer about Whitespruce, then what in the world is she doing presenting this type of legislation before this legislature? I ask you.

The minister says she's consulting with specialists to determine the effects of this Bill on the supply of health care specialists in the province, Mr. Speaker. And I say, if the minister does not know what will happen to our critical health care specialists under this Bill, then what is this Bill doing before the Assembly?

The minister says that she's consulting about the good sisters in Moose Jaw, that the Leader of the Opposition is very familiar with. If she's consulting with the good sisters in Moose Jaw to see how they can be accommodated under the centralization of this Bill — if she's consulting, well what is this Bill doing before us now? Mr. Speaker, should not the minister have answers before she proposes laws to control the various people of this province?

The minister said she was consulting with the lab technologists and private lab companies, including lobbyists like former NDP minister, Elwood Cowley. I don't think we can forget that. But would it not have made sense, Mr. Speaker, for the minister to at least finish consultations with her own NDP lobbyists before she presents legislation of this type to this legislature?

Mr. Speaker, the minister says she's consulting almost everyone everywhere on every aspect of this Bill and its consequences. She's spending tax dollars on committees, commissions, task forces, and studies to try to answer all the questions that this very Bill raises.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that this is an open admission that this Bill is premature. You're not ready for this Bill. You're not ready. In your big haste to be seen as being in charge, as being in control, of showing the people of this province that you know what you're doing, I say this Bill is premature. She's trying to solve problems that she cannot identify. She has not identified problems and she's trying to solve them.

So I would say that it would be a good step forward if the Premier would say to the Minister of Health, hold it. Let's backtrack, let's check this thing. And I would also say at the same time to the Leader of the NDP, I would also say to the Minister of Finance who are regulating this entire situation, I say to them: don't try to take refuge in some excuse about the deficit. That would be shameful duplicity I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that there is no evidence these measures are contributing anything toward reducing the deficit, and in fact you have taken the province from a 265 million deficit to nearly a billion dollar deficit in every budget that you bring down. These measures are not

taken to address the deficit, and there's every reason to believe they will in fact increase the deficit, not reduce it. That's the point that I've been trying to make.

Now if you want to address the problem with funding of health care . . . And that is a major problem; we know that within health care and education we probably are spending in excess of 80 per cent of the budget. But then let's address the funding problem in health care honestly. And I suggest to the Premier that he take seriously the suggestion of the opposition which we made last session.

I say to the Premier: assign an all-party committee of this Assembly to go to the people and genuinely consult with them about the entire health care system. They've got all kinds of ideas about how to address the situation. Those ideas may range from privatizing parts of the health care to province-wide, mass buying programs. And I'm sure that they would run the gamut of the extremes and all shades of grey in the middle. So, Mr. Premier, if you wish to tap the creativity of the people, it would help tremendously.

But your minister insists in hiding the process, hiding the process. Oh, I know, I know that the minister has admitted that she has attended three town meetings where the public was invited to attend. I know that the Department of Health has attended innumerable public meetings. But always that buffer of bureaucrats delivering the message. Always the bureaucrats delivering the message. But those meetings, Mr. Speaker, are restricted to discussing the centralization scheme and they are meetings where people are told what will happen, not where they are consulted about what will happen.

Again we come back to that whole scenario that I described before. Oh yes, people, you can say, you can determine your direction, but within these parameters, but within this global budget. And that is called consultation? That is called grass roots, ability of people to determine their own direction, their own wants? That's where this process is flawed, Mr. Speaker.

The public meetings, the public meetings of the Minister of Health, I submit to you, are a joke. The people that walk away from these meetings — and I've been to them, I've witnessed it — the people walk away completely disheartened. They're confused. Like I said before, one fellow told me, I was given the ball but I don't know what to do with it.

(1545)

And they know that they've had no impact and that the real decisions are being made behind closed doors; they're being made in secret. The minister holds secret meetings with interest groups, I'll grant her that. I think she has met with a lot of the groups — not all of them, not all of them. The chiropractors will attest to that. And then she makes threats and she makes deals. And we will have more of that in evidence and proof of that coming out. But the general

public, Mr. Speaker, the people cannot see behind those doors.

And then we have the Minister of Finance now who professes to be the minister of federal elections. The member from Regina North East instructed, personally instructed officials meeting with the chiropractors to tell those health care providers that they would either accept partial deinsurance or they would be kicked out of medicare completely.

That was the message, Mr. Speaker, delivered by the Minister of Finance's officials. That's the consultative process that we have been talking about, Mr. Speaker. In any language, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that that is anything except consultation.

Where are the facts, Mr. Speaker, that support the NDP leader's health care program, that support this shady piece of legislation? Where are the facts? The Minister of Health tells us that she is just now getting studies in place to collect the facts. I've gone through that already. Well then, what do you think you're doing?

The hypocrisy of the entire thing, Mr. Speaker, is just simply breathtaking. The most solemn commitment of the NDP in winning the last election was not to get rid of harmonization; it was to protect the health care system — to protect the health care system. And the Leader of the NDP says he never made any such promises.

So let's take him back, Mr. Speaker, to some of the major news stories at a major news conference during the election itself. And the press gallery, Mr. Speaker, will remember this news conference.

