

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to present on behalf of a number of residents across this province a petition regarding Bill No. 3, the debate taking place in the Assembly, and I'd like to read the prayer for the record:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act so that communities may continue their efforts to organize their people and have a genuine impact on the process without intimidation or threat of arbitrary action by the government.

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

And these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are signed by residents from the communities of Khedive, Kerrobert, Doddsland, Kindersley, Compier, Major, Coleville, Luseland, and Eatonia. I so present them to the Assembly.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions from across the province to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act so that communities may continue their efforts to organize their people and have a genuine impact on the process without intimidation or threat of arbitrary action by the government.

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

These petitions come from Eatonia, Laporte, Frontier, Claydon, Climax, Mr. Speaker, across the western side of the province. And I present these today.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too will, with pleasure, will lay these petitions on the Table today. And as of course of your request, I'll just read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act so that communities may continue their efforts to organize their people and have a genuine impact on the process without intimidation or threat of arbitrary action by the government.

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

Mr. Speaker, these five or six full pages that I have here are from Frontier, Eatonia — that whole page is Eatonia. These are mostly in that Eatonia area; some from Kindersley, Mantario, all mostly the west side.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to table some petitions with respect to health care. And these several pages are from places in Saskatchewan like Invermay, Antler, Climax, Frontier, Bracken, Eatonia, and generally on the west side of the province.

I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act so that communities may continue their efforts to organize their people and have a genuine impact on the process without intimidation or threat of arbitrary action by the government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And I'll table these.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have similar petitions to my colleagues asking the government to postpone the implementation of The Health Districts Act.

The petitions that I have are also from Climax, Mr. Speaker; from Frontier, from Bracken; from Tramping Lake; from Luseland, Kerrobert, Doddsland, Major; from New . . . Kerrobert, pardon me, Mr. Speaker, and Margo, and others as well from across the province, Mr. Speaker. And it gives me a great deal of pleasure to table these in the House.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions that relate to the health care districts Act so that . . . And the petitioners have signed this from Kerrobert, Tramping Lake, Luseland, Kindersley, Major, Climax, Frontier, throughout the west side of the province, Mr. Speaker. And I want to submit these to the Assembly here today.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would present petitions today on behalf of Saskatchewan people who have a great deal of difficulty with the government's proposals on health care. I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act so that communities may continue their efforts to organize their people and have a

genuine impact on the process without intimidation or threat of arbitrary action by the government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I have people from the communities of Kerrobert, Major, Saskatoon, Kindersley; Drumheller, Alberta; Dodsland, Coleville, Luseland, Drake, Springwater, Kerr., Loverna, Major, Tramping Lake — there are people here, Mr. Speaker, from all over the province of Saskatchewan — I shall lay on the Table.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to table with the Assembly today more petitions regarding the proposed 230,000-volt power line from Condie to the Queen Elizabeth power station in Saskatoon:

Wherefore you petitioner humbly prays that the Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to do the following:

And, Mr. Speaker, I will summarize this lengthy petition.

1. Order SaskPower to facilitate the production of non-utility generated power in areas of increased demand, namely Lloydminster and Meadow Lake. Several companies in this area have applied to generate power. Allowing non-utility generation of power in this area will make the construction of the power line and its attendant \$42 million expenditure unnecessary.

The individuals request from the Minister of Environment an undertaking of a complete environmental assessment; from SaskPower a full and complete compensation package for all affected landowners; that the SaskPower table, in the legislature, a complete economic analysis by an independent auditor that proves the economic benefits; that they order SaskPower to table, in this legislature, a review of all national and international studies on the effects of electric and magnetic fields on humans.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, order SaskPower to cease and desist all planning, surveying, or preparation for construction of the Condie to Queen Elizabeth 230,000-volt power line on any of the proposed routes until all other points in this petition are honoured.

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

There are 25 names on this particular petition, Mr. Speaker.

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 praying that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to postpone consideration of The Health Districts Act.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Farm Income Projections

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my question will be to the Premier.

First of all I'd like to welcome the Premier back from his trip. I'm sure that while you were in New York you did many valuable things for the province of Saskatchewan. However, Mr. Premier, your absence was noted by about a thousand or so Saskatchewan people who showed up on the steps of the legislature last week to take issue with the way that you're governing the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Premier, I find it curious that while you were in New York you told the Canadian Society of New York that your government's financial projections are based on, amongst other things, increased farm receipts. And that's quoted in the *Star-Phoenix*.

Mr. Premier, today's paper both Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Ag Canada are predicting income drops to new, record lows. And how do you explain to this House and to the people of this province, Mr. Premier, the fact that you go to New York and you tell the business community and the bankers there that one of the reasons that your government is on track is because you are going to have increased farm receipts?

Mr. Premier, don't you find that kind of strange when 60,000 farm families . . . everybody else in the province knows that that's sheer bunk, that they're dropping dramatically? Mr. Premier, how do you explain that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all acknowledge with deep gratitude the welcome back to the House that the Leader of the Opposition has extended to me. I knew that beyond all of the debate and differences that we might have, there exists a very deep affection between the two of us as public servants, so I accept the welcome.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that what I'm going to do is provide later this afternoon — I don't have a copy with me — a copy of the exact text of the notes which I used at the time I delivered my speech to the Canadian Society. And as I recall, what we were saying to them, to the Canadian Society, was that the projections contained in the four-year balanced budget plan were projections based on indices used by the credit-rating

agencies themselves and had been approved by a variety of external people who have analysed whether or not those predictions are accurate.

That is our position and we believe those are very legitimate, conservative — small C conservative, I might add, as opposed to big C conservative — estimates, and it is the projection which we think is solid. Of course, time will tell; we're only a few weeks into the '93-94 year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, as usual in this House you tend to want to avoid the question at hand, and the question at hand today is the fact that Ag Canada is forecasting Saskatchewan farm income to fall from anywhere from 56 to 68 per cent this year. That works out to less than \$5,000 per farm, Mr. Premier.

Meanwhile, you go to New York . . . And I don't know why the reporters wouldn't tell the truth here — they say that the Premier, citing increased farm receipts, increased potash sales, increased uranium production and oil revenue, means that Saskatchewan's economy is on the road back.

Now, Mr. Premier, rather than running around New York telling bankers something that is blatantly untrue, I think it's about time that you started staying home, going out, and actually talking to some farm people who are beginning their annual megaproject in this province, their megaproject which spends a billion dollars here, sir. And their income is dropping through the floor.

Now, Mr. Premier, would you like to once again have a shot at why you are telling New York bankers one thing when farm families in Saskatchewan know diametrically the opposite? Would you try it, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, again my response to the Leader of the Opposition is much along the lines of my earlier response. The Canadian Society, by the way, was not a speech to bankers alone by a long shot. We had over 150 attend these from the business community: some financial, some potential investors, people with entrepreneurial interests and the like. And it was actually a very successful turnout.

I think the best thing is to get the text and to make it available to the member opposite. I would say before I take my seat in this regard that, none the less, we understand that there is a difficult situation at the farm gate. I don't think anybody argues that there is peaches and cream and a rosy particular atmosphere at the farm gate right now. I think everybody understands that it is a difficulty.

But I think it's also correct to say, talking about newspaper reports that, Mr. Paul Martin for example

of the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* amongst others, reports a new sense of optimism, that the farm crisis has resulted in farmers diversifying in a whole number of other areas.

The heading that I've been just handed by my colleague here says, "There's a new fighting spirit in rural Saskatchewan" on Saturday's *Star-Phoenix* and an optimistic one. I don't mean to say that they have overcome the difficulties by a long shot; I'm only saying that I think that it's not as doom-and-gloom filled as the official opposition would have us believe.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, it was a brave try but it simply doesn't wash. Sask Wheat Pool, in their spring seeding report here, are saying that the average income is, in their best estimation, is around \$6,000; Ag Canada is saying 5. That compares to \$15,000 a short time ago, Mr. Premier. It's dropping like a stone.

Now maybe one of the reasons, you also didn't mention in your talk to your New York friends about closing hospitals all over rural Saskatchewan, raising sales taxes, and generally doing things in your last budget that devastate rural Saskatchewan. Maybe you didn't talk about that because that would have put a different face on your projections for farm income, Mr. Premier.

Obviously, Mr. Premier, the reporters are saying that you weren't talking about the salient issues in Saskatchewan, that you were off on some other tangent. Now the fact that farm income is dropping through the floor in the face of your election promises, Mr. Premier, could you tell the farmers of the province today that you've got something in the works for them that's going to give them some hope as they plan their billion-dollar seeding project this spring?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked about the most salient feature — I recall the word salient in his question — which I would interpret to mean the most important aspect of the trip to New York.

I want to tell the member that the most important aspect, the most important mission that we had on the trip to New York, was to make sure that we could tell the bankers and show them through our budget that we had turned the corner indeed; that we have now begun to put the finances of this province on a sound footing. They know our figures and they know our economic situation a lot better than you, sir, might think they do — notwithstanding what any premier or any other political leader may or may not say, by accident or by design.

The salient purpose of this trip was to preserve our credit rating, which, sir, is perilously, perilously on the verge of dire straits as a result of nine years of the most

horrendous, horrific budgetary deficits racked up in the history of any government in Canada. That's what I was there for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Mr. Premier, the problem is that you go to New York and you say one thing. You recently run an election campaign and you say one thing. And what we find out, Mr. Premier, is it's always diametrically the opposite the way things turn out.

Now, Mr. Premier, you're the one that made the election promise about no new taxes and doing away with \$200 million in taxation. Mr. Premier, you're the one that said we're going to protect health care in this province. Only you, sir.

Now you go to New York and you say one of the reasons that my government is on track is because farm revenue is going up. And everyone else in the world says it's dropping through the floor, Mr. Premier. I'm scared if I walked in here and said, good afternoon, Mr. Premier, you'd say no, it's night or something like that. I mean we've got to come clean with the people here, Mr. Premier.

Now, Mr. Premier, the issue today is the fact that farm income is dropping through the floor. You're telling New York bankers one thing. Mr. Premier, could you tell farm families in this province today that you, or you in combination with somebody else, have got some hope that that \$5,000 figure of net farm income isn't going to be a reality because your government's ready to stand with rural people. Are you ready to do that today, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, after question period I'd be pleased to forward a copy of the notes of my address to the Canadian Society of New York, which I have just taken the liberty during the course of the question of skimming very briefly, and I do not see the reference that the hon. member makes. So this perhaps is again either an accidental misinterpretation or some misunderstanding. But the notes speak for themselves. I followed these notes very carefully, and I indeed distributed them to the media and you'll see the situation with respect to farm receipts. I made no mention of farm receipts, that I can see here.

But that's not the fundamental aspect of the question. The fundamental aspect of the question is the need to have optimism and a need to have hope. And I'm saying to the Leader of the Opposition, as I say to all the members of the Conservative caucus over there, that while the farmers are facing a serious situation — we understand that; you understand that; they know that too — there is much more optimism this spring.

Not because the receipts from the traditional farming are going to be any better — the predictions there remain a little bit difficult — but, as Paul Martin and

others have indicated, there is an attempt now to diversify. They're going to move away from wheat and other areas they're going to be planting in. They're going to be looking at a variety of new industrial and home-based economies and enterprises, and the level of optimism is indeed much higher.

In fact the only darkness that descends here is when I come to question period and listen to the questions put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative caucus.

I would say to him: sir — and to all their caucus members — please lighten up and join the province in the sense that we have turned the corner and that there is more optimism. Please stop the doom and gloom and start building instead of wrecking the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. I'm sure, Mr. Premier, that you've got the appropriate written text to pass over to the opposition to give yourself a little bit of a smokescreen for what you actually said. But, Mr. Premier, people in this province know that you very seldom use a prepared text and you go off and say all sorts of things.

I mean we've just had an election campaign, Mr. Premier, where you said all sorts of things, none of which have come true. So I would suspect that you went down and you talked to the folks in New York and you just went off the cuff and you said a bunch of things that aren't true, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, your friend, Garf Stevenson, comments in the same report here. He says yes, diversification is on the right track but it's going to take years — years — to make any impact. Now, Mr. Premier, the fact is, the fact is, the number is \$5,000 per farm family in this province, Mr. Premier. Would you please tell the farm people of the province today what your government has in mind to change that number, either what you heard in New York or what you heard some place else on your trip.

Mr. Premier, that is poverty. Can you tell farm families today what your government has in store to make sure that number comes up. Would you do that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, there are two aspects to this question as I see it. First of all I invite all members of the House and all members of the public who may be watching this question period to note that the questioning began by the Leader of the Opposition about my notes or my remarks to the Canadian Society of New York. I have a copy of the Canadian Society of New York notes and the text which I gave right here. And I'm going to give the opposition a copy of it.

Then he switches the debate and says, oh well, I know the notes might say something, but you know you're smokescreening. I think that's simply not credible. And it is from that position, Mr. Speaker, which I think

the rest of it simply falls down as well.

Of course no one's happy about farm gate receipts. We want to see those elevated. We think there are a number of reasons for them and a number of possible solutions for them — including some assistance by the federal government which we perhaps may or may not see at this budget which is about to be announced in the next 10 minutes or so — a number of these things.

