

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to present more petitions dealing with the underground tanks, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any considerations of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the cost involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have proven to be leaking, cost sharing or other alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from Atwater, Bredenbury, Esterhazy, Bangor, Stockholm, over on the eastern border; Melville, Mr. Speaker, Yorkton; some from Regina, Lloydminster. I so present.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have several pages of petitions dealing with the same subject. And as the prayer has already been read into the record, Mr. Speaker, I won't do that. But this also covers a wide area. It goes from Waldheim, Caronport, through to Laird, and up to Rocanville, and places all across the province, Mr. Speaker. And an ever-increasing amount of these are coming in.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have as well petitions on the same subject, which I'm happy to present today, from the communities of Calder, Yorkton, looks like Watson, Regina, and Paradise Hill and North Battleford. So all around the province. And I'm happy to present these on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have been asked to lay upon the Table petitions on the issue of replacing underground storage tanks. And the people . . . from my papers here, there's a couple of pages of individuals who have signed from MacNutt, Mr. Speaker; others from Yorkton — a fair number from Yorkton — Calder, a couple of pages of individuals signing from Cando, Sonningdale, Mosquito reservation, as one individual has signed, and Saskatoon as well as Battleford, Mr. Speaker.

And it gives me pleasure at this time to lay these petitions upon the Table. Thank you.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions regarding storage tanks. They come from all over Saskatchewan — Yorkton, Biggar, Swift Current,

McMahon, Neidpath, Lafleche, various parts of the province. And I want to provide the petitioners an opportunity to make their points of view known to the public and the Assembly today.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions today to table in the Assembly concerning the issue surrounding underground storage tanks and all of the problems that individuals in our province today are having with that issue. Today I have citizens from the community of Plunkett, from the city of Saskatoon, community of Watrous; communities of Humboldt, Porcupine Plain, Mr. Speaker, Tisdale, Ceylon, Saskatchewan; Ceylon. A lot of people from the southern part of the province today, Mr. Speaker, who obviously will . . . oh Radville . . . take issue with this, and I would like to present these on their behalf.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well have petitions with respect to the underground storage tank issue that seems to be of concern to a lot of people in Saskatchewan.

The petitioners, Mr. Speaker, come from Aylesbury, Yorkton, Craik areas of Saskatchewan; Saltcoats, and a number of other communities. And I'm pleased to present them on their behalf today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions as well to present to the Assembly. And I'd be pleased to read the prayer of the petitioners:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the costs involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have been proven to be leaking, cost sharing or another alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

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

I notice there are signatures from individuals from across the southern part of the province — from Wapella, Fleming, Moosomin, Whitewood, Yorkton, Bredenbury, Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker. Even from Wroxton and Ryan, Dubuc and Russel, Manitoba; Pembroke. Mr. Speaker, petitioners who are genuinely concerned about their small communities, and I'd like to present these petitions.

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 Saskatchewan praying the Assembly may be pleased to urge the

government to change the regulations requiring the replacement of underground storage tanks.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a very real pleasure that I introduce to members of the Assembly, 24 students from St. Michael's Community School. They're accompanied by their teachers, Lorne McDonald and Teresa Cardinal. I hope the students find the session interesting, and I shall look forward to receiving their impressions of the Assembly when I meet with them at 20 after 2. I invite all members to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatoon Regional Science Fair

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday I had the pleasure of visiting the 18th annual Saskatoon regional science fair as a guest, and I want to comment on the outstanding presentations that were made at that science fair.

Saskatchewan has actually lost a lot of its science culture in the last years, the innovation that happened with the pioneers on the farms, but there is a resurgence of that in the last number of years. In 1989 there were only two science fairs in all of the province; there are now 11. And there are some 30 different organizations and individuals that helped to sponsor the Saskatchewan regional fair.

I want to recognize the support, the encouragement, and the assistance that has been provided by parents and by teachers. One of the parents commented on the after-hours work they put into their daughter's project.

I also want to congratulate all the participants of the science fair, and not just the winners. The winners are fortunate enough to go to Guelph next month for the Canada-wide science fair; but the real winners are all of the young people who participated in this fair, those who sponsored and encouraged them, and of course the people of Saskatchewan who in the years ahead will see a developing science culture as a result of the science fairs that take place around the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Persons Living with AIDS Network

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure the other day, on Sunday, to attend an open house held in Saskatoon by the Persons Living with AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) Network, which is a volunteer, non-profit, charitable-status organization founded in 1987. This is a group of volunteers, many of whom are HIV-positive (human immunodeficiency virus) or

infected with the AIDS virus; men and women and their families.

They are providing help to people in our province who need it, in the form of support and counselling and advocacy and hospital visits. They're sharing medical and treatment information. They're providing food and nutritional supplements. They're providing accommodation, transportation, and help with medical supplies and alternative therapies. And they do it all, Mr. Speaker, through their own fund-raising efforts and activities. And some of these people have been devoting countless hours over six and seven years toward helping people.

And what I saw when I went to this open house was a group of people who are caring about other people, and extending a helping hand to anyone who needs one. And I think they should be commended for the good work that they're doing. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Newly Published Book: Breaking New Ground

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association) chairman, Robert Hawkins, presented a recently published book called *Breaking New Ground* to the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Education.

Breaking New Ground is a history of 100 years of implement manufacturing on the prairies. It takes us from breaking ground with ox and plough through the many innovations created to address the challenges facing farmers on the prairies, right to today's high-tech computerized machinery. To help us all understand how things have changed, PIMA is giving a copy of this book to each of 800 high schools in western Canada for their use in social studies and economics curriculum.