The NDP leader at the time claimed that he had a leaked cabinet document. He stated that this document was a plan to increase fees on the drug plan. He had a leaked document that said here is proof that those evil Tories are prepared to increase fees on the drug plan, remove medical services from coverage, and so on. Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader then stated loudly and aggressively that his document was proof positive that the PCs (Progressive Conservative) were going to destroy medicare. Imagine that — increasing the cost of the drug plan.

If you want to protect medicare, he told the people, if you want to stop this terrible agenda of increased fees on the drug plan, an attack on the very basis of medicare itself, then vote for me. Vote for me, he said. We will protect medicare.

Well anybody who can remember back to October of '91 during the provincial election campaign will recall that we as PCs had one heck of a time on our hands explaining that. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was one of the option plans that the folks in Finance had come up with. But no, I can tell you, it had not been considered by cabinet and it was not something that represented PC policy.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP loudly

proclaimed, loudly proclaimed to the people of this province that none of these things, if he was elected, would happen. He would not do any of those things. That to save medicare the people of Saskatchewan had to vote NDP.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? The people believed him. The people believed the NDP, that the NDP would hold medicare as sacred.

In fact, he went further, Mr. Speaker. He said, the now Minister of Health said, we will spend more on health. We will spend more on health, more on education. We will not increase taxes. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The people believed.

That's why the people across the way were elected. That's why you were elected, I say to you members across the way. You were elected because the now Premier said 4.5 billion is enough. We will not have to raise taxes for two years, said the member from Regina, the Labour critic now. We will not raise any taxes for two years. We will do away with the hamburger tax. There will be no harmonization because there will not be any need for it.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, they said that if we can do away, and we will, we will do away with waste and mismanagement, and that will bring us all the money that we need to run this government. In fact he said if anybody can't live under \$4.5 billion budget, they don't deserve to be in government. What's your budget now, I ask members opposite? What's your . . . Do you wonder why people are upset? They were upset with us and we paid the price; we got booted out.

You people got elected on deception. You said you would do all of these things for the people of Saskatchewan. And what have you done? What have you done in your first 16 months in office? I ask members across the way, what are you going to do to this province tomorrow? What are you going to do? What pain and what suffering are you going to inflict upon the people tomorrow?

They were not expecting that of you because you got elected on that fundamental premise that the people looked at your agenda, the people looked at what you were promising, and then they looked at us. And I'm the first one to admit they didn't like us. They didn't like us. They told us that in no uncertain terms. There's a little group left over here to attest to that.

And I know the member from Athabasca smiles and so on. But the fact is that if the people had to do this over again, if they would have known, if they would have known, what would have happened then?

The member from Athabasca says he remembers it in 1982. So we have a little bit of empathy there. We both understand each other from that point of view.

But this is the key issue that . . . one of the key issues, Mr. Speaker, that I want to bring forward, that the people of this province were not expecting this attack

on the medicare system. Were they expecting rationalization? Were they expecting an increase in efficiencies? Of course they were, and they have a right to. And I don't think that that is what we would be objecting to.

But when a bunch of folks get elected on a promise that they full well knew what they were getting into just to get elected, that's where the betrayal comes in, Mr. Speaker. That is where the disappointment of the people of Saskatchewan come in.

So, Mr. Speaker, the saving of medicare could only be accomplished if you voted NDP. That's what I would want to remind the people of this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP has been in government for 18 months. And all the things that he publicly renounced, he is now embracing. And no, Mr. Speaker, I don't think under any circumstances we can let him get off the hook by saying that he made no promises.

I don't think it's being honest with the people of Saskatchewan when every question period he resorts to holding up his little two-page, three-page pamphlet, so-called the NDP Bible during the election. I don't think that is sufficient. I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that tells the whole story to the people of Saskatchewan.

Because he did make promises. One of the most basic, fundamental, specific was to oppose and not to implement the proposals for increased drug plan fees, chiropractic fees, optometry, and so on. And that, Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated already, is a matter of public record. That's why the hypocrisy of the situation breathes through this place. And I don't think it's any wonder why the citizenry of this province are throwing up their hands in disgust.

Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough for the government to blame the deficit, to blame the debt for their broken faith with the people of Saskatchewan. Every question period, every question period, Mr. Speaker, that deal at all with anything of the finances of this province, both the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province light up the blame thrower and they blame everybody except themselves. They're still reluctant, perhaps incapable of accepting the responsibility of government and the faith that the people of this province put into them when they gave them such a resounding victory in October of '91.

Mr. Speaker, a question that could be asked, how does the NDP seek political justification for this Bill, for its health care agenda? In every speech, Mr. Speaker, in every engagement, in every corner, in every corner of this besieged province the members of the government are sounding and mouthing one phrase. It is a phrase that's been tested by pollsters and subjected to the most minute investigation of focus groups, and it is hoped to be the salvation of this government adrift — a government, Mr. Speaker, in literal disarray.

And that slogan, that motto is: we have no choice. We have no choice, is the inspirational rallying cry of the NDP. Give me a break, the Premier trumpets at every opportunity. We have no choice. We have no choice, Mr. Speaker. We must dismantle basic health care and we have to pass this legislation. We have no choice, says the member for Riversdale.

But, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you, to the people of this province, and implore the members opposite, the government, that that is simply not true. There are choices. There are choices, and they are being made cognizantly on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to deal with those choices in a moment. But let me first of all say how deeply hurtful this campaign of despair has been and is, for our people. They have largely come to accept the prognostications by the government and spread far and near by the media. The people are actually beginning to believe that there is no choice.

Mr. Speaker, that belief has been entrenched by the Premier's betrayal and sustained by his unrelenting preaching of doom and gloom. He had to do that, he had to do that. First of all you fire up the deficit and you preach doom and gloom long enough, loud enough, often enough, first of all you begin to believe it, he begins to believe it, and the people of the province begin to believe it.

And certainly the minister who used to be called the minister of Community Services believed it in Melfort, and was roundly and thoroughly chastised by the citizens of Melfort for costing them a golden opportunity for a big hotel chain to come in and create jobs and economic spin-off in her community. But she chose the same path of spreading gloom and doom.

Knock the people down hard enough, often enough, low enough, and they will not have the resiliency to rebound and to object against what you are going to be subjecting them to, have in the past, and undoubtedly will again tomorrow.

(1600)

This strategy, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you, of the NDP leader is clear. And sadly it appears to be having a significant success in misleading the people. The strategy is undoubtedly to drive the people to such a state of hopelessness, such a state of despair, that there is no fight left in them, no fight left to oppose the Bill and to stop this threat to their health care system, unless they've got the wherewithal in their own hip . . . national pockets to foot the bill.

And so beaten, Mr. Speaker, and oppressed by this purveyor of pain, the people do start to wonder if there is any point in resistance. After all, after all, Mr. Speaker, the government had no choice. The government had no choice. But, Mr. Speaker, I say to you that there is hope and it can spring proudly and with optimism from these halls, from the stores, from the farms, from the factories, and from the homes throughout this grand province of ours.

I proclaim, Mr. Speaker, that the excuse, that the excuse of no choice is simply a black falsehood that we can and that we must defeat, and the campaign to defeat the monster of despair must begin in earnest. Because if we do not defeat the desperation the government hopes to impose on us through Bills such as this, there will be precious little left for us. We will be left with even less than what this government has already created in the name of the structures proposed by this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it has created an unfair, a multi-tiered health care system without regard to the consequences for our families. And, Mr. Speaker, they in truth have also not had regard for the financial cost of their choices.

And I say that again because that has been an integral part of the comments that I'm making this afternoon. They are mostly counter-productive. The Premier continually rests on the deficit of his justification for this Bill and all other actions. And in her remarks introducing this Bill, the minister stated that the financial situation of the province is their main reason behind this legislation.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, it seems that we have 18 ministers of Finance and no Minister of Health in this government, Mr. Speaker. They smile. They smile, Mr. Speaker. But what I'm asking now in a most serious way, where is the advocate for the health care system on the government side? What happened, Mr. Speaker, to the basic, fundamental concept that a minister must be an advocate for his or her portfolio, not its executioner, Mr. Speaker.

We have 18 ministers of Finance, and it seems, no Minister of Health. Because the Minister of Health not only jumps when the Minister of Finance and the Premier says something, but asks how high? History will record, Mr. Speaker, that fact solemnly; that under this NDP government there was no voice from the NDP benches speaking in favour of the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, a few days ago it was absolutely incredible to hear the Minister of Health in question period chastising the opposition for not having the courage to implement the Murray Commission report. Remember that, members opposite — the cheering you did when she chastised us for that? And she said that we just put the Murray Commission into the trash can. And that was absolutely incredible, Mr. Speaker.

A report, Mr. Speaker, that she reviled and opposed and bitterly condemned.

Today she says you should have implemented that report; you should not have put it in the trash can. And I remember so distinctly when she reviled Mr. McLeod as minister of Health about the Murray Commission report. And then she says that there would be no need for this Bill had we taken those steps and had we taken those measures. What hypocrisy. What politicization for the convenience of the

moment.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the previous government did not need this kind of legislation. We were allowing communities to develop together, to work at their own pace to come up with creative alternatives. And there was, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you enormous progress being made, maybe not as rapidly as we would have liked.

And in the face of that progress, Mr. Speaker, the now Minister of Health charged that the people were being forced. Remember her days in opposition here, the Minister of Health charged that the people were being forced to choose between drugs and groceries. Remember that? And at one point, she even claimed that the health care restructuring that we were doing was responsible for the death of a heart patient. We all remember that. The theatrics and the depths to which that minister would go in her days of opposition.

Mr. Speaker, all of that venom, all of that vitriol, all of that hate, all of that hostility, and here, here today, she presents a Draconian Bill and condemns the previous government for not having implemented such legislation much sooner.

And what does she say today, Mr. Speaker? She says she has no choice. Now the deficit is the real issue, not the health and welfare of the people of this province.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, regardless, even in her self-accepted role as a junior Finance minister, this Bill and the plan she attaches to this Bill will cost the taxpayer a great deal more money, not less. It will not achieve the objectives set for us.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, you will see the NDP deficit balloon again and again in spite of their attack on the well-being of the average person in this province. It will cost more. And more importantly perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it will be a grossly unfair program. A grossly unfair program, Mr. Speaker.