But my central proposition, the Leader of the Opposition, is this: that in these difficult times, notwithstanding governments, notwithstanding the difficulties that they have, the farmers of this province do have a higher sense of optimism. They are diversifying. They are finding new ways to meet the crisis. They do understand that what we inherited was a financial mess of the highest proportions, and that what we have to do is what we're doing. They know that. And there is a sense of optimism, and in truth and starting with truth, we'll build in this regard, in my judgement, a healthy and stronger economy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, the article in the *Star-Phoenix* says, and I quote: Romanow is citing increased farm receipts, potash sales, uranium production and oil revenues, starting last year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier of the province this question: \$5,000 is roughly a 56 to a 68 per cent loss in farm net income — is that up or down?

You said in the article . . . you must have quoted something to the people of the province of Saskatchewan who are in the media, that say that you said that revenues in agriculture were going to be up.

My question to you is this, Mr. Premier: what are you going to do in this crisis for agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan, for agriculture and rural farmers? What are you going to do for them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I will give this answer, but one more last time. I have the text in front of me of the Canadian Society speech about the value of resources. This is what I said in New York. Unlike the former premier who's asked me about what I said, I tell you one thing I did not say. What I did not say, I did not say this: I said, Saskatchewan has got so much going for it that I could afford to mismanage it and it still wouldn't go bankrupt. That I did not say, sir. I want you to know that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — What I told the people in New York is the truth about the mismanagement of nine years under your administration, sir, and also the truth about the fact that we have turned this budget and this economy around.

If you're saying to me that the farm economy needs more assistance, I say yes, I agree with you. If you say that the farmers have no optimism or hope, I disagree with you. I believe that the farmers are optimistic and they are hopeful and they're inventive, and they're moving into a number of other areas.

And if they need assistance, they need assistance from your cousins in Ottawa, and you should be asking these questions of the Tory leadership candidates and the Prime Minister. What are they going to do about helping the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier, in today's paper, Ottawa's CP (Canadian Press) press says that the retail sales adjusted have a .7 per cent drop. In your budget you said that there's going to be a 4.2 per cent increase. Now everybody in the province of Saskatchewan understands that what you said in the paper is wrong. When will you admit that you were wrong?

Farm sales are going to drop 56 to 68 per cent, and you say that that's going to be an asset to the people of the province of Saskatchewan? Mr. Premier, those are not my statistics. Those are not my quotes. They are actual fact.

Will you tell the people in the province of Saskatchewan who are relying on the billion dollars that farmers are going to put into the ground this spring, that they're going to get paid for their seed, they're going to get paid for their fuel? Will you give some of those farmers an optimistic view of what the world is really about by telling them the truth. They want to know what the truth is, and you said it's going up. Pool says it's going down. Canada says it's going to go down. Where's your optimism, Mr. Minister? Have you got some money for the farmers in your back pocket that you're going to deliver? Is that the optimism that you have? Would you provide that for us today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, oh how I wish I had some money in my back pocket to give to the farmers and to the others in the province of Saskatchewan. But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, those members opposite who governed this province for nine years emptied every pocket of every avenue that the people of the province of Saskatchewan have ever had.

They lifted up the taxpayers upside down and took every penny out of them, and mortgaged them and hocked them to the end of the world. And this member has the audacity to get up and say, do I have extra money in my pocket to help out the farmers. How credible is that?

Please, as an opposition which is supposed to be responsible, do you expect anybody in

Saskatchewan, let alone Canada and North America, to accept that proposition? Because if you do, then you are sinking further in the public opinion polls than you are now.

I say to you, sir, and I say to the Leader of the Opposition, and the former premier, get real. Get to the situation of admitting your mistakes, and join us in overcoming this difficult challenge rather than always being on the doom-and-gloom side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier, you are cited to have said there's increased revenue for agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, \$5,000 a farmer is not very much. And that is 56 to 68 per cent less than they had last year. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the statistics that we have.

You are also going to take away revenue from all of the other off-farm income that people have in the province. The people in the province of Saskatchewan earn a billion dollars off the farm every year, and you're going to take that away too. Fifty-two hospitals — gone. School boards are going to be ripped apart by the very fact that you're going to tax them more. Every one of your taxes that you've delivered to them are offloading on them. And, Mr. Premier, the only cost of inflation is your taxes.

Will you tell the people of the province of Saskatchewan that you're going to give them some relief? Would you tell them that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, we're back at it again. Would you please tell them that . . . is the repetitive question. I like to be home except for the terrible doom and gloom that the members of the Conservative Party have opposite.

Conference Board of Canada recommends 3.2 per cent growth in 1993 for Saskatchewan. Even that's a case; well it's a fact you can just throw out. Nesbitt Thomson says Saskatchewan may be the first province to get an actual upgrader — just throw that out of the whole picture.

The former premier yells from his chair: did you tell them about what you're doing in the wellness model in Saskatchewan? Yes, I told them exactly what I was doing in the wellness model in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Did I tell them about our foundations? Yes, I told them about our foundations. Mr. Speaker, our foundations are strong. Our resource base is strong. Our farming community, our farmers are the best in the world. We are in a situation where we are blessed much more than many other parts of Canada and Canadians are — I don't say that in any way other than facts of the case.

Our problem has been that for the last nine years, however, that bounty which were given, that trust which you were handed, that trust to be able to manage that bounty with care and compassion and taking care of future generations, you squandered. You squandered. You squandered.

And in 18 months we're trying to clean up your mess. And I want to tell you, you may not believe it, but the people in Saskatchewan believe it; the people outside of Saskatchewan believe it; and those who listened to us in New York, they also believe it. So what in the world is wrong with you folks? Why don't you admit that you were wrong and help join us in rebuilding Saskatchewan? Please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Federal Transfer Payments

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance, but I have one comment for the Conservative opposition next to me, sir. In nine and a half years, Madam Minister, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ottawa had Conservative leaders in power and in nine and a half years there were no prairie grain-belt solutions for farmers in this province and no reforms.

The federal government began delivering its budget today about 25 minutes ago and there's considerable speculation that there may be cuts in transfer payments to the provinces. Given the federal government's actions to their last several budgets, I'm sure that you have planned for potential reductions in transfer payments to the province of Saskatchewan, and if so, what contingency plans are in place and in what part of the budget are they listed?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes. Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. If you would look at the estimates upon which we based this budget, you will see that we planned for a reduction in transfer payments. The number goes from 28 per cent to 24 per cent. So we have been very realistic in our projections, and when we were in New York one of the comments that was consistently made was how realistic our projections are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, municipalities are unable to make their plans for the year until they know the extent of government assistance and I do commend you that you have given projections to municipalities over the next several years. But just as you are awaiting the federal budget and not knowing if this will throw off your revenue and expenditure projections, local governments continue to be forced to wait for the provincial government each year.

One of the important reforms that Liberals campaigned on — a reform that your government has committed to implement — is to fix a regular time frame for the delivery of the provincial budget.

Madam Minister, after 18 months of consideration, I think your government has had ample time to choose set budget dates.

Will you give governments and third-party agencies who rely on your funding a clear message by acknowledging the difficulties unpredictable budget dates have created for them and announce the set budget dates for the province of Saskatchewan from this day forward?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Several comments to make. First of all with respect to the budget date, this is the earliest budget date in about 10 years in the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Second, with respect to giving third parties advance warning, that is precisely what this government has done. We have given them two years advance notice as to what their grants are going to be, and we have even talked with them about what may be in store for them beyond that date.

I guess I would like to address the main thrust though of the member opposite's question. I think she's dead wrong. I do not believe the federal government will be cutting transfer payments to the provinces in this budget. I have spoken to the federal Minister of Finance and I have said that we're into a new era of politics in Saskatchewan, in Canada — we are setting aside partisan differences on the issue of the need to control the deficit.

How we control it, the measures we take, we will differ. They will do it one way; we will do it another way. But in terms of the overall goal, this province stands united with the other provinces and with the federal government because we want to present to the outside world a common front. We know we have a debt problem; we're going to cooperate, we're going to sit down at the same table, and we're going to deal with it together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

A Bill to restore health care services to the community of Mankota

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of Mankota.

The division bells rang from 2:38 p.m. until 2:39 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

Muirhead	Toth
Devine	D'Autremont
Neudorf	Haverstock
Martens	

Nays — 30

Romanow	Upshall
Van Mulligen	Lorje
Thompson	Lyons
Wiens	Lautermilch
Tchorzewski	Calvert
Lingenfelter	Murray
Teichrob	Trew
Koskie	Draper
Anguish	Serby
Solomon	Flavel
Carson	Cline
Mitchell	Kujawa
MacKinnon	Stanger
Penner	Knezacek
Cunningham	Keeping

A Bill to restore health care services to the community of St. Walburg

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of St. Walburg.

The division bells rang from 2:41 p.m. until 2:42 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

Muirhead	Toth
Devine	D'Autremont
Neudorf	Haverstock
Martens	

Nays — 28

Romanow	Upshall
Van Mulligen	Lorje
Thompson	Lyons
Wiens	Lautermilch
Tchorzewski	Murray
Lingenfelter	Trew
Teichrob	Draper
Koskie	Serby
Anguish	Whitmore
Solomon	Flavel
Carson	Cline
Mitchell	Kujawa
Penner	Knezacek
Cunningham	Keeping

A Bill to restore health care services to the community of Vanguard

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of Vanguard.

The division bells rang from 2:43 p.m. until 2:44 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

Muirhead
Devine
Neudorf
Martens

Toth
D'Autremont
Haverstock

Yeas — 5

Muirhead
Neudorf
Martens

Toth
D'Autremont

Nays — 28

Van Mulligen
Thompson
Wiens
Tchorzewski
Lingenfelter
Teichrob
Koskie
Anguish
Solomon
Carson
Mitchell
Penner
Cunningham
Upshall

Hagel
Lorje
Lyons
Lautermilch
Murray
Trew
Draper
Serby
Whitmore
Flavel
Cline
Kujawa
Knezacek
Keeping

Nays — 19

Thompson
Wiens
Lingenfelter
Teichrob
Koskie
Anguish
Carson
Mitchell
Cunningham
Upshall

Hagel
Lorje
Murray
Draper
Serby
Whitmore
Cline
Knezacek
Keeping

A Bill to restore health care services to the community of Cabri

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of Cabri.

The division bells rang from 2:45 p.m. until 2:46 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 6

Muirhead
Devine
Neudorf

Martens
Toth
D'Autremont

Nays — 25

Thompson
Wiens
Lingenfelter
Teichrob
Koskie
Anguish
Solomon
Carson
Mitchell
Penner
Cunningham
Upshall
Hagel

Lorje
Lyons
Lautermilch
Murray
Trew
Draper
Serby
Whitmore
Flavel
Cline
Knezacek
Keeping

A Bill to restore health care services to the community of Coronach

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of Coronach.

The division bells rang from 2:47 p.m. until 2:48 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of Whitewood.

The division bells rang from 2:50 p.m. until 2:51 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Muirhead
Neudorf
Martens

Toth
D'Autremont

Nays — 19

Thompson
Wiens
Lingenfelter
Teichrob
Koskie
Anguish
Carson
Mitchell
Cunningham
Upshall

Hagel
Lorje
Murray
Draper
Serby
Whitmore
Cline
Knezacek
Keeping

A Bill to restore health care services to the community of Craik

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to restore health care services to the community of Craik.

The division bells rang from 2:52 p.m. until 2:53 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Muirhead
Neudorf
Martens

Toth
D'Autremont

Nays — 19

Thompson	Hagel
Wiens	Lorje
Lingenfelter	Calvert
Teichrob	Murray
Koskie	Serby
Carson	Whitmore
Mitchell	Cline
MacKinnon	Knezacek
Cunningham	Keeping
Upshall	

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting Health Districts

The Chair: — I would ask the Associate Minister of Health to please introduce the officials here with him today.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have with me today Mr. Duane Adams, deputy minister of Health; and Mr. Jim Engel, health policy planner.

Clause 1

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that what we must do here . . . My colleague from Arm River is going to be asking some questions and was going to get up first, but I find the situation as it is developing here, Mr. Chairman, totally unacceptable. And I must protest in the strongest terms possible the manoeuvre taken by the Minister of Health or the House Leader, whoever is responsible for this travesty of setting up a toy minister to answer the questions from the opposition that we want to ask the Minister of Health.

This is not acceptable. The people of the province had to come to Regina to ask the Minister of Health questions on last week Wednesday. And then when they were going to be . . . were prepared and had the opportunity to ask questions, Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Health ducked and she ran into the shelter of this Assembly in order to duck the direct questions from the people of this province.

So now we have two days and the Deputy Chairman keeps on chirping and interrupting proceedings, Mr. Chairman. He's setting a fine example for other presiding officers in this Assembly.

But, Mr. Chairman, it is unacceptable for this government to put up the member from Moose Jaw and pretend that he is the Minister of Health. That is not acceptable, and we want the Minister of Health. We want the Minister of Health, I say again, to answer and be accountable for the actions of this government.

And to think that they can get away with a ploy of putting up the member from Moose Jaw and pretend

that he has anything to say in this government is an utter travesty. We want either the Minister of Health or the Premier of this province to answer our questions, Mr. Chairman. This will not do.

Failing that, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that we adjourn for the remainder of the day. I suggest that we adjourn for the remainder of the day and that this time be not counted in the time allocation motion.

You're playing games with the opposition, that's what you're doing. That's what you're doing, you're playing games with the people of this province. They came to Regina last Wednesday to ask the Minister of Health some very pointed, specific questions. And they wanted answers. And the Minister of Health ducked, and she ran into the legislature to get away from them. She turned her back to the people.