I would like to acknowledge the cooperative effort between PIMA, Fifth House Publishers of Saskatoon, several provincial government departments, and of course the authors, Don Wetherell and Elise Corbet.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian prairies have a proud record of producing top-quality farm machinery that is today being used in many countries around the world. A bouquet of thanks goes out to all of those who have had a hand in putting the Canadian prairies on the map with their regard to farm machinery manufacturing, and especially to PIMA for their efforts in documenting this history in the newly published book, *Breaking New Ground*. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Organ Donor Awareness Week

Mr. Wormsbecker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to make the Assembly aware that the week of April 18 has been designated Organ Donor Awareness Week. Residents of Saskatchewan are

joining people all over North America this week in focusing both public health and professional attention on the vital need for organ and tissue donation.

The Saskatchewan Coalition for Organ Donor Awareness or SCODA, are responsible for putting together the programs set out for this important week. Some of these programs will include: media spots, mall displays, Mediacom billboards, and a story on *The Provincial*. This government is pleased to support SCODA for their efforts in enhancing awareness of the vital need for organ donation and in giving people an opportunity to enhance their lives through transplantation.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan can be proud that certain transplants are being performed right here in our province. However, we should also be aware that there are currently 60 residents of our province waiting for a kidney transplant alone. This proves that the need for greater awareness and understanding is of extreme importance.

Once again I would like to remind all people of our province that the week of April 18th is Organ Donor Awareness Week. I would also like to say that our government encourages the worthwhile efforts to promote Donor Awareness Week. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Heimlich Manoeuvre

Mr. Draper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. My colleague, the member for Indian Head-Wolseley, once more has made a very moving and important statement on a Monday and he stimulates me to make a plea for the use of the Heimlich manoeuvre in cases of drowning.

This manoeuvre, introduced by Dr. Henry Heimlich, is well known for the treatment of choking, commonly called “café coronary”, sir. But it is not realized that it is impossible to use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation effectively on a person whose lungs are full of water. It only takes half a cup of water to fill an adult’s breathing tubes and even less for a child. It has been known for an unconscious person to drown while lying face down in an inch or two of water in a gutter and suicides have known to have taken place by simply immersing the person’s head in a bathroom vanity. Therefore the lungs must be emptied of water first, and this can be done very easily using the Heimlich manoeuvre.

And with the swimming and boating season fast approaching, I think this is an important matter to raise in the House today. And I would appreciate the opportunity to show this simple skill to all of my colleagues in all parties, and even you, Mr. Speaker, sir, on the grounds that the saving of one life would make this worthwhile. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Yorkton Lions Club 19th Annual Indoor Games

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure this afternoon to extend my congratulations to the work of the Yorkton Lions Club and the many volunteers who hosted this past weekend the 19th annual indoor games.

Over the two-day period, more than 1,000 young athletes from Yorkton and across this province took part in 168 carded and uncarded events. It is most rewarding to witness the look of victory when young athletes cross the finish line just ahead of their competitors, or when an athlete clears the high jump bar as two Lions Club members stand on chairs to get the bar back in its place.

Without the commitment and sponsorship of the Yorkton Sunrise Lions Club, this event would never be possible. The club’s motto, “to serve”, is most appreciated by young athletes, coaches, and spectators from across the province.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the work of Mr. Lorne Yeo, the president of the Sunrise Lions Club, and Mr. Peter Baron, the meet director, for their leadership in making the 1994 games the most rewarding and memorable experience for lots of young athletes and spectators. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Underground Storage Tanks

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of the Environment. I would like to ask the minister these questions on behalf of the 200 people that met in Davidson last night, and since the minister didn’t have the courage to show up and meet with the people there and defend his destructive policies.

Mr. Minister, the guest speaker at last night’s meeting was Dr. John Blatherwick, of the city of Vancouver, who told those in attendance that digging up underground tanks is not only a waste of money but is actually harmful to the environment. He said and I quote: Digging up oil tanks in the middle of Saskatchewan makes no sense whatsoever.

Mr. Minister, why did you not attend the meeting last night, and why do you continue to push ahead with a policy that is destroying businesses and communities all over Saskatchewan in return for extremely questionable environmental benefits?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite has ever tried drinking gasoline-contaminated water, or for that matter, those people whom he quotes. And I wonder if the member opposite has ever been exposed to an explosion resulting from that kind of leakage. I hope not. I hope

not. These are life-threatening experiences and I hope the member does not become exposed to that kind of terror that other people have experienced.

The goal — as the member opposite ought to know because their government introduced the policy in 1989 — the goal of this policy is to remove tanks before they leak, before people are exposed to these kinds of risks, before they're exposed to the additional costs resulting from clean-up. It's just good business, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the minister may try and spread his scare tactics around, but he didn't have the courage last night to come and meet with those people that wanted to talk with him. Mr. Minister, you might have learned something had you shown up. You might have learned that the environmental dangers of underground tanks appear to be greatly exaggerated. You might have learned that there are far more pressing environmental concerns you could be dealing with, without destroying the businesses and communities of Saskatchewan.

And you might have learned that the cost of digging up these tanks is simply going to be too much for many service station owners to bear, and that this is going to lead to even more job losses, tax losses and economic hardship in this province. But you weren't there. You weren't there to listen; but then again, you never listen.