How has the health care system become unfair, Mr. Speaker, would be a good question.

Well I'll give you a few examples. I know members opposite don't think along that line, but I'll tell you: respiratory patients are treated differently in this system than someone with a cold. Think about that. Respiratory patients are being treated differently than someone with a cold.

Diabetics are treated differently than someone with a sprained ankle. Just think about that.

People with back pain are treated differently than someone with a headache. You think about that, the reality of that. And certainly rural people are being treated differently than urban people.

The NDP health plan is demonstrably unfair. These NDP measures, Mr. Speaker, as I have said again and again, are going to cost more, not less.

A chiropractor is less expensive than a back surgeon. An optometrist is cheaper than an ophthalmologist. Treating children at the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre is less costly than treating them in an acute care bed. And that's the route that the Minister of Health was prepared to go until the representatives of the 800 handicapped children of this province stood up and protested loudly and vocally, and effectively, I might add.

Providing insulin, I suggest to members opposite, is less costly than treating shock or supporting a patient in a coma. The VON is at least 150 to \$175,000 less costly to the taxpayer than the nationalized system that you folks have set up now. And this litany can go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP health Bill will cost more, not less. The whole Bill, Mr. Speaker, is built on falsehoods.

While the NDP — and I would suggest the Liberals — say that yes, we need to close rural hospitals to save money, as I have pointed out to you, Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of the hospital budget is spent on seven hospitals in the major cities. It's less expensive, Mr. Speaker, to treat a patient in a rural hospital than it is in Regina or Saskatoon. The care available to people in the cities will deteriorate as rural people come in, expanding waiting-lists. No one wins. People are hurting and it would seem from actions of members opposite that the NDP don't seem to care.

Mr. Speaker, essential care is being drawn . . . withdrawn, pardon me. Essential care is being withdrawn by this government through this Bill. For example, the reason we have more nursing home beds than other provinces is because we have more old people who need the help. It's a known fact, Mr. Speaker, that we have a higher percentage of senior citizens in this province than in any other province in Canada. But the NDP Minister of Health does not tell you that, does not tell you that we have more elderly per capita and that we have huge waiting-lists of elderly people in need of special care homes . . . special care beds, pardon me. There's never, it seems, enough of them. And the NDP know well about that from their sojourn in government in the 1970s.

In the latter half of the 1970s, for a six-year period of time there was a complete moratorium on special care beds. And that's one of the reasons why I was elected in 1986. The people did not want to have a repeat of this attack on the elderly people in our province. People recognize that seniors in our province are valuable, that even though they may be in the golden years of their life, they still are valuable, that they have a lot to contribute. Never mind the fact that after going through 65 to 85 years of life, they have earned, they have earned this respect from the people of this province. So . . .

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

An Hon. Member: — Will the member take a question?

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize the age-old trick of a member getting up to destroy the thoughtful intent that people were listening to my speech. And certainly I would suggest to the hon. member that . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member did not want to take a question, therefore the member must continue with his speech.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Although I did not allow the member to ask the question, I was prepared to give him an answer.

Mr. Speaker, time after time in question period we asked the members of the cabinet of this government salient questions, thought-provoking questions, and we are looking for answers, Mr. Speaker, and never do we get an answer. And members opposite have the audacity to get up and ask questions when they're not even prepared to answer questions. It seems ironic, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly I look forward to the member from Regina North West getting up in this debate and enlightening us as to some of the reasons why they are doing what they are doing with this particular Bill and trying to justify it. I challenge, Mr. Speaker, all members across the way to please don't sit on your backsides, don't sit on your hands when you have the opportunity to participate in debate.

This small opposition of 10 members here is becoming renowned for its ability to hold up the . . . literally hold up the activities within this legislature by our debate. And members opposite think that by sitting back, refusing to debate, that they will wear us out, that we will not be able to fulfil the functions of an opposition. And it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

(1615)

So I challenge members opposite, please participate; show that you have the conviction of your beliefs; that indeed and in fact, which I doubt, you fully support your Minister of Health and Minister of Finance in this attack upon the health care system of our province. It's not well thought out. I've gone through many, many specific examples of what is wrong with this Bill, that this Bill is in fact untimely, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill has not been well thought through; that there has been virtually no grass roots consultation.

The minister says she's been in three communities in the province. That is not communication, that's not dialogue, that's not consultation. And when she admits that she's got so many committees running through the province trying to find out what the problem is, trying to find out what the problems are, that why have a Bill before the House that addresses the problems that she cannot identify. I've said that previously, Mr. Speaker, but I reiterate.

Home care beds in the '70s, Mr. Speaker, was part of

the litany of what the people in this province objected to after the NDP had been in for 11 years. They objected to that, Mr. Speaker, because they felt that seniors . . . with home care beds for seniors were something that was desperately needed, special care home beds. So to justify this legislation, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government tells you only that we have more special care beds per capita, that we do not need them. And again, Mr. Speaker, that is going to be counter-productive in the long run. It's going to counter-productive in the long run.