Now we have the last-ditch opportunity that we have as an opposition to ask the minister detailed questions about the plan in Committee of the Whole. This is the only opportunity we have, and she doesn't come out, she ducks — she ducks, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman. That is unacceptable and I give notice to the Government House Leader now that we want the Minister of Health back into this Assembly so that she will . . .

(1500)

And we insist that she comes in to answer the questions that we want to ask her. Not the member from Moose Jaw — he doesn't make any decisions. He's going to be acting as a messenger of some type. But we want to shoot the questions at the Minister of Health, not at the messenger.

And I request the Government House Leader now to see to it that the Minister of Health appears. I don't know how long it takes her to get down from her office, but the five or ten minutes that it would take her, and I respectfully then ask for a recess during that time while the minister comes into her place to answer the questions that we legitimately want to ask her, not this cop-out.

An Hon. Member: — On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — What is the point of order?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I would ask for a ruling on the availability of ministers to answer questions. It's my understanding that the established rule in this Assembly — established ironically by the members opposite — for associate ministers to answer questions during estimates or during committee on Bills has been in place for some time. And I remember very clearly the premier of the province, the premier of the province, the member from Estevan, leaving the Assembly and allowing the associate minister to answer questions of the premier's office and the Department of Agriculture.

And I want to say, Mr. Chairman, in light of the fact

that the Minister of Health is in North Battleford, P.A. (Prince Albert), Swift Current, and Yorkton today, I would ask for a ruling, Mr. Chairman, that would allow the committee to do its work. The same advisers, the deputy minister of Health, is here to give advice, the same person as would be advising the minister. And this is nothing but a phoney excuse for the member to try to get away from asking the questions, I would make the comment, as opposed to the answers.

Mr. Neudorf: — To counter the arguments made by the Government House Leader, we have questions, Mr. Chairman, that we want to ask — very, very legitimate questions and lots of them.

Now this is a bunch of nonsense what we have here. The Minister of Health has known for three weeks at least that the deadline . . . with the closure motion in place that the deadline was fast approaching. She knows full well we only have today and tomorrow to ask her questions. So she ducks. She ducks because she doesn't want to answer.

Mr. Chairman, we only have two days to ask questions. And now we don't even have the minister so we can direct our questions to her. She's in P.A. She's in North Battleford — tightly controlled meetings, no doubt, where the public is not invited to attend. I know how those meetings work. I know how those meetings work — she's doing damage control out there instead of facing the people of Saskatchewan through their elected representatives, Mr. Chairman.

It's totally inappropriate, with the Government House Leader having the audacity to get up, having the audacity to get up, having put time allocation and having put closure on time allocation, that we only have two days in which to ask questions of Committee of the Whole. And then they orchestrate it, they orchestrate it purposely so the Minister of Health isn't even going to be here.

I ask again, Mr. Chairman, that you rule that this House recess until tomorrow at the time where this minister will be available to answer questions that we want to ask her.

The Chair: — Order, order. It's not up to the Chair to determine which minister shall answer questions for the government. The government can call on any minister it wishes to respond to questions by the opposition. Order. This is a matter that the members can resolve themselves — order — and the point of order is not well taken.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want somebody in this province to notice what's going on here today. This manipulation of the process . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And that is exact . . . Now, now we're getting somewhere. The Government House Leader has admitted that they don't care what goes on in the House right now because the federal budget is coming down. Another fluff, another hope that this will camouflage what these people are doing, Mr. Chairman.

This is unacceptable. I repeat that. We do not want to talk to the toy minister, as they describe him themselves. The associate minister is not responsible for any actions of this government other than being basically a back-bencher and a yes-man. That's all. We want to talk to the real thing. The Minister of Health is going to be held responsible.

We have a government here that is involved in the biggest, massive restructuring of the health program that this province has ever seen, and they don't want to be held accountable for that restructuring.

So what do they do? They put on time allocation and say you can only have so-and-so much time to talk about it. And then they put closure on the time allocation and they expect us to sit back here and be content to ask the member from Moose Jaw questions.

This is totally unacceptable — totally. The Minister of Health has to be here. The Minister of Health is responsible. Then put the Premier in his chair or the Minister of Finance in her chair, and then we'll get on with it.

Mr. Chairman, the Government House Leader got up and said it is within the purview and the mandate of the government to have any minister get up and answer questions, and I concur with that. Those are the rules of this Assembly and I full well know that.

Then I will say this, I will say this to the Government House Leader: put up the Minister of Finance or put up the Premier and we'll get on with the show. I put that challenge to the House Leader right now.

The Chair: — Clause 1 agreed?

Mr. Neudorf: — See what happens, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman? Immediately there's silence. They don't want to answer our questions. They're ducking, simple as that.

Now the questions are not difficult that we are going to be asking, but I think the answers are extremely difficult. The answers are extremely difficult if you don't have them. And I can see why you're ducking. I can see why you do not want to put up your ministers — the ministers that are accountable and responsible for what is happening. That's our problem here.

The questions are straightforward. The answers are going to be demanding of you folks, to come up with appropriate answers. That is true.

Then we have the member from Moose Jaw, and I hold no personal grudge against him. I know he's in a bind and he is wishing right now he was anywhere else except here right now as well. But he's the person that's been assigned — you take the flak. And I'm sure he'll do a good job of fudging. But he doesn't know, he doesn't know what perpetrated the conclusion that you people have come to as to how you want to restructure health in this province.

Quite frankly, I think it would be more appropriate for the Minister of Agriculture to get up and answer these questions. At least he's rural-based. And the devastation . . .

An Hon. Member: — Well ask him then.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well ask him then, the member from Prince Albert says. Sure we will. If he gets up, we're on a roll. We're on our way.

But I want someone who is going to be answerable to the impact that this health restructuring is going to have to the people of the province in general and in particular to rural Saskatchewan. And with all respect to the member from Moose Jaw, I don't think he's got a handle on it.

We want someone from the treasury branches that we can ask specific questions to, detailed questions to, impact questions of how this is going to affect rural Saskatchewan. And what we've got here is the member from Moose Jaw who has been assigned the task of covering for the government.

Now that's a shameful cop-out. I'm really disappointed in the House Leader and the Premier and particularly the Minister of Health, who has chosen deliberately to avoid answering to the people of Saskatchewan. And she's now got herself up in the northern part of the province in a contrived atmosphere to do some damage control, talking to a few media folk, but certainly not talking to the representatives of the people that are being hurt in this province and who have asked us as the opposition to hold the government accountable.

I'm waiting for the Minister of Agriculture to indicate that he would be willing then to answer and field these questions that we have. You see how low this government is stooping, Mr. Chairman, in terms of giving the opportunity to the opposition to ask questions to credible ministers who are responsible for these actions.

Now we've used associate ministers under certain circumstances who have been assigned tasks. And when those items were up, that associate minister got up and answered the questions specific to him. But now under one of the most dire consequences that this province has ever experienced, we have the Premier ducking and we have the Minister of Health ducking. Now that's a frustrating experience to find yourself in. We've been looking forward to these two days.

And again I ask the Associate Minister of Health then, if you're the only one that I can talk to: will you consider deferring the Committee of the Whole and we'll get on to other government business and come back tomorrow and Thursday at the appointed times so that we can have a real, meaningful discussion with the Minister of Health? Will you be honourable, Mr. Member from Moose Jaw, and agree to that compromise?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, at last a question.

We've been at this I think now the best part of 15 minutes listening to quite a diatribe from the member from Rosthern, and now it continues as he sits in his seat.

Mr. Chairman, I think I understand the process of this legislature. We are now into Committee of the Whole which gives the appropriate time to thoroughly look clause by clause at the provisions of a Bill.

With me here today are two extremely senior officials from the Department of Health who can provide to all members of this legislature through me, the detail that will be requested by any member in this House. Mr. Chairman, that's the process.

Now I want the member from Rosthern to understand that in this government — perhaps that wasn't the way it functioned in his; I'm not sure — but in this government when any initiative is undertaken it is an initiative of government. And any minister, Mr. Chairman, any minister in this House is fully equipped and ready to stand up and discuss these issues with any member of the opposition or indeed with any member of the House.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to what I hope can be a fruitful afternoon and perhaps evening of discussion of the detail of this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. Neudorf: — I asked you a very specific question, Mr. Minister. Your own caucus members, your own cabinet colleagues have called you and your position . . . perhaps rather than . . . I don't want to get personal — have called your position a toy ministry. That's what your cabinet colleagues think of your position.

Now under normal circumstances . . . and I know that you have some specific responsibilities as associate minister. And if you would get up to answer those issues that you have specifically been assigned to, we would have no problem with that as long as we have the real thing in terms of the Minister of Health to ultimately answer. She is the policy-setter here and we want her to answer the questions that we're asking on behalf of the people of the province. That's all we're asking.

We know that your professionals, your bureaucrats are here. We know that they're capable. We know that they've got the answers. And the answers that have not been supplied on previous occasions are only because it's a political decision on your part that you're not going to convey those answers to the public through us.

And so, Mr. Member, you are being obstructionist here. That's the simple bottom line. Your minister has chosen to duck. She has known about this day for a week. She could easily have made alternate arrangements.

Now, Mr. Minister, will you commit that the minister will be here tonight?

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, there needs to be some consistency in the members opposite. Now on one hand, they're saying that we as members of government, members of the government caucus, members of the government Executive Council, and so on need to be addressing the concerns of the public in the public forums.

On the other hand, now today he says, well we should all be right here and ready to answer his questions. Well I again say to the member: I'm here ready to answer his questions and I would be pleased if we could finally get to the discussion of health care.

And I'm not sure if this is . . . if he wants to divert the discussion this afternoon on to some other fields, other than the important legislation which is before us, or not. I'm here, we're here, to get looking at a serious look at this piece of legislation and, Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to do that.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Frankly, Mr. Minister, I don't want to talk to you. That's the bottom line. I want to talk to the Minister of Health. I want to talk to the Minister of Health. That's the bottom line.

Now you can joke and make fun of it, but I hope there are enough people in Saskatchewan who are watching proceedings or are listening, or at least some of the media that will pick up this atrocity to the democratic process.

Now you made some eloquent speeches when you were in opposition about closure. I'm almost tempted to read some of them because I have them here. But that is not the issue today as much as it is the issue of your minister deliberately — deliberately — flaunting her ability to speak to the people, to speak to the questions that we're going to be asking. She's deliberately ducking. That's what's so irritating here.

Now I know you can convey messages from your deputy minister there when we ask questions. But we want to hold accountable for the people that are responsible for these decisions.

Now with due respect to you, Minister, please don't get up and say that you were the determining factor as to what the policy was going to be. It was driven by the Deputy Premier, the Premier, and the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Health has been jumping to that tune ever since she became appointed to that post pretty well.

Now we want to hold them responsible and accountable. That's what this process is all about.

An Hon. Member: — Go ahead and ask questions.

Mr. Neudorf: — Go ahead and ask questions, says the member from Quill Lakes who finally wakes up. No, Mr. Minister, we want to ask the questions to the Minister of Health. Failing that, obviously, obviously

there's no point in pursuing an issue when you just steadfastly refuse to be open and forthright and accountable. So then the only alternative we have is, I guess, to bite our tongue, bite our lip, hide our frustration as much as possible, and continue on with the process.

But, Mr. Minister, I don't think that this is going to fly in the public of Saskatchewan. I don't think it's going to fly. It's a serious miscalculation on your part. You cannot duck. You cannot duck. That's the point I'm going to try to make, as I turn the proceedings over to my colleague here, the member of Arm River, who is going to ask you some specific questions then.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well I've seen a lot of things happen in this here legislature in 15 years but nothing like this today. There's nothing wrong with bringing in an associate minister for part of estimates, or part of a Bill, or whatever. But when a heavy-handed government comes down and says, closure, and then closure on closure, and then as the . . . our House Leader, the member from Rosthern says, she ducked.

And I want to ask you this direct question and I ask for a direct answer. I will not be able to be in this House Tuesday and Wednesday when this finishes off — I've only got today to be here — and I've got a lot of questions I want to ask. Do I just . . . do we have you all day today, or will she be back for some time this evening? It's going to affect how I ask my questions.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I can say to the member from Arm River, I will be here as long as necessary to answer as many questions as he wants to deliver.

Mr. Muirhead: — That's got to be the dumbest, stupid answer I've ever heard from a smart man in my life. I just asked you a decent question so it would affect . . . Nothing wrong with you finding out if she's going to be back tonight or not, the minister. That's all I'm asking. And it will affect how I . . . if she's going to be back, maybe I'll ask you some questions and some of the more direct questions I will ask tonight. But if she's not, I will be asking you all my questions and giving you all my frustration.

I just asked you: do you know whether she'll be in the House from 7 to 10 tonight or not? And there's nothing wrong with asking a question like that, so please give me a direct answer.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Nothing wrong with the question at all. And here's a very direct answer. The member will have questions. The member may ask his questions at length. Whether it is this minister responding to the questions, or whether it be the Minister of Health, or whether it be another minister in this Chamber, the answers will be the same. And therefore, member from Arm River, please carry on with your questions.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, this shows you the arrogance of the whole government. I had to sit and

listen to a half an hour of arrogance in question period today when the Premier would get up and talked about this new optimism coming into Saskatchewan and going to another country and talking about the farmers doing so much better. Of course we're always optimistic in Saskatchewan.