Mr. Minister, if you want to dig up something, you could start by digging your head out of the sand and listening to what these people have to say who's businesses you're destroying.

Mr. Minister, will you sit down with the owners, listen and act on their concerns? And will you consider whether this policy is really necessary given the enormous costs and the highly questionable environmental benefits?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, a number of the members opposite had the courage to admit, at their Progressive Conservative convention a couple of months ago, that they had been wrong in visiting the waste upon Saskatchewan that they as a government had done in their previous administration. And I'd like to acknowledge that the member from Maple Creek and the member from Kindersley had the courage to say that about their own administration.

The members opposite ought to have the courage to acknowledge that they also began this process. Now the fact that they may have messed it up; the fact that they may have started on the wrong foot; the fact that they may have not talked to anybody before they got involved in it, is not of my doing. You ought to have the courage to also acknowledge publicly that you screwed up one more time.

But what I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that I have been meeting regularly with these people. I established the advisory committee, Mr. Speaker, on which Mr. Botting, on which Mr. Alberts sits. I met with Mr. Botting and Mr. Alberts two days, three days ago. I asked them to take their concerns to the advisory committee. We've established an advisory committee to clean up the messes you created when you established the policy in the first place. And I've got the word of the committee that they're going to be working urgently to make recommendations, to make changes to the mess you already made, like Gass made recommendations to the financial mess you made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, it's plainly clear that you didn't have the courage to show up there last night and defend the policies that you're doing — the regulations and the implementation of the Act.

Mr. Minister, I've been reviewing your government's *Partnership for Renewal* document. And this document sets out the following goals: to lower the cost of doing business in Saskatchewan; to emphasize employment in the small-business sector; and to improve the regulatory and administrative requirements on businesses in this province.

Mr. Minister, your underground storage tank policy runs completely counter to each one of these goals, and could you explain how this policy meets any of your government's economic objectives?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had bothered listening to my points a minute earlier, he's just made the perfect admission of the mess they made in this regard. Maybe the member opposite ought to answer the question of why it doesn't fit any of his sense of what business ought to be.

Because what I'm telling the member opposite is that we've established an advisory committee that's examined the question, that has examined the question of the upgrading standards that for the most part acknowledges that it is just good business sense to establish a time for replacement of tanks before leaks occur and before you get into the business of adding additional costs and public risk from the leaks. Now if the member opposite doesn't see any good sense in that, let him explain himself to the public that's put at risk by that.

But on the other hand the committee has now committed itself to looking at the upgrading standards; at looking at the contamination levels; looking at the environmental liability, and if the member opposite would get onside with trying to repair some of the messes they made instead of pointing accusatory fingers at others, we might get on with the cooperative business of fixing up the mess you made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Legislation

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Labour. Mr. Minister, your trade union and labour relations Act are a one-two punch for small-business investment and job creation in Saskatchewan.

Yesterday in this House you finally admitted that these Acts were not designed to promote job creation or a better investment climate for Saskatchewan. That's interesting, because your government's *Partnership for Renewal* plan has as one of its main objectives, and I quote: to "Rejuvenate labour market policy" and "Promote economic development . . ."

The partnership plan was to, and I quote: "Establish a cooperative, fair labour relations climate . . ."

Well, Mr. Minister, business and employers are telling you that it was neither cooperative nor fair. And by your own admission it is doing nothing for job creation or investment.

Mr. Minister, will you take the advice of your own economic development plan? Will you scrap this legislation and bring in one that will be cooperative and fair, and will help rather than hinder job creation and the businesses of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, that was not so much a question as a bare-bones attempt to comply with the rules of the Assembly in giving what was a long statement about the effect of this legislation.

The answer to your question is the same as it was two weeks ago. We intend to proceed with this legislation. And the response to your comments about this legislation destroying jobs, is that there is no evidence of that.

You and others may do what you want to attempt to frighten people — and I recognize you're trying to do that — but you've not provided any evidence. And one would think after this length of time you'd feel some sense of responsibility to provide some kind of foundation for your allegations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Interprovincial Trade

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, your much-touted *Partnership for Renewal* plan strongly advocates export markets and trade as one of the ways your government was going to help develop our economy. Your plan stated that one of the primary objectives was, and I quote: to aggressively pursue markets outside Saskatchewan and to reduce barriers. And we applauded that

objective, Mr. Minister, when it was announced, and we applaud it to this day.

But I'm afraid it's more a fiction of your PR (public relations) department over there, sir, than it is reality. Instead we find that instead of reducing trade barriers, we see the Deputy Premier busy posturing to get into a trade war with Alberta. I wonder if you could explain, Mr. Minister, to this Assembly, how closing the borders to Alberta jibes with the *Partnership for Renewal*. Can you tell us that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer a question on trade, after this many days in the House to have the first question on trade, when we are very much a trading province. In fact if you look at the great trading countries of the world — Japan and Germany — Saskatchewan on a per capita basis trades more than either of those two countries outside their borders.

Obviously the member opposite, the former minister in the past Conservative government, is unaware of the new announcements of uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan, all of which will be exported from the province; recent announcement by Cameco of \$34 million for a new gold mine.

Sir, I think you only need to look at the statistics on exports from this province to realize that the business people in this province are doing an excellent job in improving our position as an even increased exporter over what we already are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the same minister. Mr. Minister, obviously you don't know what your cabinet colleagues are up to, because you didn't answer the question. The question was dealing with Alberta and the statements made by the Deputy Premier. Now, Mr. Minister, already there's been a response. Alberta's deputy minister said, and I quote:

If Saskatchewan says Albertans can't bid on work on Crown corporation projects, we'll do the same to them and won't allow them into Alberta.