And the NDP does not tell you the reason why we have more small hospitals than most other jurisdiction is because we have more small towns and we have larger distances. This province is unique. And I don't think, with greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, that we can compare ourselves on an equal footing with provinces like Ontario where you have huge groups, conglomerates of population. Over short distances it makes sense to have more larger, centralized hospitals than it does in Saskatchewan. And you people don't seem to realize that we are a unique province with a small population base, long distances involved, many, many miles of highways, and that therefore this translates into a higher per capita need.

The same thing as a per capita of road distances for example; we have more roads per capita, more miles of road per capita than any other province as well. Is that why the Minister of Highways now is going to close down many of our highways, shut them down because we've got too many miles of it and can't afford it? That kind of reasoning, members opposite, does not make sense.

The reason, Mr. Speaker, the reason we used to cover insulin and oxygen is because people needed those kinds of things to stay alive. Now what you're doing in the interests of economy is you're charging people for the air that they breathe, for the insulin that they need to stay alive. And they're going to cut back — you know that — and there's the concomitant diseases and so on that are a result of that.

Mr. Speaker, people, because of actions like that, are hurting. They're hurting. And I'm coming to the conclusion that the NDP don't seem to care because they've got 18 Finance ministers on their benches. They have no advocate for Health. And that is the responsibility of the Minister of Health, not to chorus in union with the Minister of Finance that we have to save money — that's not her job. Her job is to be an advocate for the ministry for which she took an oath.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we're finding out is that we are going to, and we do, have a multi-tiered health care system because of this Bill. Not only do people, different people get different treatment, as I have just gone through a few minutes ago, different people are still going to get different kinds of treatment when we come to the wealthy.

Those folks across the way are fond of talking about the wealth. They don't know how to create wealth, but they can recognize it when someone else has it.

But what happens in this kind of a system, Mr. Speaker.? We find out that the wealthy will still get the treatment that they want, in spite of these people, by going to the States. They can afford to do that.

But what about the middle class, Mr. Speaker, and the poor? The middle class and the poor are on waiting-lists for even the most basic procedures. And the Premier of this province stands before the people and moans, we have no choice, we have no choice.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, as I've already pointed out, the Minister of Health says that these changes are not budget driven but are intended to improve wellness. Well if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, then the deficit should have no bearing on the issue. Clearly, clearly with the tremendous increase in cost to the taxpayer that these changes represent, the government is not in fact making them to address the deficit.

Now why are they doing it? To break the will of the people, and as that will is eroded, Mr. Speaker, as that will is broken, the Premier stands and says, now is the time for more tax increases. Tomorrow is the time for more tax increases. I have no choice. I have no choice.

That is what this Bill is all about, Mr. Speaker, not health care — tax increases, tax increases, offloading to the property tax.

But the Premier does have choices, Mr. Speaker. He does. He could opt for the least expensive forms of medical care, as I've outlined. But instead he attacks them.

He could, Mr. Speaker, go . . . he could choose to go to full harmonization, but instead he makes selective concessions for the few and major tax increases for the many.

He could choose, Mr. Speaker, to sell shares in SaskEnergy. But instead, he chooses to borrow hundreds of millions for the new pipeline that are needed and by borrowing, reduces the resources available for health care.

He could choose, Mr. Speaker, to cut spending dramatically on government administration. But instead he spends \$100,000 a month on flying his cabinet ministers around and then chooses to eliminate coverage for diabetics.

He could choose to keep his election promise of a small cabinet, of a war cabinet of 10, with no expansion to 18 — and he promised us that. He said there would be no expansion in cabinet until the government could afford them. So what are we to read into this, Mr. Speaker? That somehow now the government is in a position to afford 18 cabinet ministers — 18 cabinet ministers that the taxpayer of this province is going to have to pay for.

Mr. Speaker, he could choose to eliminate . . . or not to

eliminate, but rather to reduce all government salaries by 4 per cent — that would be a possibility. But instead he chooses to reduce the incomes of all families even further by more tax increases and particularly the property tax increases this Bill will generate.

He could choose to get rid of his little policy units that he has running around under every minister in every department. But instead he advertises for more associate deputy ministers, toy ministers, and spends on salaries rather than on eye examinations.

He could choose to cut out the layer of middle management — and that'll be interesting tomorrow — all the executive directors of this and that. But instead he chooses to stop covering chiropractic patients.

Mr. Speaker, he could choose to close down redundant advocacy units in various branches and departments, including the Department of Health. But instead he hires on a new social policy adviser, a new social policy adviser in his own office.

Mr. Speaker, he could choose to keep his election promises about patronage and nepotism. But instead we find the sons and daughters of NDP cabinet ministers who are getting plum patronage appointments.

Mr. Speaker, he has choices. He has plenty of choices. It's just that he's making, Mr. Speaker, all the wrong choices. And this Bill is the height of bad choices that this Premier is making. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of concern. There is a lot of concern about these bad choices and the effect that it's going to have on people. The bad choices that he is making is evident as one travels around this province.

Because in spite of the concerted effort to bring the people of this province to their knees, they are rising up and they are saying to me and they are saying to members of our caucus, we don't like what's happening. We think we know where the government is going. We are suspicious of their motives. We don't trust them. We don't trust them. They have betrayed that trust too often and we think we know what the ulterior motive behind this health reform is.