You go to Craik or my town of Davidson out there in my area where I've been most of last week to two funerals and met a lot of people. And of course they're optimistic. There's lots of moisture, and they want to grow a crop. But if you think they're optimistic about not having any dollars and cents for it . . . I'm optimistic about going out and sowing a crop and try to get 30 bushels or 40 bushels to the acre, but I'm not optimistic about the cheques I'll be able to write with it this fall.

So why should we have a Premier get up and misrepresent the whole country, not just Saskatchewan, maybe the entire North American continent and say we're doing fine in Saskatchewan. The farmers are coming out of their doom and gloom.

Well I'll tell you . . . And I'm going to bring this right into what we're talking about on this here foreclosure Bill because you're an absolutely an arrogant government. This is the kind of a government that they've had in over in Europe for 50 years or 75 years . . . are getting rid of these Communist thinking people — dictators. If you think you're not the worst dictators I've ever heard of, then why isn't the minister in her seat? Why isn't she there?

You want to talk about optimism? We had the Premier talk about optimism. I'll tell you I'll talk about optimism. When I was just a boy in the '40s, I took my team and wagon as a boy and hauled gravel for the hospital in Craik. You people don't know what it is for older people that lived in rural Saskatchewan. We've put these hospitals together. We've put our communities together. We put our schools together, and you people are tearing them apart at the roots.

There'll be nothing left to rule Saskatchewan when you people get through. I can't believe that this day would ever happen when I would sit here — and this is my 15th year — that I would ever see even an NDP-CCF (New Democratic Party-Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government be so low as they are today.

You don't need to tell me, Mr. Minister, that this just started. You think about this, Mr. Minister, Mr. Associate Minister, and you can respond. You think about this: when did this start? When did this new wellness model start and when did the new idea start of closing hospitals and going this route we're going in? I'd just like to hear your comment. When did it start?

Now, Mr. Chairman, I did ask a direct question. He wasn't paying any attention anyway; he was talking to somebody else. I don't think you heard . . . Did you hear what I said?

An Hon. Member: — Oh, yes.

Mr. Muirhead: — All right. Well let's just start. How did this all start? Where did this all come from? Well what started this here move of closing down hospitals and closing down rural Saskatchewan? Where did it come from?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the member asks: when did the process of reform start? Well I could show, for instance, to the member from Arm River, some studies that were done in the 1940s that talked about the need for district formation — interestingly enough, in the 1940s.

We could look, Mr. Chairman, through the 1960s and find studies conducted across the province that talked about the need for health care reform. Same thing in the 1970s.

Now we get to the decade of the 1980s when members opposite were in government and the member from Arm River, for a time, sat on Executive Council and he will know this, that their government commissioned a Mr. Elmer Schwartz to do a report. That report was done and received. And what did it recommend? What did it recommend? I think the member from Arm River knows what it recommended — movement towards district formation.

And then the highly publicized, widely travelled, very expensive Murray Commission report was done, again under their government. And, Mr. Chair, what were . . . now there were 200-and-some recommendations there. But certainly two of the major thrusts of the Murray Commission — and if he wants to talk about the Murray Commission in detail, we certainly can — but again, the proposal of the Murray Commission to move to large districts, health care districts. And, as he will know, the Murray Commission talked about changing roles of many of our rural health care institutions. He knows that.

Now what did that government do with all of those reports? Well they just stuck them on the shelves. For whatever reason, they just stuck them on the shelves.

Now that same government, Mr. Chairman, who seem to lack either the foresight or the courage or the will to begin the process of the necessary health reform, left the people of Saskatchewan with an inheritance that has simply forced us, simply forced us to look very, very seriously at health care reform and that's the financial straits they left this province in, Mr. Speaker.

But when he asks, when did this all begin? This has been an ongoing process for decades.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, it sure has been an ongoing progress for decades, but not to do what you folks are doing. You had no mandate to do what you're doing. And you certainly . . . there was commissions that . . . and different . . . Murray Commissions and different groups that did studies for the government. It's been going on forever.

But a government using their head at all, would want to ask the people if it's the right thing to do. Certainly we had the courage to do what was right, but we didn't have the courage to go out and do what you did, because you're going against the people. When you go against the people, that's not courage; that's destruction, Mr. Minister. That's destruction.

You cannot go into rural Saskatchewan and get support for what you're doing. You cannot get it. It wasn't there; it never was there. But you don't know your history very well, when the ownership of Saskatchewan, as much as they could possibly . . . possibly could own started right in the '30s; you're one decade out with the Regina Manifesto. That's when your CCF put their program and their policies together and what they were out bent to do, and that was to own, own, own.

And I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, the direct question. If this ever gets to happen, if the people of Saskatchewan allows you to go ahead with your dictatorship type of things you're doing out there, who will own the property? Like in a community, if you're going to close a hospital or maybe you're going to close part of it, who's going to own it? Will the community own it or will the district own it or will the government own that property?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I thank the member for his question; I think it's a question that's on the minds of Saskatchewan people. He asked the question, who will literally own the properties that are now health care institutions. I think we need to be very careful that there are now currently different owners. Some of our health care institutions will be owned by churches or religious organizations. That will continue to be the case; the religious organizations will maintain ownership of their properties.

Some health care institutions, as the member will know, are privately owned by private corporations or private citizens, and again those properties will be retained in private ownership. Then there are those institutions which have been built by the public purse, the union hospitals, the public hospitals, and so on. Ownership of those properties, as they are today, will remain in the public, but now in the name of the district health board.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Associate Minister, you're saying that if a hospital that's been a public hospital, not owned by a religious organization or a private enterprise or a private group of people, that will be owned by the district. Are you clearly saying that the Government of Saskatchewan will not own that hospital?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, yes to the member from Arm River, that the ownership will be vested in the district health board.

(1530)

An Hon. Member: — Full control.

Mr. Muirhead: — Yes, I can bet full of control. We got full control all right. Tell me why, that if this is so, that you're going to take the ownership away from a town. We'll just take any town in Saskatchewan, town A — they own their hospital. Well we'll use my town of Craik for example. It's a hospital that was built in the last couple of years; it was opened a year ago. There's been a hospital there since 1940 and it's always been owned by the people. They built that hospital. They didn't put the mill rate up one bit. They had \$700,000 they raised in that community, with a pot of money left.

You going to tell me that they can't hold . . . own the ownership? The community owns that hospital; the town owns that hospital. You mean to tell me if down the road you changed your mind — this outrageous move you're making doesn't work — that they still won't have control and own that building within our town? That, say, if we go into Regina or Saskatoon or Moose Jaw districts, that we're going to be controlled by other hospitals in other communities?

Why could we still not have the district and have the ownership of our title? Everybody in rural Saskatchewan wants to own what they paid for — same as your farm.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, the member will know that it's not simply the town that now owns the facility, but it'll be the union hospital, the union hospital board that will involve a number of RMs (rural municipalities).

The fact of the matter is the facility will be owned by . . . the title will be vested in the district. Now whichever district the community is part of, that will be the district that holds title to the various health care institutions and properties within its district.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well that's an awful shock, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, that's an awful shock to us. I was hoping that couldn't be true.

The question was asked to a Dr. Bell that came out to Craik the other night and he didn't answer any questions. He just answered questions to keep people confused. It sounded good at the time, but when everybody got their heads clear and they left, they didn't know anything.

But I can't understand how the local people that . . . And you can say, whether the municipality owns it, whether the town owns it, you've got community hospitals, you've got union hospitals out there. Union hospitals are owned by several municipalities; a community hospital, like we are in Craik or my town of Imperial . . . it's union hospitals, and it goes all around Saskatchewan. All my colleagues . . . And you people are the same way — you've got community and union hospitals and you've got religious hospitals, you've got them all over. But why could you not let us join the district . . . to join the district to work together if that's the way it has to be?

But if this doesn't work and something goes wrong with it or you got to change into another district or whatever, why can't the ownership and the title stay where it is? Because I can tell you, Mr. Minister, you're going to have a lot of problems in Saskatchewan . . . people find this out that their titles are going to leave that town. It's controlled from within the communities, and they're not going to . . . It's bad enough that they have to work with someone in a larger district which has been the mandate of this government for a good many years.

They want larger school districts. They want larger RM districts. They want larger hospital districts, and we can't stop you. But for goodness sakes, be reasonable about who's going to own. My goodness, when two RMs or three RMs go together to make a bigger RM, they don't say, well you're going to own the land within it. The farmer still owns the land no matter how big a district he's in. An RM is controlled, and all the roads are built by the municipality and the taxpayers and what. But the farmer owns the land, and that building sits there.

And now 52 towns you're talking about plus all rural Saskatchewan . . . We haven't even got to the big bunch you're probably going to close in January '94. I understand that's when you're going to be closing the ones that aren't in good shape; you're taking a look at those. So it won't be just stopping at 52.

I cannot believe it that you can't reconsider and be serious about letting the town . . . whatever you're going to do, let the towns or communities own their own hospitals. Is there not any way you'll reconsider that, Mr. Minister? Or do you have to wait until you have a cabinet meeting and get the ministers from the front row?

Not taking away from you, Mr. Minister, you can't help it that you're associate minister, but I know you have a problem and maybe . . . your deputies, your people around you, are not going to be able to say yes, no. That's got to be a political answer, and the minister's not here to answer that. But try to do the best you can. Is there not some way? Have you heard them talking about reconsidering something about ownership?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, the member, I think, tries to indicate that he is surprised by the idea today that ownership will be held in the district. Well if he is surprised about that today, I'm not sure where he has been or who he has been talking to. Meetings have gone on across this province over the last number of months — hundred and hundreds of people actively involved on health care boards, trustees, and institutions — where this has been widely discussed. And it has been clearly stated and understood that the ownership of facilities would go into the district. This is not news to anyone involved.

Now I would point out to the member from Arm River I think there is a school in his community and schools in other communities that are part of his constituency. And he will know that those school facilities are

owned by the district board. There's nothing new or strange here, Mr. Chairman. And it only makes good sense that that governing body which will have responsibility for the institutions within the district should also have the responsibility of ownership.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well, Mr. Minister, I am surprised because when a minister, even an associate minister, answers in this House, it has to be the gospel. And I'm going to tell you why I am surprised. Because when Dr. Bell was asked that question . . . and it shook the whole town of Craik. It took the next day when the people that weren't there heard about it, they were told directly by Dr. Bell that the government would own it. And so now you're telling me the districts will own it. Now which way it is?

So are you going to tell me I'm going to be surprised to hear anything because your member from the Department of Health that went out to answer the question distinctly — and that's why I phrased my questions the way they did, because that's exactly why you're not the right minister to be answering the questions — he said your hospital will be owned by the government. The province of Saskatchewan will own that hospital. And at the coffee break they just went . . . the people just . . . never seen them so upset.

Now you come in here and you tell me no, the districts. So that's why I asked you before. Get it straight because if you think that people . . . you said where have I been all this time. I'll tell you, I've been listening to people and I haven't maybe had as much touch this last month as I should have had out there because of my illness but I've got a lot of phone calls. I've got a lot of people that phoned me. And I can tell you that the people in the Craik community didn't have a clue that they were going to lose the ownership of that hospital.

But now get it very straight — that's why I asked you before — who's right? Dr. Bell telling the people . . . the member from North Battleford was there, he'll hear it very clearly. I didn't see him stand up and say no, you're wrong, Mr. Bell, I must correct it, that it's going to be the district.

Now which way is it going to be? Are you going to say one thing in this House like you always do and one thing out in the country? That's the way it's always been. I won't sit down. Because that's the way it's always been. This government here says one thing in the House and says something some place else.

We had a real good example right in question period today from your own Premier. Don't tell me that your Premier didn't misrepresent the whole country in this House today saying that farmers are doing well. And to get the bucks flowing out of Washington he tells them a different story down there. So don't tell me you people can't do it. You're full of it. And don't tell me that you can't misrepresent, because I've heard heckles from my seat several times about this here Tory deficit causing all this problem.

You people have all read this \$3.5 billion debt we

took over from you in 1982, and it's right there in *Hansard*. And we know it's 4.9, but we got an admission of 3.5 billion — billion — dollars debt. That's all we hear.

You said it too. You said it . . . the minister has also said it today, 3.5 billion, and you always talk about all this debt that you got . . . we took over from the Tories.

Every time I speak I'll be saying that right till this . . . there's an election called — about this \$3.5 billion debt admitted. And you take it in 1993 dollars, it is \$14.8 billion which is your total debt today.

It's like me buying a farm for a hundred thousand dollars and paying cash. And then I think I own it and somebody says, you owe another hundred thousand over here.

That's how you people did it. You balanced your budget and then it was all hid in your Crowns. Took us a year to bring all the debt out.

So don't tell me that you know what you're doing. You misled and misled everybody in the province of Saskatchewan.

And as I hand this piece of paper out, I got some people from Watrous that want to see this. They wouldn't believe it. And when they seen it they said, well I'm going to make the NDP in Watrous, every NDP in Watrous is going to eat this, they said. They're going to do it. It was in the Watrous Pool here two weeks ago.

So I'm getting sick and tired of them howling from the seats here about the big, big deficit the Tories left. You people left the deficit yourself.

An Hon. Member: — Gerry, did you watch W5?

Mr. Muirhead: — Somebody said, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, somebody said, did I see W5. Well I'll tell you, W5, they sure weren't around my town to get that information. They sure didn't . . . they misled the whole of Canada, saying that the Tory government built a hospital here and a hospital there and a hospital there. They made them think they'd just built some brand-new ones.