That's fairly serious, Mr. Minister. We don't disagree that there should be some form of Buy Saskatchewan. It was the former Tory administration that in fact helped SaskPower achieve one of the highest levels ever in its history. But the Saskatchewan Construction Association, Mr. Minister, estimates that 50 per cent of their members have done work outside of Saskatchewan, and that 80 per cent of those members did that work in Alberta.

Mr. Minister, closing our borders, implementing onerous labour legislation, imposing costly environmental legislation, increasing utility rates, Mr. Minister, that all goes against the stated plan which

you brought into this Assembly, significantly hurting Saskatchewan business and workers. Mr. Minister, won't you admit now that that is anti-business, anti-jobs, and as Economic Development minister, won't you stand up for your own plan, sir, stand up and correct some of the ills that the rest of the ministers in your government are doing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say, as the member's mind grinds along missing the odd cog, I want to remind him that it's impossible to understand how you say on one hand this is a terrible place to do business, and yet why are you doing this dastardly thing of keeping all these Alberta companies out of this terrible place to do business?

Now you can't have it both ways. Either it's a good place to do business, which in fact it is; it's a wonderful place to do business. But you can't say on the one hand it's a great place to do business and all these Alberta companies want to come here because they can't get jobs in Alberta, but we don't know how to create a situation that's good for business. It doesn't work. This is a good place to do business.

But I'll tell you one thing, sir: that the many years we watched your administration on the west side of the province with all of the jobs being done by companies with Alberta plates, that having a balance in the system, there's nothing wrong with that. And Saskatchewan people believe in that.

There are a number of contracts in the last year that have gone from Crowns to Alberta companies. But if you're making the argument that all contracts should go to Alberta contractors, I simply don't understand why it took nine years for the people of the province to kick you out, as they did in 1991.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Underground Storage Tanks

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Environment minister. I had the pleasure of also attending a meeting of the Environmental Fairness Association in Davidson last night. It was obvious that the people there simply want common sense from government.

Most of the money from the sale of a litre of fuel goes to government and to major oil companies. The private service station owners get three and a half cents. These small-business owners say they can't afford to clean up the environment by themselves at three and a half cents a litre.

Mr. Minister, last night your deputy said that wasn't an issue. What do you say?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to remember that business is business, and if I have a piece of equipment on my property that wears out, I need to replace it. I think maybe the

member opposite is one of the only persons that doesn't understand that; that the piece of equipment that wears out is mine and I need to deal with that when it wears out.

I don't think anybody denies that. I don't think anybody at the advisory committee denies that. I don't think anybody at the meeting would deny that. If equipment is worn out and it belongs to me, it's not the government's job to replace it. And if the member opposite had listened, he might acknowledge that what is disturbing to people is if they don't do enough business to pay the cost of buying new equipment. Again, this is a business decision that has to be made.

The uncertainty that arises from the issue is the uncertainty of knowing what the clean-up costs might be, which ought, I think, in the mind of the average business-minded intelligent person, ought to say that good business would say before you have the problem resulting from leaks, you should make sure that your regulations and your business practices replace the equipment before it leaks. That is the simple goal of the program — to make sure that before you incur the additional costs of contamination and the results of it and the risk to the public, you engage in the upgrading at a time when that cost is down to the cost of replacing worn out equipment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, a person at last night's meeting said he has underground tanks that have been dry for over 20 years. He wanted to know how the government could kill his future, his livelihood, by forcing him to remove those tanks.

Mr. Minister, your deputy said that there was no requirement to dig up those tanks. Others at the meeting disagreed with that. What is the real story? Does he have to remove the tanks or not?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the regulations provide authority to require those kinds of tanks to be removed. It's not the first administrative requirement at the moment, but it is there within the authority. It is that kind of issue that results from the careless work of the previous administration that is before . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Sorry. It is that kind of issue that was insensitively dealt with with the previous administration that we've referred to the advisory committee to see if it makes sense. If it doesn't make sense, we'll change it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, obviously there's some poor communication between yourself and your deputy.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is aware of mistakes his government made in regards to GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) and hospital closures, and I'm sure that he would like to avoid those mistakes again.

Mr. Minister, your deputy says that he is willing to

look at other ways of resolving the fuel tank issue. He says the rules are not cast in stone. Mr. Minister, will you tell us today what aspects of the rules and regulations your government is considering changing, and when you're going to inform the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to know the answer to that question since he voted for the action plan which resulted in the extension of deadlines so people could have more time to plan. He voted for the proposal to set up the advisory committee which is now studying the issues. And he ought to know that the advisory committee was set up specifically for the purpose of looking at the issues in all aspects of the upgrading requirements for service stations so that they might be done sensitively.

We ought not to leave unreasonable expectations about this. The simple fact that worn out equipment needs to be replaced and sometimes that's a financial challenge for businesses who are not pumping a lot of gas, remains a fact. That's a dilemma that cannot change but it's a business fact of life that business people in Saskatchewan acknowledge.