And they are telling me, and that's why I have repeated a number of times what they are telling me. This afternoon I've repeated a number of times already. Fundamentally they are convinced that the ulterior motive of this government is simply to do a massive offloading, an offloading, number one, of responsibility, and number two, of funding.

The offloading of responsibility. That is why Mr. Anderson and Mr. Wright are saying, we're not going to touch the elected portion of those health care boards with a 10-foot pole. They want nothing to do with that because it's going to be pitting one community after another, against another. And the people that are going to be on this board are going to have to be the messenger. They are going to be the executioners of the wishes of this minister.

Because there won't be funding. There won't be the money. They know that. And they are going to be forced into a position of making the painful choices on behalf of the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province. They recognize that.

That is why I think you're going to have trouble getting enough elected members on those boards. And we can go into the composition of the boards, Mr. Speaker, but we can do that at some other time.

There's a very, very suspicious element involved in those boards as well, where the government will want to indirectly control and maintain control over those boards. So there's a lot of suspicion by the people about the motives. Now it's not only the motives of the offloading of responsibility, but also the offloading of financing. And SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) see through that, and they have a lot of concern about that, Mr. Speaker. They have a lot of concern about that.

In fact I'm holding in my hand now a press release from SUMA, Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, and the headline on this particular press release is: health care funding through the property tax base must end. You see, Mr. Speaker, this organization saw through the plan of the Minister of Finance when she instructed the Minister of Health to do this. They see through that. It's an offloading, where SUMA basically says, and I quote, in this press release of March 4 — and I'll read this part because we have to give you some credit:

SUMA is pleased that the new health district boards will not be funded out of the property tax base, an assurance we received from the Premier at our recent convention. However the new Act does not address the existing hospital revenue tax which amounts to a 2 mill levy.

(1630)

They still have the concern, Mr. Speaker, that The Hospital Revenue Act is still there, and they suspect very, very much, the ultimate end to which this government is going to use that particular Act. And consequently, Mr. Speaker, consequently, the release goes on:

SUMA's membership has taken the position that health care is the responsibility of the province and therefore should be funded exclusively through provincial revenues.

Who's saying that? Not the opposition; this is SUMA. All the urban municipalities of this province are combining together and sending a message to this government, Mr. Speaker. And they go on, and the last quote on this particular release says:

Premier Romanow made a commitment to remove health care funding from the property tax base. That being the case, SUMA is calling on the province to

announce a date for the repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act which will result in the removal of hospital levies from the property tax base.

That is their concern, that this is a roundabout way of the government simply abrogating their responsibilities, passing it off, sloughing it off, passing the buck, and ultimately allowing for the municipalities themselves to make up the difference for what the offloading this government is anticipating.

Mr. Speaker, that was SUMA. I'll come back to that in a few minutes.

As we know, last week the other major organization in this province, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, better known as SARM, had their annual meeting March 9, 10, 11, and 12. There was group 10, a number of resolutions under group 10, what they call, which is the Department of Health and resolutions affecting the Department of Health.

Resolution no. 27, by a whole host of RMs (rural municipality) came forward with this one. I'm going to read this one for the edification of all members present:

Whereas real property like land and buildings is a poor measure of wealth and is now taxed too much and for too many purposes;

and whereas multiple access to the property assessment base by different taxing authorities is fiscally irresponsible;

and whereas the provincial government should reduce its dependency on the property assessment base for funding social programs;

and whereas the provincial government is changing the health care program and promoting the formation of large health care districts which will amalgamate all health care services;

and whereas the financing of the new plan has not been announced;

Therefore be it resolved that the new regional health districts not be empowered to access the property assessment dates, either to tax levies or through grants in lieu of such levies.

Mr. Speaker, SARM is saying, we know what you guys want to do, we know your plan, and we're not prepared to accept it. There is a specific resolution now passed . . . Oh by the way, Mr. Speaker, this resolution passed. It is the commendation now of SARM that you cease and desist.

But there was another one brought forward. Resolution No. 28, Mr. Speaker. It's a very short one. I will read that into the record:

Whereas health costs in Saskatchewan are steadily escalating, therefore be it resolved that the revenue

required for health services in the province of Saskatchewan be generated by lottery funds and/or user fees rather than taxation or levies on property.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to go into the rationale of why SARM would want to allow lottery funds and/or user fees to generate funds for health services. That's another debate that is not germane to what we're talking about this afternoon.

But be it noted explicitly that it does say, rather than taxation or levies on property. People in this province are taxed out. Businesses are taxed out. Property owners are taxed out. And they fear, and I suspect, Mr. Speaker, rightfully so, that the motivation behind this health Bill and the funding of health is such that the government is using this as a strategy to offload health care services onto property tax owners.

And that will generate more of the multi-tiered type of health services that I was talking about previously because there's a different tax base in this province that RMs and municipalities operate under. Not everybody has an oil well in their jurisdiction, not everybody has a potash mine in their jurisdiction, or a Weyerhaeuser or a Saskferco or any of these other large revenue generating, tax paying industries and companies, Mr. Speaker.