They never built . . . we never built one hospital where there wasn't one before — not one. And when you took over government there was a hundred . . . I think we dropped about six or seven hospitals in Saskatchewan, 137 to 133 while we were in government. We just fixed up the messes that you people left in the 1970s.

You could see when this whole program came together, it all started back in the Regina Manifesto time that we're going to own, own, own, the government's going to own you. And it proved itself through the years.

I remember having problems in the early '60s trying to keep our hospitals. We had to come down here and

shake things up then. And then in the '70s you put a moratorium on nursing homes in Saskatchewan. You never gave any money to repairing hospitals in the 1970s. You just let them go because you knew what your plan was today. Just because you put it in action today — and the minister just said a few minutes ago that this plan started in the '40s. So that means absolutely a contradiction to what the front-row minister's been saying through this whole legislature . . . or since the whole session, that it's only doing this because of the Tory deficit. Now we got . . . the associate minister said this plan started in the '40s. Come on, get it together, you folks.

An Hon. Member: — Do you have a question?

Mr. Muirhead: — You bet I've got a question. I asked him and if he's forgot it, then he shouldn't be here.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I recognize there was a number of questions I think in the member's presentation there. I think we started around the question of ownership of the facilities. Now I will make it once more clear to the member, so there is no confusion in his mind.

The ownership of those facilities which now are public facilities will transfer to the district board. Now that should be as clear as it needs to be for the member or for anybody.

But I want to go now into some of the other issues that he wanted to raise here. He talked about a health department official who was at a meeting in his community. We've had a conversation with that official, who assures us that in fact in that meeting he indicated that the ownership of the properties would go to the district — not to government but to the district.

Now further to that, Mr. Chair, the member has had I believe in his possession a copy of this piece of legislation for almost two months. This legislation was introduced here in the House, I believe on March 3. It's been in his hands for almost two months and in the hands of his caucus and their other members over there.

Now right here in the Bill, in the printed Bill, it indicates what will happen to the assets, that those assets will become the assets of the district health board. And I can refer him to section 16, clause (1), part (c). There it is in black and white for anyone who cares to read it. And I would assume when members opposite have a copy of a Bill of this import that they would have read it, and I would further assume they would share the accurate information with their constituents and communities.

But there it is, right in the Bill, plain to see. So that the member should come in here this afternoon and suggest on how he's surprised about this information, well one wonders therefore what's going on here? Is this a serious questioning of the Bill and its clauses, or is this an opportunity to grandstand a little bit.

(1545)

Now he talked about the debt, and he talked about \$3.5 billion. And he is true; he is accurate indeed. The Crown debt existed in 1982 but it was not hidden. The suggestion that it's hidden is a ludicrous suggestion. It was widely reported in the annual reports of the Crown corporations. He knows that — nothing hidden about it.

What he fails to report to the House this afternoon, that when he and his friends inherited government in 1982, were given the responsibility and mandate to govern, in the Consolidated Fund was a surplus of over \$140 million cash, money in the bank. Now what did they do with that surplus? What did they . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well now the member from Moosomin wants to enter the debate. I invite him to get on his feet and enter the debate if he wants.

I tell you there was \$140 million-plus in the Consolidated Fund, cash money in 1982 when you people took over. And what did you do with it? What did you do with it, my friends? You blew it at a rate of a billion dollars a year, you blew it.

And what's the consequence? What's the consequence? The consequence is the kind of phraseology that's used by a Mr. Eric Malling on national television. This province is now the financial basket case of North America. That's the consequence of 10 years of your billion-dollar-a-year debt.

So I would ask the member from Arm River to please be accurate with the facts here, that there was in fact money in the Consolidated Fund when they took over and that now has reached 10 billion in debt.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, I never heard such grandstanding inaccuracy in my life. He can't even read. It says right here by your own Minister of Finance . . . I'll touch on that one first. I'm going to read it to you. He didn't say \$140 million. He says right here, the Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski, and he reads it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, on the Consolidated Fund . . . that's what you said, 140 million which is the government side, taxpayer-supported debt. Do you know what it was, Mr. Chairman — \$190 million. You're talking about 140 million to the good, and he says 190. And so don't stand up with your sanctimonious figures and think that we're always wrong. Because you are wrong, Mr. Minister. And if you can read, you can read it. So what are you talking about, standing up here saying 140 million sitting there for us?

And I know where most of it came from. It wasn't even your fault and we didn't blame you for that. Because you overestimated in the potash income for that year. I was here in 1981 when the budget came down. You weren't here. And they were estimating, which is all right. It's like a farmer going into the bank today and said: Mr. Banker, I've got to borrow some money and I'm expecting 50 bushels an acre on my canola, 30 on my flax, 30 on my wheat. But he don't get it. And that's

what happened on the potash, and there's why the \$190 million debt was there.

But don't stand up and say \$190 million. And don't stand up in this House and tell me what Dr. Bell said out at Craik. Don't say such a thing. Because you bring him into this House and if he can say to you that the people in Craik weren't told that they'd be owned by the Government of Saskatchewan, I will resign.

Because I got 137 signatures at Craik that all were upset because he distinctly — and my hearing is good — and in the name of God he said that it will be owned by the province of Saskatchewan, and that is fine. If he made a mistake, that is fine. But don't get up here and say, oh that he said something that he didn't say. Because I know what he said and I can get enough people in here by cars for tonight's meeting to tell you what he said. They'll scream it to you from the world.

And that's not a big thing, but it sure mixes people up. Because yes, I knew . . . I thought it was supposed to be owned by the districts because of your Bill, because of the Bill. But why wouldn't I get upset? Why wouldn't the Craik people? Because that's why I asked you the question. Why I was upset, Mr. Minister, and surprised. Because he — maybe a mistake — but he did say it. He upset the reeve and the municipality and all their councillors. And I'll tell you . . . and the mayor of the town. They are upset. That's all you hear in the streets at Craik today is the Government of Saskatchewan is going to own our hospital.

I even heard the comment, if it was even going to be owned in the district, it wouldn't be quite as bad. So don't get up and tell me what somebody that's not sitting beside you said. Because I know what he said; I was there. I was from here to that chair from him. And the hon. minister from North Battleford will tell you what he said. He didn't say it; he said it the way I said. And don't contradict me on that or we'll be here right till 10 o'clock arguing about it.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chairman, for the purposes of this afternoon, let us be clear once again. Here in the legislation for all to see and all to read is the indication what will happen to the assets, and they will be transferred to the district board.

Now the member's had this piece of legislation in his hands for almost two months. I assume he has read it. I would further assume that in a public meeting if an official of government is not accurate in what is being reported to the meeting, that I would assume a member of this legislature would stand up and say, well no, no, no, that's not what's in the Act; here's what's in the Act. And have the Act with him. I assume he would take a copy of the Act with him.

Now apparently the member didn't do that. Apparently if — and I underline the word "if" — if the official reported something that was not accurate to the legislation, I would expect a member of this legislature from whatever party to stand up and report what's in the Bill.

Now I am not here to suggest that the official of government present at that time reported anything else but what he has now reported to us, that in fact he reported to that meeting what is in the Bill, and that the assets will be owned by the district.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, it's fine except for this. I know the way you've said the way it's going to be. I accept it, and that's the way it's going to be. They're going to be owned by the districts. That's fine.

But you must control your people out talking, because it wasn't up to me. I didn't have a Bill with me that night. I didn't have anything but my bare hands. I didn't even take it. We went to that meeting, didn't even know the minister was coming out. It was a meeting called to vote on what district they're going to go into.

But your minister was there. The member from North Battleford, I think he had the Bill in his hand because he had a folder. And when he was sitting closer to him than me, why didn't he get up as a government member and correct him.

Anyway, we'll get off that, Mr. Minister. I accept it that he made a mistake, but it should be corrected that, be very, very careful when people vote not to upset people that way. Because it's going to be hard now for me. I'm going to have to take *Hansard* back. Well I would say that they're going to try to get the people to understand that they're going to be owned by the districts. I will do that. But I don't want it left on the record that your Dr. Bell . . . he made a mistake. He definitely did.

All right. Maybe this is not right on hospitals, but you're answering on behalf of cabinet; you're answering as associate minister. You must know a lot of what's going on. What is the future plan? You're taking over the hospitals now. When do you plan to take over the schools and the municipal offices and the rinks? Have you got a plan when that's coming? Do you hear that? Because that has to be in the plans, all the same thing.

We can't probably run our own rinks; we probably can't run our own schools. I've heard it coming from the departments that they're monitoring the enrolments in all our schools. Now it's not right on the Bill but it's all connection what you're doing here. It all connects. Everything all connects.

And destroying rural Saskatchewan. We're now closing hospitals and they're dictated to. And people that worked and toiled . . . you don't know, you're not old enough to know what people in rural Saskatchewan did to put their buildings together in these towns.

You're not old enough to know the sweat and toil that went into these hospitals and to have a hospital when times were tough, when there wasn't any money at all. You didn't get money from government. Communities paid it all. There wasn't anything.

When is your cabinet's plan to start closing the schools now and moving them into larger districts, and our municipal offices and our urban offices and our rinks. When's your plan for that?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, again the member . . . You see, this is what happens here — the member's wild and exaggerated statements that take us miles from what we are intending and should be doing here in a responsible legislature. We should be looking clause by clause, and we were getting close to it when we were talking about the ownership of the assets. That's close to the content of what we should be doing here this afternoon. But now, in his exaggerated rhetoric, he's taking us all over his map.

And again the member opposite, and like his colleagues, wants to misrepresent what's going on. He in his . . . I heard it again talking about the closure of hospitals when he knows full well that what is happening here is conversion of some of our smaller, acute-care institutions into new and better health care centres to serve our people not just for today but in the long run.

So I would really appreciate it if we could get to the Bill, get to the clause-by-clause study, which we are intended to do this afternoon.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, you make the accusation about making these here wild accusations. If you would have told anybody at election time you were going to close rural Saskatchewan, I would have even thought it was a wild accusation because I wouldn't have believed it.

You never said anything at election time in the fall of '91, so why isn't it . . . it isn't an outrageous accusation to say what you're going to do. It was the CCF back in the '50s that started the school units and closed down our country schools and we had to move into the school units. It's your concept.

So it's not a wild imagination to say we're going to have larger units and larger municipality because it's been talked about. I didn't ask an outrageous question. It wasn't outrageous at all. But you just stand up and grandstand and absolutely say nothing because you think, oh, we'd never so such a thing.

If you, Mr. Minister, had have met me on the streets of Moose Jaw and said, I heard while the election was on and said, I heard out of Regina that our own governments may be talking about closing 52 hospitals and shaking up medicare the way they have and destroying and drug plan and the dental plan, I wouldn't have believed you because I couldn't believe that it could possibly happen by this government — couldn't believe that it could ever happen.

Let me ask you this question: what is your plan and what do you think, Mr. Minister, that when we close . . . I understand that in the city of Regina and Saskatoon, if someone has a heart attack or has an accident or a

fire and they're injured and they're in emergency, that it only takes a matter of minutes and somebody's there to pick them up to get them to care, to a hospital or wherever.

When you close all these hospitals out there, what is your plan? And don't get up and give me that big story that you're not going to close hospitals, because why did your press release say that? — the closure of 52 hospitals. You're not making people believe you very well because the headlines in every paper . . . 52 hospital closures. We know you're playing your politics now. They're coming open one by one by one.

It isn't going to happen, but you made a big smokescreen out there, Mr. Minister, of making people think that, oh we're closing a whole bunch of hospitals in our NDP (New Democratic Party) ridings and not so many in the PC (Progressive Conservative) ridings. But did you ever fool people because now we're hearing where this hospital's going to stay open maybe for a year now, like talk about Pangman . . . because I can imagine the minister would soon come into your caucus and cry and lay on the floor until she says, give me back one of my three hospitals.

It's politics that's starting to happen. It's started to happen all over the province. Well you're so . . . You haven't got a plan. You just hit out there and close 52 down and you . . . We'll have to play it by ear and see what happens out there. Well I tell you, once you start doing that you're going to have everybody going to be upset.

And there's going to be hospitals closed, you said that. But I want to know, what is your plan for someone in rural Saskatchewan that is going to have a facility gone, a doctor gone? What are you going to do to save his or her life?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I know this is an important issue to the member, and it's an important issue to the people of Saskatchewan. He refers in his question to the provision of emergency care. It has been stated clearly from the beginning of these discussions and re-emphasized over and over again that emergency care for Saskatchewan people will continue to be available.

I think what the member opposite confuses in his own mind is an acute care bed — a hospital bed — as that bed which provides emergency care. And he knows that's not true. Emergency care is not provided by the hospital bed. It will be provided by trained and qualified people. It will be provided by ambulance services. It will be provided by communication. But he knows full well that emergency care is not particularly provided by a hospital bed.

Now it has been from the beginning the commitment of this government and through the reform process has been stated over and over again, that the provision of emergency care will continue to be made. In fact that I believe we will see enhancements of emergency care, as districts come together and understand their need

and will begin to put their facilities in place in an appropriate manner for their district, that what we're going to see is better emergency care across all of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Muirhead: — You can stand there and say so nicely and quietly and smoothly, that they're going to have all this care. But what if they have . . . what if somebody is out there seeding . . . let's say this is a year from now, and their hospital and their doctor is gone.