The other issues respecting the exact standards to which the upgrader occurs is being reviewed by the committee. The issues with respect to contamination levels in the soil are being examined. And I'm expecting a quick response from my committee so that hopefully by early September we'll be able to respond to the recommendations of the committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your deputy told everyone last night there will be changes to your own rules regarding the removal of underground fuel storage tanks. Now you may dispute your deputy on this issue as well. But if this is true, will you not put the whole process on hold until the changes are made public?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, again our dear member opposite from Shaunavon, I don't want to suggest descriptions for the posturing he's doing, but there's a bit of insincerity in it, because he obviously knows that aside from the class A sites, the upgrading for all sites was extended to April 1, 1995. And therefore while the committee is examining this issue, members can make their decisions about upgrading. May I reiterate, this is a business decision. If I . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

No-fault Insurance

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, for the seventh time, will you agree to debate the president of the Saskatchewan bar association on the issue of your new no-fault insurance policy? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I am actually very, very surprised, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a House of debate and these members across are unwilling to debate. And I'm saying therefore that the minister wants to debate; I will debate him right now in the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Appointments

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll see if we can find a minister over there with courage today.

My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, in the orders in council released yesterday we see that you are continuing to live up to your vow to end patronage by appointing former NDP (New Democratic Party) candidate Jim Mills to the board of SGI. That's the same Jim Mills, Mr. Speaker, who already sits on the Highway Traffic Board.

Mr. Premier, we've already established that your government has appointed 37 former MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and candidates to government boards and commissions and now some of these people are being appointed to a second and third board.

Mr. Premier, isn't one trip to the trough enough? Aren't there other qualified people in Saskatchewan you could give some of these appointments to rather than giving two or three appointments to your NDP friends?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — As we . . . (inaudible) . . . into the SGI board member, Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot of work in looking at credentials of our board members and indeed Mr. Mills has a great background, and I'm very surprised, you know, that the member from across stands up to question that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll refer this one then to whichever one of them has the courage to answer the question.

Mr. Minister, I hear that the other day there was a contest on the radio and the DJ (disc jockey) announced that if you had won in the past, you weren't allowed to enter again. I guess there's no rule like that on the NDP wheel of patronage. And I just point you in the direction of Mr. Garf Stevenson, already on the SaskTel board at 300 bucks a day, already on the Provincial Health Council.

Does that stop him from winning again? No. He hits another \$500 a day jackpot on your phoney health elections commission.

Mr. Minister, will you eliminate the NDP version of double dipping? Will you make a rule that says that a person can only hold one board appointment at a

time? How about that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to respond to the member opposite and express my dismay and concern about this continuing attack by the Progressive Conservative Party on the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool simply because of the fact that maybe at some point in time, they did not see eye to eye when they were in the government. And I want to remind them that that's just the way government is — sometimes you don't see eye to eye on some issues.

Garf Stevenson is a notable citizen of this province, former president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, one of the largest corporations in Saskatchewan, and therefore has the expertise and the background and the experience to contribute a great deal on the board of the Saskatchewan Telecommunications and SaskTel.

I'm proud of the fact that Mr. Stevenson is prepared to give of his time to be able to lend his knowledge to this board, to one of the corporations in this province of which we are proud, because it has in the past and will continue in the future to serve the people of this province well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, just to prove to the Deputy Premier that we're not picking on anyone in general, I'll give you a few more examples.

Don Cody, Mr. Deputy Premier, appointed to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) and SGI — nice double dip there. Miles Kroll appointed to the Farm Land Security Board and a Farm Ownership Board. Pat Trask, Saskatchewan Research Council and Women's Advisory Council.

Mr. Deputy Premier, we're not picking on any one individual. We're trying to get a point across to you that this is going on and on and on. Your friends are double dipping, sir, and it is obscene.

Now there are thousands of qualified people out there, Mr. Deputy Premier, that could sit on boards and commissions. Will you give them a chance? Will you limit board appointments to one per person? And, Mr. Deputy Premier, would you give some consideration to allowing a committee of members of this House to set board appointments? Would you do that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member from Thunder Creek very clearly that we will continue as a government to appoint people to boards and commissions who are capable and based on their competence and based on the kind of contribution that they can make to the board or commission to which they're appointed. That has been the principle on which we have based our appointments to date and that is the way we're going

to continue to make those appointments.

Now it so happens, Mr. Speaker, that some of these people may be supporters of the New Democratic Party. I don't apologize for that. I want to remind the members opposite that 51 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan voted for this government in the last provincial election. And therefore, from time to time, some of those people who voted that way will be appointed to boards. But the bottom line is going to be on their competence and their ability to make the appropriate contribution to the body to which they are appointed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Resolution No. 65 — Aboriginal Sentencing Circles

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the close of my remarks I will move the following motion:

That this Assembly encourage the Department of Justice to work with aboriginal communities to extend and improve the use of sentencing circles within the justice system.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin I would like to acknowledge the help and advice of Judge Barry Stuart of the Territorial Court of Yukon in Whitehorse. Judge Stuart has had extensive experience with sentencing circles and has been most generous and helpful with both his time and his written work.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I have spent some time in conversation with Mr. Ivan Morin, who was himself sentenced by a sentencing circle last year in Saskatoon. And I am indebted to him for his comments and his insights.

If a fair trial is the basis of justice in our community, so is a fair judgement. People have been seeking fair judgement in human life since the days of Solomon. Three things concern us about our system of justice: first, fair and just laws which everyone sees to be fair and just; second, that breakers of those laws are caught and found guilty by due process of law; third, that these people found guilty are given the appropriate judgement.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we concern ourselves solely with the third — appropriate and fair judgement. An age-old means in the aboriginal community, which has its parallel too in Europe centuries ago, and may be found in other cultures throughout the world as well, is the sentencing circle.