So therefore if a hospital is needed or some other health care facilities or health care is needed, these would be able to quite readily generate the revenue necessary with their large tax base. But the others, and I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, by far the majorities of our municipalities would not have that luxury, would not have that option, period.

And so therefore I would suggest to you — and many people that I'm talking to are suggesting to me — that we will, in fact and indeed, have different levels of health care in different areas of the province. And that is absolutely unacceptable to people.

Mr. Speaker, there was another one — resolution. I won't read it, but it basically deals with another concern that SARM has and I've already alluded to it, and that is the option that the Minister of Health had — not only an option; a right that she will be doing and taking — and that is that she has the right now to appoint members to the board.

The boards are not going to be entirely elected. There will be appointments made by the minister, enough appointments I would suggest to you — and this is a concern that SARM has, members of SARM have — and that is that there will be enough members appointed so that the minister will maintain control. All you have to do is get a few of your own philosophically minded people that are the equivalent to your philosophical bent, and you'll have control of the board. And this is a concern, Mr. Speaker, that many, many people are expressing to me as well.

I'm going to summarize by bringing into perspective, by bringing into perspective where we see ourselves

today in this health reform adventure, and try to relate that to where people back in October of '91 were expecting to be at this time. I've alluded to the promises made by the members opposite in their bid to become government, in their bid to be elected.

And during that period of time, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the public's attention some of the promises that members opposite were making, some of the commitments that members opposite were making with the electorate of this province, saying if you put your trust in us, if you vote for us, this is what we promise, this is what we commit to. And I think after I read a number of these commitments, it will become apparent to members of the public why there has been this utter betrayal of that trust that the people put in members opposite when they elected them.

There was on the Harasen line on October 3, 1991 — that seems to me that's about 17, 18 days before the election, 17, 18 days before the election . . . This is a commitment made by the now Premier, the then aspiring premier in October 3, 1991, and I quote from the Harasen line, where the now Premier is quoted as saying: We will not charge premiums or deterrent fees or utilization fees, as they are called, for a number of reasons. Basically the fundamental is they are not a fair way to finance the health care program. End quote. They are not a fair way to finance the health care program, Mr. Speaker.

The litany that I have gone through over the last while now when we talk about the chiropractic fees that have been put on, the optometric fees that have put on, the charge to insulin patients that have been put on, the charge to you people who need oxygen for survival — am I wrong? Are these not deterrent fees? Are they not utilization fees? Are they not premiums, in a sense? A premium on health.

And yet on the Harasen line, October 3, 1991, the Premier says, we will have none of those because that is not a fair way to finance the health care program. Those were his exact words. How does that compute? How does that relate to promises made and subsequent actions taken.

In *The Commonwealth*, which is of course an NDP newspaper, March 1988. The now Premier is quoted to saying this:

New Democrats would continue the fight to restore social programs such as medicare, the dental program, the drug program, to their former place of leadership for Saskatchewan.

That's what he said then.

I wonder what's going to happen to the drug program. I asked, I thought, a very leading question to the Minister of Health on that the other day. I was not particularly reassured with her answer and I don't think the people of this province were reassured with her answer. Is this the fairness that you espouse to? Is this what the people have to look forward to in tomorrow's budget as it is handed down?

From the *Leader-Post*, the Minister of Health, the now Minister of Health in April 19, '91 said this about us, about us because we were only giving a 4 per cent increase to the health program: Why should the sick and elderly carry the burden for your incompetence? Why should the sick and elderly carry the burden of your incompetence? That's what she asked us. That's what she asked George McLeod as minister of Health.

Members opposite, that's what the people of this province are asking you today. That's what they're asking you because they had higher expectations. You had promised them and they believed you, and you have betrayed them. And I submit to you that when the budget is handed down tomorrow, we will see the ultimate betrayal.

I hope I'm wrong. And if I am wrong, Mr. Speaker, I want you to give me the freedom and the privilege of getting up and apologizing. I will do that. But the indications and the track record, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately is such that I don't think I'm going to have to get up to make that apology.

But this is the stuff that you people were saying. On September 30 in the *Star-Phoenix*, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

Simard suggests the province is moving towards a fee-for-service system where quality health care will be only available to those that can afford it.

Fee for service. What do you call that when you go to a chiropractor and have to pay; go to an optometrist and have to pay?

Again, in *Hansard*, August 21:

The opposition is going to fight these health care cut-backs and these changes to medicare. It's going to fight the erosion of the principles of medicare. I feel rather certain we'll be having a change of government next time round and then the public isn't going to have to worry about these problems.

That was a commitment made by the now Minister of Health. These changes, they are going to not allow them. They are going to change them. And when you folks form government, nobody is going to have to worry about these kinds of problems.

(1645)

Another promise made by the now Minister of Health. This one is on April 14, 1992:

As the party which pioneered universally accessible health care in this province, designed to respond to need, not ability to pay, we categorically reject the concept of health care deterrent fees.

Again, the litany of what I have gone through, what is

that? This is an interesting one. *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, the Premier, the now Premier on January 31, '91 said that he, the Premier, said he doesn't believe health care costs in the province are sky-rocketing. The cost of medicare is well within the budget — well within the budget.