And don't tell me there isn't going to be some doctors leave, because they're talking about it all over. In the town of Craik, where I talk quite a bit about naturally, because it's where I live and it's where I was born and raised, and I've been a part of four hospitals being built in that town, so naturally it's . . . and it's the only hospital in my riding that's any chance of losing the acute care beds.

(1600)

I already find out that Imperial, built the same time, they've already played their politics over there with somebody on the board and it looks like they're going to save their hospital — that's fine. They saved theirs; we want ours saved. So you're into problems. You're into deep problems.

But our doctor in Craik has been asked at the meeting the other night: if we lose our acute care . . . we only have two. You've misled all the people in Saskatchewan about the hospital beds out there. You said we've got more hospital acute care beds per capita than any place else. Well it isn't right, because you didn't use the right figures. You use 6 acute care out of Craik; you used 8 out of Imperial; I think it's 8 or 10 out of Davidson; but you didn't . . . you should use the ones that they pay for.

They only pay for two. That's the figures you didn't use. If they only pay for two acute care in the town of Craik; and they only pay for, I believe, two in Imperial; and it's the same proportion all over the province — that's what the dollars and cents is to the government, to the taxpayer. We've got to fund the rest ourselves when it happens to have six, or eight, or overflowing.

But the question, Mr. Minister, that if that doctor leaves, our doctor . . . We just got a new doctor there from South Africa and he is one tremendous doctor. And the plan was for the Craik hospital was to build a health centre. And it's got 18 beds — 12 level 4; 6 acute. And when we couldn't hold a doctor . . . and this wasn't a suggestion from Craik. This came from the Department of Health. We were building a new hospital. It was the department, probably the same people sitting around you, talked us into building the health centre. And we want to know if that doctor leaves, and somebody has a heart attack, or this is a year from now and they break their leg on a tractor accident now, what are we going to do with them, because for 40-some years — 50 years now — in 1941, they've been able to go into the Craik hospital, Davidson hospital, Imperial, Central Butte, Moose

Jaw. They've always had their care, quick care; keep them alive to make that move.

I had a real close neighbour that just about died just two years ago. They got him to the Craik hospital, and a doctor kept him alive — put a nurse in an ambulance, and he lived till he got to Saskatoon; nobody thought he was going to ever make it — but he's living and walking around today because we had a doctor and a hospital to save his life.

What are you going to do, Mr. Minister, if the doctors are gone from some of these local areas? Are you going to have a nurse trying to be sitting around there to save their life? Or what's your plan?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The member covers quite a wide swath in each question. The member will know that what is happening across Saskatchewan today is that communities are coming together into districts. Now those communities are working together across the province, and they'll be assessing the needs and the most appropriate distribution of health care facilities and institutions and programs within their geographical district. And we believe and have believed for a long time that those kinds of decisions are best made more locally as opposed to being made more centrally.

Now I happen to believe that the people of Craik, and whatever district Craik becomes a part of, will have a better ability to make decisions for Craik and the district than for instance we sitting here in Regina or officials. Now that will hold true for the provision of emergency services. Understandably in every district there will need to be a variety, an accessibility to emergency services. Now that can take a variety of forms as we've discussed earlier.

Part of the provision of emergency service is the medical doctor in the district. Now there is very little to indicate that the medical doctors who are now practising in rural Saskatchewan will be choosing to leave. There have been ongoing discussions with all of the medical profession in the province. There have been some very specific discussions with medical doctors that work in those communities that will see role changes for their institutions. Many of them are suggesting very creative responses to the situation.

In fact, it's being suggested by many that this district model will in fact enhance rural medical practice through the opportunity for medical doctors in rural practice to join into group practices which, I would like to underline, does not mean that all of those medical doctors will group in one community. They will continue to live in the communities where they now live and serve, but will be joined together in group practice where there is more coordination and cooperation between those same doctors to provide the services. And so the plan is just that. It's a plan of local decision-making and control to provide the quality health care service that we all desire and need.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, you almost make me laugh. Like you said when you got

up, that I cut quite a wide swath when I ask a question. That's because I've been listening to your ministers for a year and a half . . . get a pretty wide swath when they answer questions. And you said something though in your remarks that it really pleased me, Mr. Minister. I am so happy what you just said because it's the contrary, the contrary, to what has been happening.

We were told that if we formed the districts, the people will decide on the hospital closures . . . what we're going to do, I should say. I wouldn't say hospital closure. We're going to make the decisions out there.

But before the Bill is through the House . . . and it never really got discussed I guess much until really today because it's the first time we've even had an associate minister. We may never see the Minister of Health because she more likely is making sure when she hits North Battleford today and Meadow Lake and she'd be in Uranium City and gone. She didn't want to answer questions.

But you said a statement there — and it sounds so nice to say that to the people — you made the statement, Mr. Minister, that when I talked about these decisions about doctors and acute care and what not, you said it's going to be up to the district. Well are you telling me, Mr. Minister, that Moose Jaw . . . Like we're talking about in . . . and I'm using my town of Craik again, as the other members may use the example of their local areas, because Craik's the only town I have a hospital in danger of losing acute care.

So they're talking about going . . . in fact they made the vote the other night, a straw vote, to go into at Moose Jaw and Central Butte; that's going to be their district. And they already made their decision. The district has already made the decision, and Moose Jaw very clearly has already said to us that if we can get together we will make the request and we will make sure that there's one acute care left in Craik. So they've made their decision.

We've made our decision. We're going to have one acute care left in Craik — one bed. We're going to drop from two to one. But are you going to let that happen? It wouldn't be fair just for Craik to have . . . You've already said we can make our decision, that the district will make the decision.

Well I can tell you, there have already been meetings going on between many people in Central Butte and Moose Jaw and Craik and meeting with the other areas. They've talked about going into Imperial, coming to Regina, and it'll look to be the best to go to Moose Jaw because there we'll see that we get a one-bed acute care.

All right, you're going to let that happen. But what about the rest of the people here? Is everybody going to have the same right as we are in Craik, that we're going to be able to make the decision, Mr. Minister? You said, we'll make them. The decision's already been made. We're going to let you take the one away that'll save you \$165,000 a year and we'll finance the other ones ourselves. Craik will do that and they're

quite happy about it. And seeing now that you said it and you've agreed with the people, but I just hope that you do that for the rest of the people here.

I wouldn't want Craik to be the only one just to have a one acute care given back to them, like Imperial. I wouldn't want them to be the only one. I want that for all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister. Is that your plan?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, the member illustrates, I think, by his own comment precisely why it is advantageous now for communities to move into the district bed . . . into the district formation.

Now this is not the place, obviously. The floor of the legislature is not the place to do a detailed discussion of the provisions of each district. That's obviously not the place and we're not the people. There are people much better equipped for those discussions and for those decisions than either you or I or anyone else in this House.

But I think what the member illustrates is that the discussion that's going on with Craik, and I guess the Moose Jaw District — I'm very happy to hear that personally — is the kind of discussion that needs to go on across the province because here are communities working together assessing their needs.

Now he talks about the provision of a bed in Craik. Obviously as districts form and look at their needs for the provision of emergency services, a bed may be needed for observation purposes. That may be an appropriate decision for a district or a community.

Some institutions or some districts will want to put into place perhaps a respite bed, or respite beds. Those are the kinds of decisions that are best made on the local level. The member points that out by his very words here this afternoon. That's what's happening and that's good news.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Associate Minister, but you're playing games with my words. You got up and said all the things that we might be able to do out there by being dictated from your department. You said before we will make the decision. We already have made the decision what we're going to do in Craik. We're going to keep one acute bed. We've already made that decision.

So you said we could make our own decisions, the same as the district boards would make the decisions in the first place. But you get up with your cute little answers and you skate away from that. And that's exactly what Dr. Bell did out at Craik when he was asked that very question.

I asked one very important question; I'm going to ask you now. I asked Dr. Bell and he couldn't answer at all. He wouldn't even attempt to it; he was scared of this one.

Now we'll just use any town for example here, but I'm going to be thinking of several in the same position. Say they have six or seven acute beds now or they're

under that and they're going to lose them all; they're going to lose all these acute beds. But they're an integrated facility to start with so they want to hold their level 4. There's several of those I understand — 20-some — in the province that's in the closure position.

And so they lose their acute care — and this is the question I asked Dr. Bell — these beds are going to be closed down, maybe use one or two, we hope we can get it back in for acute care; you said today we'll be able to do what we want. And let's assume whatever happens, Mr. Minister, that in these hospitals and these situations with integrated facility, that there's one to five or so beds that are left empty, for no need whatsoever. They have no way at all, because whatever these . . . may take one or two beds to handle these needs you're talking about, whether it be still be a one-bed acute or for emergencies or for whatever, Mr. Minister, whatever, but there's still several beds left empty. What are you going to do with those beds?

Because I asked the question to Dr. Bell: will they be able to be filled with the level 4 waiting-list that they have in our town in Craik now, and the same all over the province? If they're sitting there empty and there's a waiting-list, will we be able to fill them up as planned by the same department that you're working for now; it's an integrated facility, when we lose the doctor or whatever, it's going to be filled with level 4. Will that plan still be in effect if they're sitting there empty, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Number one, Mr. Chairman, some of the beds that the member refers to are today empty beds. We understand that, that we have beds across Saskatchewan that are not being used for their purpose. Hence the need for some reform.

Now we're saying the money that we're spending, if we can take some of that and put it into the provision of other services, isn't that a better idea to take our limited health care dollars and spend them as wisely as we can in providing services?

Now we're learning as a society and a community and a province that there are effective ways to provide health care that are not always related to institution. I hope the member agrees with that, that there are effective health care programs that can be provided to our people, that are not specifically related to an institution or a room or bricks and mortar; more related to community and the people who can provide those services.

Now the member asked a specific question about beds will be . . . or rooms or space that will be available in some of our institutions. What will happen is this. The district board will assess its need district-wide. The district board will have some . . . a global budget with which to work. If within the financial constraints that we all must live under — and the member I hope will admit that, that there are financial constraints we must live under — if under those constraints the district board assesses the need that some of those beds should be used for long-term

care, and if they're confident that their waiting-lists require it, then that becomes part of the district board decision-making process, and is an option that's available.

(1615)

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, thank you for that answer. Now I want to ask you, do you agree with me on this statement I'm going to make, that if there is such a thing — and there will be many throughout the province of Saskatchewan — where a hospital, an integrated facility ends up with empty beds, and that hospital is going to be heated, has the nursing staff, and if that need is there and the list is there and the people . . . level 4 care has got a long list or whatever, and the district agrees, do you agree that that should be used for . . . do you agree personally, Mr. Minister, that that should be used for level 4 if everything works out that way rather than leave it empty?

Do you agree that that should be, and will there be funding from the government if there's some level 4 space left and they're not using it, will you allow them to use it and will there be money . . . funding for it?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Member, whether I agree or not or whether you agree or not I guess is not the issue. The issue is we have health care needs in our province that must be met. We have limited resources with which to meet those needs.

What we are proposing and doing with this piece of legislation is enabling districts, communities, to come together in a district basis. They will be in a better position I think than we who sit here in Regina, to understand the real need, the real needs in that geographic area of our province.

They will be provided from government a global budget based on need. They will then assess with the resources available to them how best to spend those monies. In that circumstance, if the district has, for instance, a very high percentage of seniors, it may well be that a district will decide to use some of its global budget to offer some of those beds for long-term care. However, in many cases we know that districts will opt to put some of those resources, perhaps more of those resources into community-based programing, home care, and other.

But again it's a district decision based on the real need in that district, understanding the financial constraints.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I can sure see why that they brought you in here today, than having the Hon. Minister of Health here, because I think you're better at saying nothing than she is. She couldn't hold herself. She would be into temper and mad at us and be hollering back and forth. And you're the best minister I've ever . . . You're just about as good as the member from Swift Current at getting up talking nice and saying nothing. You're just answering questions without answering them.

You know what your plan is. Your plan is — and I've already heard it from some of your back-benchers — in five to ten years there will be no level 4's in rural Saskatchewan. You know that as well as I do, that you want to get them into high-rises in Regina and Saskatoon. You know that.

So that's the reason why these beds are going to stay empty. To prove otherwise, let's fill them up and let's say differently. Tell me I'm wrong — that you're not going to close down rural Saskatchewan and let the people have to move in here and die miles away from their loved ones. You know, Mr. Minister, that if you're born and raised in Moose Jaw, you want to be in a home in Moose Jaw in your dying days.

You know the plan of the early settlers in this province was that parents died at home with their families. We have moved away from that and the people are living much longer. And I'll give you a good example. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Duff from Davidson, went into a home in Davidson when she was 75 and lived till she was 99 years of age with the good care she had. I'm sure she couldn't have made it the last 10 years without that good care in a home.

But what kept her alive wasn't her family just coming to see them every week. It was living in Davidson and somebody went by every day, several times a day saying, hi, Mrs. Duff. And I'm using that example because it's that way right across this province and you people don't care about that. You don't care about that or you would want every bed in this hospital right full of level 4's.

That's the number one issue you've got to do out there is to make sure that if you do close down acute care and you don't leave them a doctor and you don't leave them something that they want — not what you want. If you don't, you'll look after the aged out there because you've been the promisers of it since Tommy Douglas days. If Tommy Douglas was here today, he'd be ashamed of the lot of you. He'd be so ashamed of you that he wouldn't own you. He'd want to have nothing to do with you.