Aboriginal communities, generally nomadic, were single, integral units where every person had a role, an essential role, from gathering food to hunting. Crime did occur in these communities, but the very nature of the nomadic, integrated life meant that punishing

offenders in ways similar to our own punishments, that is by putting them in jail, was never part of their culture; but proper judgement was.

The community recognized that crime reflected disharmony, and that it was incumbent upon everyone, through mediation, reconciliation, and restitution, to bring back harmony. Thus everyone became part of the justice system and the idea of sentencing circles developed. Sentencing circles have been used with success in northern Canada, and their wider application in Saskatchewan is urged in this motion.

We are here talking about individual cases in individual communities where judgements have to be made in the context of a particular individual in particular circumstances in a particular community and at a particular time.

If we think one of the first requisites of civilized society is justice, it makes sense that those with some knowledge of these particular considerations should participate in the judgement. Thus a sentencing circle is a process whereby community members recommend a sentence in cases involving other members of the same community.

A sentencing circle does not focus on punishment. The overwhelming energy of a circle is positive, and the circle considers the causes for the criminal act in the context of the social, economic, or family environment fostering crime. The sentencing circle, unlike the criminal justice system, does not treat crime as a simple problem calling for a simple answer. The circle, rather, recognizes how complex are the causes of crime and therefore how complex must the considerations be that inform any response to crime. In other words, crimes have many causes. Wise judgements should recognize this.

Mr. Speaker, my friend and colleague, the minister responsible for Indian and Metis Affairs, tells a wonderful story about two aboriginal men, Billy and Fred, and the theft of a VCR. When you hear this story, which he tells beautifully, you begin to understand how and why our justice system fails aboriginal people.

Mr. Speaker, it's not my intention to tell this story because I couldn't tell it nearly as well as the minister does, but I do hope you have a chance to hear it one day.

I like the idea of using what was once an important element in aboriginal culture, circle sentencing, to help ensure that our justice system no longer fails aboriginal people.

Circles are characteristically made up of the accused and the victim, their families, elders, the presiding judge, and other interested community members. Also in attendance are defence counsel, a prosecutor, and police officers.

Typically circles are held in a courtroom or other

place open to the public. Chairs are arranged in a circle with everyone finding a place where they feel comfortable.

After opening remarks by the judge and counsel, the formal process becomes an informal discussion with everyone introducing themselves by name, not by title. Simply by arranging the court in a circle with all the participants facing each other with equal exposure and access to each other, the dynamics of the decision-making process are changed.

Just as officials and community members are brought together as equals in searching for solutions, everyone is drawn into discussion, unlike a typical courtroom setting where judges and lawyers dominate. In some circles a talking stick or eagle feather is passed from participant to participant.

The focus of the discussion then becomes how the best interests of the community may be served by the judgement. This could involve practical advice to the accused and recompense to the victim and family of the victim, or a conventional jail sentence. It must be emphasized the community offers support to the accused and his or her victim. But also the accused has to show genuine commitment to changing his or her ways and accepting suggestions for improving his or her life.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, in the context of personal change, to quote a long-time offender. He said:

I can't wait to get up and into the day because now I know I'm needed. People need me. That's never been before. So I've been sober since then, (since the sentencing circle), almost two years. First time. No one thought I could do it and neither did I.

Sentencing circles are not so much about what happens to the offender, however, as what happens to the community. Sentencing circles empower the community to take over their own problems and work at solving them. You cannot have healthy communities if they cannot work at solving their problems. Conflict, even violence, is all too much a part of our world. But conflict can be a positive building tool if properly handled.

If you have problems or conflicts and you always bring in outside help and outside law enforcement professionals to handle the problems, the underlying causes of these problems may remain unacknowledged and unresolved. Thus, sentencing circles may not only bring wise judgement concerning criminal acts, but also strengthen communities and the bonds between their members. Better judgements will foster the community's growth.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot improve on Judge Stuart's conclusion to his paper on sentencing circles given at a Quebec congress last year. He said:

Circle sentencing profoundly reshapes perspectives through the frank, often

emotionally difficult sharing of information, feelings and thoughts. Everyone involved changes their perspective about people, about events surrounding the crime, and about what should be done.

The principal value of community sentencing circles cannot be measured by what happens to offenders, but rather by what happens to communities. In reinforcing and building a sense of community, circle sentencing improves the capacity of communities to heal individuals and families and ultimately to prevent crime.

Sentencing circles provide significant opportunities for people to enhance their self-image by participating in a meaningful way in helping others to heal, a participation that is recognized and appreciated by the community.

Mr. Speaker, circle sentencing and all parts of the community-based justice system are not just short-term solutions but investments in the community's future.

I move, seconded by the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood:

That this Assembly encourage the Department of Justice to work with aboriginal communities to extend and improve the use of sentencing circles within the justice system.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on and to second this motion that is before us now.

It almost appears that everyone in today's world is saying that the criminal justice system is breaking down seriously. It is not doing the job that people expect of the justice system. People out there are upset at what appears to be the failure to impose stiff enough penalties on people that victimize other people.

Mr. Speaker, one example of that was put to me by a service station owner in Craven. His concern was that his son was caught for not wearing a seat-belt and was fined \$80; and yet a person who had broke into his store and stole some cigarettes and other goods was apprehended by the police and given a suspended sentence. He was not made to make restitution to the owner; therefore it would appear that the justice system is appearing to be removed from the realities outside of the court-house.