I mean how can that be? Time after time, whether you're in Harris or whether you're in Prince Albert or wherever you are, you say whatever is convenient at the moment. Shouldn't these kinds of statements and promises come back to haunt you? The cost of medicare is well within the budget. Well, Mr. Premier, I say to you, tell that to your Minister of Finance so she can relate that message back to the member in Regina here, the Minister of Health, that you're on a wrong bent.

The *Leader-Post*, March 26, '91, this was just after we put in a budget, Mr. Speaker, and the Department of Health was increased by 4 per cent. The spending for the Department of Health was increased by only 4 per cent, and I quote: NDP Health critic Louise Simard immediately accused the government of eroding the health care system by starving it of money. End quote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to tomorrow the Minister of Finance saying to the people of Saskatchewan, we're going to give you a 5 per cent increase. I don't think it's realistic, Mr. Speaker, but these are the kinds of statements that members opposite were making that got them elected. That's the point.

Again, *Leader-Post* '91: the Conservatives cut back on public health nurses, provided stingy increases for home care and slashed health programs. That was the time, Mr. Speaker, where we came up with a 10 per cent increase for home care funding, a stingy increase, a stingy increase.

We have the now Minister of Social Services, I think, I believe, Saskatoon Broadview who said: the health situation in this province is out of control. We have a drug plan where people are making decisions between groceries and prescription drugs. Too little, too late. End quote.

So you were going to be the protectors of medicare. You were going to be the protectors of the drug plan.

Now I agreed we came up with a \$125 deductible drug plan. We came up with a 125 deductible. We were chastised as destroying the drug plan. What did you folks do last time around — 300 per cent increase, 305 per cent increase?

What is a per cent increase when you increase something from 125 deductible to \$380 deductible, and growing? What's going to happen tomorrow? What's going to happen tomorrow? That's a question that many, many people are asking themselves.

We know . . . and I've heard of druggists now who are saying about the long line-ups and people buying prescription drugs trying to get as many ahead of the

game just like the folks right now are lining up at the gas bowsters.

Just like I heard the other day an advertisement from a furniture company saying, beat the budget, come and buy now. Beat the budget because it's going to be what? It's going to be 9 per cent, 10 per cent on the PST (provincial sales tax)? Expanded base, all of these other wonderful things that you have in store for the people who trusted you when the member from Regina — the toy minister of Finance at one time — Churchill Downs, said: there will be no tax increases for two years if we form government.

Folks, that's why you were elected. Don't we have the right now to remind you about it? I don't think we have to remind the people about it, because that's . . . they heard you, they listened to you, and they believed you. And they said, that's the kind of government we want. And they voted for you because they trusted you.

Tomorrow we will see whether their trust was well founded. Because right now they don't believe it, from what they've seen so far. They don't believe it. I'm quoting now from the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, February 27, '89, and I quote: Romanow said the Devine government has caused considerable harm to the finest health care system in Canada by destroying the prescription drug plan and the dental care program and not providing hospitals with adequate funds.

I don't know whether the Premier was still in the 1970 mentality, the super '70s when everything was gung-ho and there seemed to be no end to what we were able to do.

One more quote, Mr. Speaker. Health care and education have been underfunded . . . This comes from *The Commonwealth* again, Mr. Speaker: health care and education have been underfunded and serious cuts have been made in these and other important services. There has been increasing tax pressure on the business community, the home owner, and the farmer because of underfunding of municipal governments and school boards.

We'll leave the school boards out of it right now. But municipal funding, Mr. Speaker, that is the concern; offloading — offloading of responsibility. It's not my fault; don't blame me. It's the local health board that made the decision. It's the hospital board that made the decision, whatever the decision.

But the people are now saying, protect us from the offloading where the municipalities, the property owner, is going to have to foot the bill through their property tax situation. That's what they're concerned about. They don't want to have to be forced into the corner where they have to raise their own funds to pay for their health care system.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, that is why SUMA is saying, that being the case, SUMA is calling on the province to announce a date for the repeal of The Hospital

Revenue Act. Because they see this as being an avenue whereby the government can actually access taxes on property on the property base. They do not want that to happen.

And that's where the Premier and the Minister of Health were kind of confused about the \$43 million raised. The Premier was saying that was raised through the property tax Act; the Minister of Health was saying that was raised by the hospital union Act. Now we should get our story straight on which is which. The two are totally different, Mr. Speaker.

And because of the big concern that is being expressed both by SARM and by SUMA about this possibility of offloading on the property tax base, where the property taxpayer is already extended beyond what they can capably pay for, and because of the fear of the tremendous increase that they potentially are facing on this offloading and downloading, which seems to be the strategy of the government, they are saying that that revenue . . . hospital revenue Act has got to be taken out because that will prevent the government from doing something to the back door that they are afraid of doing through the front door. Get rid of that Act. Then at least if it's going to be done that way, come before us, be clean, upright, forthright, upfront, and do it by a Bill that is actually going to be called exactly what it is, and that is a further degradation of the property tax base of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, because of that, I move:

That the Assembly move to a consideration of Bill 10, An Act to Protect Municipal Property Taxpayers in the Province of Saskatchewan through the repeal of The Hospital Revenue Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:54 p.m. until 5 p.m.

The Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock, the vote on the superseding motion lapses and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.