And I'm ashamed of you — your ideas, your examples, and the way you walk over people. I'm absolutely ashamed of you. There's some good, decent people in this caucus over here. I know them. I've talked to them one on one. But they can't stand up and be counted because there's a few members that tell members like you, Mr. Associate Minister, what to do. You're told what to do. You can't stand up in your caucus like I did when I spent four years in cabinet and if two or three of us didn't like something, it was stopped.

There was many moral issues came to our cabinet and people . . . Several of us stood up and said, we don't want it and we could stop it, but not in the case of over here. And I'm even going to call . . . like hospital closures to me is a mighty moral issue. Boy, I tell you, when you get talking about death, we're talking about health and death of people.

And you people over there, when it comes to vote on your towns, they ran out and wouldn't even vote. Where was the member from Bengough-Milestone when they voted on her town the other day? She ran like she couldn't run any faster. The member from Rosetown, he was in the House and he took off out of here when we voted on one or two of his, and he came and run back in here to introduce some visitors in the gallery. Couldn't stand it to vote against his town.

The only one that was the member from Lloydminster that could do it. And I give her a lot of credit. She done what she was told by you henchmen. She done what she was told. And I said it in this House when I was in opposition before from 1978 to 1982, that the member from Riversdale, when he pulls that chain and he goes up and down, your heads go up and down; when he goes this way, it goes this way. That's the way it's always been. He's a dictator.

And you people haven't . . . And I think even he would listen to you. He would listen if you stood up and be counted. Stand up and be counted and said, we don't believe in the closures affecting people's health out there. We don't believe in destruction of rural Saskatchewan. We don't believe in having our Premier go to another country and misleading them about how well the farmers are doing and coming out of their dilemma of financial problems they're into.

Stand up and be counted you people. But you can't, you won't. When it comes to a vote on this Bill I will guarantee you that the ones that got a heart, the ones that got a feeling for people, the ones that feel for the aged in rural Saskatchewan will be in the caucus and not vote. You cannot get a unanimous vote over on that side. But you won't have anybody stand up and tell the House Leader, say to the House Leader . . . And that's how you stop Bills.

That's how I stop Bills, along with my colleagues when we sometimes said, perhaps . . . I had it suggested to me a couple times, perhaps they said, maybe it'd be better if you just didn't come in and vote. I said, I vote. If you people would say it . . . all these issues and we're going to come to another one on the human rights Bill, all kinds of things like this. Stand up and be counted.

Mr. Minister, will you stand up and be counted for rural Saskatchewan? That's the question I'm asking you now. Stand up and be counted and do what they want because now you're not. You're not doing what . . . you're dictating to them. You're walking right over top of them. Listen to them. There's nothing that's wrong with saying I'm sorry, and we will go back and look this thing over and do what's right for the people of Saskatchewan. Will you stand up and be counted?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes, Mr. Chair, yes to the member from Arm River, I am proud to stand up and be counted as supporting this legislation, and so, Mr. Member from Arm River, is every member of this government.

It is difficult, you know, it is difficult in this process, when we're supposed to be doing a detailed clause-by-clause discussion of the Bill, when we never seem to come near the Bill or a clause of that. We are fully prepared to try and answer the questions the member may have, but it is sometimes very difficult to pick out a question in the remarks the member makes.

Now he said, I think rather complimentary, that I sound quite nice but then he went on to say nothing. Well the member doesn't sound so nice and he doesn't say anything either.

And then he rambles around to talk about Tommy Douglas. Now this is in fact where he does get off track because, I tell you, beware the Tory who starts to quote Tommy Douglas in this place or any place.

He talks about the need for members to stand up in the caucus. I have to ask the member opposite, well was he standing up for the last 10 years in his caucus when he watched the financial health of this province just go on a downhill slide like we've never seen before? Was he standing up and saying . . . was he protesting about that?

I think he was part of the cabinet decision-making process in that government when we started on this slide downhill. Was he standing up and saying, don't do this to my children and grandchildren; don't leave us this inheritance; don't leave any future government the kind of choices that you're leaving with them?

Was he protesting the kinds of deals that we saw over the course of the last 10 years in this province? Was he protesting the waste and mismanagement that's got us to this state? No, I don't think he was standing up enough if he was standing up at all.

Now I think there was a question in what he said and it had to do with the provision of long-term care for Saskatchewan people in or near communities where they live. And on this I share his view. As far as we are able as a province to provide that long-term care near our home communities, the better — the better on every occasion.

And there is absolutely no plan, sense, or desire to centralize long-term care into two major urban centres, as the member in his comments was saying. It is shared by this government, and I think by all members in this House, that if we can provide that long-term care opportunity as near to home as we can — and we can't always do it in each of our communities, we know that, but as close to home as we can — the more, the better.

But then beyond that, Mr. Chairman, the more that we can provide services and facilities that people can remain in their own homes without deinstitutionalization, I say, more power to that. That's the direction we're trying to move. Of course we will need long-term care for the aged and the frail. We understand that. And for the disabled and the young in some cases. But the more that we can put

into community-based resources to have us living in our own homes, the better.

So I would appreciate it if the member has some specific questions about the Bill, if we might get to those.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, we on this side decide what we're going to ask. You don't tell us what we're going to do. If we want to stand up here and condemn you for your Bill because there's nothing in it we like . . . what could we possibly like about your Bill? I couldn't talk about it clause for clause, because I'm against it all. Anything to do with destroying rural Saskatchewan, I'm against it.

So I have my right here to stand, and in Committee of the Whole I have my right on item 1 to tell you what we think. Because I've never had a chance in this House in this session, to tell you what I think. I didn't have a chance to tell you what I thought of what you were doing to rural Saskatchewan.

When on a Saturday I read the paper in Craik where somebody from the *Leader-Post* writes an article that we have to have closures of rural hospitals. A whole page written by a man named Varcoe. Closure of rural hospitals needed; there's wasted money out there. And that's the day, on a Saturday night I got that paper, I read it, and on Sunday morning I collapsed with a ruptured disc. And I laid in the Craik hospital for two days on Demerol to get survived to be brought to Regina on an ambulance.

And I was brought into Regina to the Pasqua Hospital. I was left there for seven or eight hours, seven hours to be exact, before the doctor could get to me. They don't want to hear these kind of things. But this is a good example what happens.

I was in emergency for up to seven hours, didn't even have a needle or a pill. And I felt sorry for all those good people in emergency because they were swamped with accidents and everything else. I seen life, boy, I tell you, what goes on every day. And I hope none of you ever have to go through what I went through, with pain like I've never had in my life.

A doctor came to me about 6:30 at night and says, you poor man. He says, I'll book you in. I got to book you for emergency CAT (computerized axial tomography) scan. I'll book you for emergency operation. He came back and says, they've got no room here for you. And I was . . .

An Hon. Member: — Oh, go on.

Mr. Muirhead: — Don't go on, because I can prove it by a receipt. You see, Mr. Chairman, the doctor had to get an ambulance . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Order. I'll ask the members of the Assembly to allow the hon. member from Arm Creek to make his point. I'll ask all members of the Assembly to allow the member from . . . I will ask all members of the Assembly to allow the hon.

member from Arm River to make his point and to ask his question.

(1630)

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Naturally they would want to holler because they didn't want to hear the last part of my story because, as God has me standing here, the doctor could not get me in that hospital. And they had to get an ambulance and take me to my apartment and leave me for two nights and one day to look after me, and it may affect me the rest of my life. It may affect me.

Now the point I want to make, I'll wait my turn to die if I have to wait my turn to get into a hospital, but don't let me read in the paper, close down hospitals. And I'm saying to anybody in the city of Regina and Saskatoon that's listening to me now, wake up, because we in rural Saskatchewan may be in your bed when you need to get in there. We're going to fill up your beds when they bring us in here. More and more, there'll be people in there for having their babies and their toe nails cut and everything else, any little thing, a small little operation. And you won't be able to get in for the emergency operation, the heart attacks and the strokes, because the beds are going to be full from people from rural Saskatchewan.

So you members from the city, you'd better wake up and stand up and be counted or you're going to be in trouble in this province like you never were in your life before as democrats. Never ever has this ever happened before that any government ever disturbed health care, medicare like you people have.

And the associate minister keeps throwing in every once in a while — he has nothing else to talk about — the financial mess, the financial mess. And he knows right well that he'd better get off that, because I've told him and I told him, and he's going to make me say it again, that your 3.5 billion which we think is 4.9 billion . . . your \$3.5 billion debt is \$14.8 billion debt.

Certainly I stood up and was counted in my caucus and my cabinet. If they ever even suggested, Mr. Chairman, if they even suggested in my caucus or cabinet that we talk about closing a hospital or even thinking about touching medicare . . . we even think about it. I was upset when we had to take some of the deductible off, but we did, on drugs. But you people just swiped it right away. You bet I stood up to be counted, and I knew the debt was climbing.

An Hon. Member: — What about GigaText?

Mr. Muirhead: — Talking about GigaText. That's a good one to talk about, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that's just about exactly the same as talking about the \$5 million for GigaText. It didn't turn out very well and I wasn't even for it in the first place. It didn't turn out.

But I'll tell you, I'll tell you what the minister said out in front of the legislature here. She said that when the thousand people were here, she said it all so she floundered around all the way from nothing to \$20

million this is going to save us. Well I'll tell you, that's about saving a farmer a year . . . going in for one cup of coffee. She's going to think they're going to balance a budget of \$15 billion with disturbing rural Saskatchewan with \$5 million.

You're going to save 5 million to \$10 million, and you're going to upset the whole rural province and have them so upset that people will be probably having heart attacks tonight over it. There's people so upset that phoned, they're so disturbed, that I know that there'll be people that will have a hurried death because of you people.

You people are responsible from now on for what you've done, and you can sit . . . The member from Canora sits there and he laughs. But some of you are pretty sober, pretty quiet. Because wait till there's a first death in your riding because of lack of hospital care and the doctors are gone and whatever. They're not all going to leave rural Saskatchewan, but they're not going to hang around very long either if you take their acute care away. They're not going to be hanging around.

And you people, one by one in your ridings, you won't show. I could go home to Craik when we had my meeting there the other night and hold my head high. I helped them build it in tough times. I helped them build a health centre in Imperial and Craik, and I fought for it. I fought hard. My father started fighting in 1949 for a level 4 and we finally got it in 1992.

An Hon. Member: — You fought against medicare, you know it.

Mr. Muirhead: — We were always for medicare. I came here on the steps of the legislature in 1963, supporting what you people were doing — medicare. I supported what you were doing for health care in this province. I supported when Tommy Douglas brought out health care, after Diefenbaker brought it out to Canada in the first place. Diefenbaker introduced it to the world. And certainly we got to give the credit to the CCF for bringing medicare in and hospitalization, and we got to give the credit to you turkeys for taking it away.

Now I better not be saying turkeys. I guess I better even withdraw that word because that's . . . I understand that happened when I was away in the hospital. It's called the barnyard debate, and I take that back already, Mr. Chairman. We'll just say that they're doing wrong, these people over here, of what they're doing.

And, Mr. Minister, I'm going to ask you again to stand up . . . and you've never really answered one straightforward question. Only one question you've answered this afternoon, and that's the question that we have made some progress on. And you did answer me that for sure that the hospitals or facilities will be owned by the health districts, not the Government of Saskatchewan. That's the only question you've answered. You strayed and scattered away from all the rest. You've only skated away from that integrated

facility.

If those beds are empty out there, if we got an empty bed and the district requests that they be filled up with level 4, is the government going to do it or say no? Are they going to dictate to them, or is the districts going to be able to have their say? Are the districts going to be able to have their say, long as they're in the parameter of their financing? I understand that they got to be in the parameter of their financing. And if it's there, will the government stop any bed being filled with a level 4 care? Or will they say, the health district, you make the decision as long as it's in the parameter of their financing? I want a direct answer on that, and then that's my last question.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, the member says I've answered one question specifically. It's only because he's only asked one specific question in an afternoon that's supposed to be filled with very specific questions about the Bill.

Now I understand if the member wants to turn this into a further second-reading speech, that's fine. But if he wants specific answers to specific questions, we're more than prepared to bring them. Give us some specific questions.

Now he asks again about the prospect of long-term care beds in some of our smaller rural institutions. And I repeat again the process. The process is that communities will form into districts. Districts will do their need assessment, sorting out what is the appropriate need, the real need within their district.

The district then is charged with the responsibility of spending their global budget within that district. That global budget, Mr. Chairman, will be set by the department based on the availability of resources to the province. There then are three constraints on the local district. One is the budgetary constraint. That's obvious. Number two, there will be provincial-wide standards established by the department and by government that each district will have to adhere to. And number three, there will be each year struck with the district and the department a contractual arrangement so that the department, the province, can be assured that the services are being provided to Saskatchewan people in each of our districts.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, there's no sense asking you questions because I said I will ask another direct question. You won't answer that question. I've asked you about three times. I wanted just a yes-or-no answer on this one.

I'm going to try you once more. If the parameters of financing are as such in the district and there's empty beds in an integrated facility, will they be allowed to fill them up with level 4 if the parameters of financing say such? Just say yes or no. That's all I need from you. I don't need a long speech saying nothing.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I just said to the member, if he'd have listened, so long as the provincial standards are being met, so long as the budgetary requirements are

met and there's no exceeding the pools of money available, and so long as this is contracted, in the understanding that services are being met in the district with the contract with the department, the answer is the district has the ability and responsibility to make choices for their communities in their district.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, I will apologize. The first time I didn't quite hear you because the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Thunder Creek just come and told me that I'm getting calls to my office, as I'm speaking this afternoon, asking if the minister's going to be here tonight to answer questions for my colleagues. And I want you to answer that when you get up.

But you still didn't answer my question on the integrated facility. You just get up and say, if everything's right and all this. It's not whether the district will make the decision. Let's say they've made the decision — and I've said that to you several times this afternoon — the decision's already been made in Craik what we want on the acute care. We want one acute care bed. That's been there. You already said they're making decisions, so we thank you that we're going to get one acute care bed in Craik. All right.

And I've told you and told you and asked you and asked you, if the district says within the parameters of financing that we want you to have two or three or four of those beds go to integrated facility . . . I mean, or sorry, for level 4 nursing care, and you won't get up and say yes, the government will let them do it.

That's what you won't answer. You're only skirting on that one. Now get up and answer me, whether it's yes or no, if the Moose Jaw district or any district — I'm only using them for an example this afternoon because it's closest to me — if the Moose Jaw district, if Craik goes in with them, says yes, we want in the town of Craik two or three or four of those beds go to level 4 care, will the government step in and say no, you can't do it anyway, or yes, you can go ahead?

You won't answer that. You just get on and make that big story. Try it differently this time so we can move on to something else.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I think it is obvious that the member is, I think, talking about his local situation. And I am not about, on the floor of this legislature, nor should he, think that we are going to make the specific decisions for any specific institution or a specific district. This is not the place and we're not the people.

I repeat again, the decisions will be made, the decisions will be made based on real need within a district. That need will be determined by the district board and the planning committees that are now in place that will evolve to district boards.

Those decisions will have as constraints the financial constraints of budget that we all live with, and the district boards will live with. They will be constrained by the provincial-wide standards that must be and will

be set by the department and the province, and it will require contractual arrangements between the district and the province so that we can ensure that services are being provided in a fair and equitable manner to all people in Saskatchewan. That's how the system will work, Mr. Member. And we're not going to get into a process here on the floor of the legislature of making that kind of decision for the districts.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, that is absolutely a nothing answer again. You know what I'm getting at. You're smart enough to know what I'm talking about.

Let's forget about talking about a specific district of Moose Jaw. Let's talk about district A. I've said to you very clearly, if the financing is available in that district to do whatever they want to do, whether it be acute care or whether it be a level 4, whatever, will you allow them to do it if the money's available within that district? And you will not answer that because you are dictators. You figure on dictating to them after the districts are formed — and you better tell us otherwise if it's not true — the same way as you dictated to all Saskatchewan when you wanted this Bill through to set the boundary lines and then you closed the hospital before you done it.

Now is that what you have in mind after we go into a district and a hospital has the facility for whatever, and the district board says yes we want this, but Mr. Government comes along and says no. All I wanted from you to say whether it's any place in Saskatchewan . . . It's not a specific. We're not talking about whether it's Craik. I only use that for example. It may be any of those integrated facilities.

Will you allow the districts to make their decision if the money's available in that area, for what they want to do? Or are you going to be the dictator that comes back in to your NDP on the board to say . . . Because they did say that at Craik the other night, that all the board members were going to be appointed by the minister.

So will you be telling your NDP-appointed member on that board, no you won't be able to do that even if you had the money; you've got to do this? So explain it more careful than you have been, or we'll be here a long time.

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Member, I'm prepared to be here for a long time, until such time as I guess we can have you understand what's happening here. Now the member asks if the district can make decisions. And of course the district can make decisions; that's the goal of the reform process. He somehow accuses us of being dictatorial when in fact just the opposite is true, when just the opposite is true. For the first time in the history of Saskatchewan, local communities, through the district model, will have the decision-making power and the responsibility to make the health care decisions for their district.

Now that's a first in our province's history; this is a major reform of returning to local control health care decision making. It's coming away from the centre of government into the hands of local communities because we think the local communities can make better decisions. Now those decisions have to be in the context of budget, as the members pointed out. We all agree; it has to be in the context of the limited resources which are available. It has to be also in the context of some provincial-wide standards. And I hope the member would appreciate the need for provincial-wide standards and so that each district will enter into a contractual arrangement each year with the department to ensure that those standards are being met.

But the responsibility and the authority for decision making will be vested in the district.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I can't stand that kind of talk. On the closing days of the House last August, the minister was sitting there, and I was standing here. I was the last one to speak the day the House closed on a health Bill. And she told me the same thing exactly, that the districts in these here . . . the people in Saskatchewan are going to say exactly what they want. Whatever they want, they'll get.

Who would deny . . . You look at *Hansard*, and I said it to her, what's happening today? I said, do you want to tell me that the four hospitals in my area, Outlook, Imperial, Craik, and Davidson, will have the say what they're going to do? You're going to tell me that Craik board's going to say: oh, we'll just close down and you can have it, Davidson, or vice versa? And Outlook is going to say: well we'll let our hospital go; Rosetown, you can have it. Or Imperial will say: we'll close down and go to Watrous.

That's a bunch of bunk and you know it is. Because they may have the say to tell you, but whoever controls the purse strings has all the say. So don't try to fool people of Saskatchewan that you people with your financing to rule Saskatchewan has all the say.

There's no sense continuing on. This is a long ways from being over. You've got us on closure but I'm only going to ask one more direct question and then I won't be back until the end of the week and this is going to be gone. I won't be back till Thursday. But you mark my words, when estimates come, we're going to get answers or estimates will go on until you have to do closure on estimates. And that's never happened in Saskatchewan before.

I'm going to bring out and I'm going to read all the letters. There's just a few letters from just one town about what they think of you. This is just one town — one town. And I'm going to read every one in this legislature and she is going to answer the needs of people.

I'm telling you there's going to be something happen in estimates in this House that you people will wonder what you're going to do next, because Mr. House Leader will not control us, how long we're going to go

in estimates. Unless you're going to get so dictatorship-like that you're going to put closure on estimates too.

Now my last question, Mr. Minister: is the Minister of Health going to be in this House to answer questions tonight from 7 till 10? Is she going to be here tonight or not? Now that's not a big question. Turn around and ask your House Leader where she is. Because all we want to know . . . it makes a difference in how we put things together because we're under closure, we're going to be absolutely through here asking questions in committee by tomorrow, and we got to know how long we're going to have her. There's no sense wasting them on you because we've never had any answers. You wonder why I go off to make speeches. Because when I do ask a direct question, I don't get it. So I might as well tell you what I think of you.

Mr. Minister, my last statement today until estimates. Is the minister going to be here tonight from 7 to 10, or what time will she be here to answer questions?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Member, I will be here tonight to answer as many questions as you or any of your colleagues or indeed any member of this House care to raise on the specifics of this Bill.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we were afraid of that. It's most unfortunate, most unfortunate that we have spent pretty well the entire afternoon, all of the afternoon, first of all with the Premier and now with you, getting a whole bunch of non-answers to one of the most important developments that has hit this province in a long, long time, as you are going around now dismantling to a large degree the health care services in rural Saskatchewan.

Now we've been trying to ask you questions, my colleague from Arm River has been attempting to ask you questions dealing specifically with his area, framed in his own words. And we don't seem to be getting any responses from you. Perhaps if I gave you something more solid to go on, we might get somewhere.

And what I'm holding in my hand right now is a letter that was delivered to me today that was written on April 23, so it's very, very recent. And it's signed by a Collette Jones, who's the administrator of the rural municipality of Carmichael. And if you don't know where Carmichael is, it's . . . the address here is Box 420, Gull Lake, Saskatchewan. And she is writing this to me, and she says:

Dear Mr. Neudorf: This letter is in response to your letter dated April 5, 1993, whereby you request council's views on the new health districts. (And I did write that letter and I did ask council to respond in the fashion that they felt.) On March 24, 1993, this municipality held a spring ratepayers' meeting and had 102 ratepayers at this meeting. And we passed a few resolutions at that meeting.

Resolution No. 1. Whereas the Government of Saskatchewan has announced the plans for severely reducing the health services to rural Saskatchewan and further disadvantaging rural residents by limiting their access to acute health care facilities, be it resolved that this meeting move a motion of censure against the Minister of Health for abandoning the health care of rural residents. And be it further resolved that we request the Government of Saskatchewan to reconsider the restriction of hospital care services to rural Saskatchewan and budget to retain existing acute health care facilities in rural Saskatchewan.

That motion carried, Mr. Minister. They want a response from me, as to what your response was to their resolution. What should I tell them, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I do not believe . . . and to the best of my knowledge, we have not received a copy of the RM of Carmichael's resolutions or resolution that the member refers to here in the House. If he would like to send one over, there certainly will be a response. If that resolution is directed to government or to the department, there most certainly will be a response given to the administrator and the RM.

Mr. Neudorf: — Is it that difficult, Mr. Minister, for you to answer the question that I have just posed to you from this RM? I'm simply asking you for your response. What will it be? Or is it contrary to what you have been leading the people of Saskatchewan all afternoon, that you can answer for your colleagues, that you are a decision-maker.

Now the people of the RM of Carmichael want your response. What is it? Or do you want me to repeat the resolution? I can read it again. You indicate no. All right, well then let's have your answer.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I think it's appropriate that we do both. If that is a resolution that's directed to government, then I think the member should provide a copy to government. If he is the channel by which the resolution is to come to government, then he should deliver the resolution.

We can certainly in this forum have discussion about the issues that are raised by the resolution. Now we will make a specific response to the RM of Carmichael if the resolution is provided to us. That's number one.

Number two, we will have discussion here this afternoon and I presume this evening about the issues that are raised in the resolution. The resolution raises the budgetary issues. He knows, he more than many will know, the kind of budgetary pressure this government in this province is under. We won't go into the long discussion about how we got here, but surely to goodness he will admit we are in a fiscal crisis in our province.

And these very difficult decisions — and it's certainly not in just this one area of government or this one area

of health care — these difficult decisions have been made by this government and they are part of this budget. And he knows that.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, I'm glad that you're saying you are prepared to discuss in detail the issues raised in this resolution. I need this paper for a little while longer and then I'm going to give it over to a page to make copies to give to you. But there's another resolution on here as well, Mr. Minister.

The irony of the whole situation is that you're hanging your hat on the deficit and yet we're being told by your own officials that the savings this year is \$5 million. Now, Mr. Minister, I don't know exactly what the percentage is, but a saving of \$5 million on a \$5 billion budget has got to be extremely low. And the pain and the suffering that is being created by this measure on your government to save \$5 million I think becomes very, very questionable.

Now we're going to go into detail on that issue as we go on into the evening session where you're going to be forced to defend that \$5 million statement and your \$20 million annualized savings every year hereafter. Now we're going to take a good, deep, close look at some of the bureaucracy that has been built as a result of the restructuring of the health care system.

Mr. Chairman, from the RM of Carmichael, resolution no. 2:

Whereas the Government of Saskatchewan has announced that the proposed larger health care boards for rural Saskatchewan are to be composed of eight locally elected members and four members appointed by the provincial government; and

Whereas it is our belief that locally elected board members will better reflect the interests of rural residents;

Therefore be it resolved that we request the province of Saskatchewan to reconsider and that the local health boards be composed of 11 locally elected members and only one provincially appointed member.

And that also was carried. And there's a concluding paragraph, Mr. Minister:

These resolutions reflect the opinion of council and the ratepayers and it is felt that they should be taken into consideration when making decisions regarding this matter.

So I ask you on their behalf at this time, Mr. Minister, are their concerns in the resolutions, are they going to be taken into consideration when decisions are made regarding this matter, or have all decisions been made already?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chairman, I anticipate we will have a copy of those resolutions. I see the member has sent them with the page, and we will have a copy

and the RM of Carmichael will receive direct response from government to their resolutions which are presented to government.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

On the issue of the board structure proposed in this legislation which we're now discussing, the Minister of Health, myself, other members of this government, and officials through the department, as the member knows, consulted widely, talked to many groups and many people about the make-up of the boards.

Some suggested totally elected boards; others suggested totally appointed boards. What we feel we have represented here in the legislation is the consensus, the consensus of people across our province with . . .

An Hon. Member: — Who said totally elected boards?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — If the member has a further question, I'm sure he has an opportunity to get on his feet, to get on his feet and raise it.

We believe that this represents what was the consensus opinion of people in Saskatchewan. You will find those who believe that they should be totally elected; you'll find others who believe they should be totally appointed. We believe that this represents a consensus and we believe it is an effective mechanism for the governance of the health care districts.

Now further to that point, Mr. Speaker, the member suggests, I think, without saying it, that the four are to be "government appointed." To at least suggest, if not to say outright, that they are government chosen, I want the member to understand, if he doesn't already, that all of those who are appointed to those appointed positions on the board — one-third in the case of boards outside of Regina and Saskatoon — that those will be based on nominations that must come from within the district.

And the goal through having some appointed members on those boards, the goal will be to give a fair representation to the whole district and perhaps to groups or those who might be involved in health care directly, to give their voice on that board.

And so let me just, for example, Mr. Chairman, if for instance in a district there is a high percentage of seniors but through the electoral process a senior or seniors are not represented on the board, it seems to me that it might be very appropriate that a senior be appointed to be part of that health care board because they will represent a significant part of health care need within that board, within that district.

But again I repeat, those who are appointed will be based on nominations that come from the district and so . . .

The Chair: — Order. It now being 5 o'clock, the Committee of the Whole will stand recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.