When you add to this the uneasiness that is felt by the aboriginal people when they are put through our court system because of all the uncertainties that they have with the workings of our court system . . . In the '70s, aboriginal court workers went a long ways to make

these people feel much more comfortable when they were in court. But the sentencing was still not relative as far as a just penalty for what was done. For these reasons, there has been a movement towards a new approach to justice, one that puts aside the punishment model and stresses the human need for reparation and healing.

The existing approach to justice focuses on crime as a law that has been broken. The response is to assign blame and to punish. But this emphasis leads people to avoid the consequences of admitting responsibility for their behaviour. Punishment is therefore threatened, and that sometimes prevents the truth from coming out.

Yet we need the truth in order to feel safe again. We have to know what makes this crime happen, what led up to this crime, and therefore each party connected to the event must have the possibility and the responsibility of speaking the truth they know to each other, and also listening to each other so that the total picture can come out.

(1430)

This does not change our assessment that what has happened was evil. But it can mean that evil does not have to remain an obstacle between us. We can search for solutions together. Because crime has come from the community, therefore, Mr. Speaker, the solution to it must also come from the community. Because crime is a human problem, therefore the solution must be a human solution. It is the people with the problem who must be put at the centre stage and given the resources and the assistance and professional support to attend to the needs of all three parties — the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community.

Mr. Speaker, this takes part in sentencing circles. Sentencing circles were first conducted in the Yukon in 1991. His Honour Claude Fafard began conducting sentencing circles in several northern Saskatchewan communities in the fall of '92. Since that time, upwards of 50 cases have been heard, mostly in northern Saskatchewan, but also most recently circles have been conducted further south.

While our trials are a stage that has many formalities, the sentencing circle is extremely flexible, thus making everyone feel much more comfortable and feeling freer to speak the truth, unlike the courtroom. Whereas my colleague has said the physical setting allows participants only be the lawyers and the judge, the circle setting draws everyone into the discussion and the problem solving also.

There is an apparent and actual equality created by and within that circle. This is a dynamic which is essential to building a partnership between the community and the justice system.

Mr. Speaker, these changes to the sentencing process will not be the makings of a fix-all. They will not be the end results. They would be relatively small steps in a

very long journey to move the criminal system, criminal justice system, from its destructive impact on people and communities, to doing what it should do, and that is working closely with communities to prevent crime, to protect society, and to rehabilitate offenders; and instead, process conflict in a manner that builds, not undermines, a sense of community.

One might also observe that the movement towards circles may be part of a much wider process of reform; one that tries to build bridges towards justice institutions and processes which are more respectful of and more respected by aboriginal people.

The end goal of the whole process is the healing of the brokenness in the community and between specific people so that the cycle of violence and vengeance can be broken.

Mr. Speaker, therefore I am pleased to second the motion and to support it in this House. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too find it an honour to be able to stand and speak in favour of the motion brought forward by the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden:

That this Assembly encourage the Department of Justice to work with aboriginal communities to extend and improve the use of sentencing circles within the justice system.

Mr. Minister, I just want to first of all take a moment to look at an article in, I believe it was the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, September 2, 1993 and it talks about sentencing circles involve the community — something that the motion before us addresses.

Lately we are hearing of instances where people convicted of a crime are receiving their sentences only after a sentencing circle has taken place. Many people are unaware of what this means. Why is the offender not given a sentence by the court like everyone else? What is a sentencing circle and how does it work? Why is a circle preferable to the regular sentencing process? How can an offender get a sentencing circle?

This article addresses these questions.

The increased focus on sentencing circles is a response to the apparent failure of the criminal justice system in reducing crime rates and rehabilitating offenders.

Many courts and justice workers at the sentencing stage now seek to give victims more of a role in the process. They also look to jail as a last resort and try to get the community to participate more.

Traditionally punishment is the main goal in sentencing. A sentencing circle gives greater

emphasis to rehabilitation and reconciliation. Therefore communities become involved and assume responsibility for solving disputes. So that community participation in the process has a true impact, communities must be given power to resolve many conflicts that now go through the criminal courts.

This is especially important in cases where a long history of jail sentences have destroyed an offender's self-worth, causing depression, anger, or suicidal tendencies. In these cases the offender often returns to a life of crime upon release. The judge, Crown and defence lawyers, the offenders, the victim, police, and the professional advisers such as probation officers and psychologists, make up the sentencing circle.

Members and elders of the supporting community and members of the offender's and victim's families also sit in the circle. In most cases the public has free access to the room, but this may change if issues are particularly sensitive.

With the arranging of the participants into a circle, everyone faces one another and so has equal access and equal exposure to the others. This changes how the sentencing decision is made because the judge and lawyers no longer sit in their prominent places above and in front of the regular courtroom setting.

They no longer own and control the process. The discussion is less formal. And outsiders, including victims, offenders, and their families, are drawn into the discussion much more readily than they would be in a regular courtroom setting. Participants are on a more equal, level footing. The community and the justice system become partners in deciding what is the best sentence.

The information gathered about the perpetrator's circumstances and use of the crime is more complete and the most appropriate sentencing options should result. Then, since members of the community have a part in deciding the sentence, they take on the responsibility of making sure through monitoring and support that the offender honours his or her sentence.

The offender faces his or her sentencers each day and faces the disapproval of friends, neighbours, and family. The community may also learn much about what ails it and causes crime within it, which can lead to effective efforts to correct the situation.

To receive a sentencing circle, one must apply to the court after a conviction is entered. A circle may not be appropriate in all cases, especially where jail sentences over two years are expected or where punishment is the only

choice.

The Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench has held that before a circle will be granted, the offenders should, at the very least, be worthy of either a suspended sentence or a short prison term with probation attached. Offenders should be truly sorry for the offence and must want to turn their lives around with the help of their community.

The request for a circle should be supported by community members ready to make useful recommendations and take responsibility for supervising and enforcing the terms of a probation order. However in a different case, the same court has also held that such factors as type of crime, possible length of sentence, or whether an aboriginal community is involved, should not be considered in deciding whether to hold a circle.

Circles have so far been confined to northern or aboriginal communities. These are likely the minimum requirements for a sentencing circle. Recent court decisions denying and granting sentencing circles are now under appeal and we await final word on guidelines for this important sentencing alternative.

I believe that's a good article, Mr. Speaker, explaining the use of sentencing circles. And I know that I've been in meetings where I've heard speakers talk about the different stone formations across our province made up in circles. And they're involved, in most cases, in native communities, and they talk a lot about native life and the way they treat one another.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, what we have here in sentencing circles is an opportunity for individuals to face up to the crime that they have committed; and for the community at large, as has been suggested by members opposite, to have not only the right to sentence an individual, to have them pay for the crime that they have committed, but also the responsibility of helping that person to understand the wrongs that they've committed and working together with the individual who has committed the crime in helping them to understand that they've infringed upon another person's rights; and it's therefore their responsibility as well not only to pay for the crime they've committed, but also to make right and restitution with the victim. And I believe that's very important.

Mr. Speaker, our party has always recognized the valuable contribution that native people have made to the Saskatchewan way of life and we recognize the debts that we owe them.

And I believe the issue of native justice in particular has become a very important one, and certainly a number of native people I've talked to or aboriginal people have indicated that they would like to have some involvement and have some say regarding justice and regarding sentencing and in working with

their peers, as they believe that it would be a way of addressing the growing crime or criminal concerns that have been arising in our society.

Natives have obviously been poorly served by the justice system as we see it today. Many fail to get adequate legal representation; consequently a disproportionate number of them end up in jail. And once in jail they face a severe cultural shock that makes rehabilitation even more difficult than it ordinarily would be.

Natives are at a cultural disadvantage when dealing with the European-style justice system. Its procedures are foreign to their culture. The ideas that justice is blind, that it is impartial, and exists independent from the whims of society at large, are ideas that work well for people of European culture, but natives do not understand or appreciate these ideas.

Mr. Speaker, to them community involvement and the involvement of community elders, which might be seen as political interference, are integral to a holistic approach to justice.

Some would argue, Mr. Speaker, that this isn't fair, that justice is a universal concept that must be applied in the same way for everybody. Natives however reject this and say that justice varies from person to person depending on a very close examination of their lives and experiences.

This viewpoint was defended in 1992 by Canada's Chief Human Rights Commissioner, Max Yalden. In his testimony to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, Yalden said, and I quote:

It is by now a well-established principle of human rights law that where cultural or other circumstances warrant, people may need to be treated differently in order to be treated equally.

It was on this basis that governments across Canada began experimenting with different methods of administering native justice. Some of these have been informal and ad hoc with the judge simply inviting band members to the sentencing hearing to speak along with the convicted person's legal counsel in arguing sentencing.

Other experiments have focused on the post-sentencing rehabilitation problems by creating healing circles and healing lodges to reduce the culture shock felt by the incarcerated natives and to help rehabilitate them in ways that are consistent with native beliefs and culture.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're quite well aware of the effort that is being made and presently the work that is ongoing in the Cypress Hills region of a healing lodge to deal with women of aboriginal, or native ancestry, in their criminal backgrounds and helping them through the process of rehabilitation and serving their time.

In Saskatchewan we have been experimenting with permanent sentencing circles; native or Metis councils that take the place of sentencing hearings, in order to render sentences and penalties that are consistent with native ideas of justice and healing. This approach, I believe, Mr. Speaker, creates a blend of justice systems, where the court system for society at large establishes guilt or innocence while the aboriginal circles execute the court's decision in ways that are consistent with their culture.

The first such circle in Saskatchewan to deliver a judgement in an urban area was a Metis sentencing circle in Saskatoon. This was a very useful, deliberate process that all participants approached very seriously.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, none of these experiments have been without their pitfalls. No justice system in the world is perfect and it is particularly difficult to implement a dual system where two ancient systems of justice are foreign to each other and are expected to work alongside each other. I believe that was made evident by the fact that the sentence of the Saskatoon Metis sentencing circle was later appealed by the Crown.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, if we are to pursue the concept of native self-government in good faith, problems like these will have to be addressed. And I might add, this will not happen overnight, and it will take a lot of work and understanding from parties on both sides, native and non-native.

Mr. Speaker, we encourage the government to do this; to show this good faith. We likewise invite the leaders of the native community to work with us as we go through the trial-and-error process of developing a working system of native justice within our justice system. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, the use of sentencing circles has been discussed by the three previous speakers, basically in the way that they will affect the aboriginal community or the Metis community or the Indian community in the province of Saskatchewan, or throughout Canada as a whole.

I want to enlarge upon the group of people that this probably should be used for, and is the group that basically now are called young offenders. And the reason that I suggest that we should take a concept from the aboriginal community of North America and implement it into our society is that if you take a look at the food that we eat in Europe and North America, about 60 per cent of the base items come out of the aboriginal or Indian communities of North and South America.

If you do a research or a study on how the governing structures in both the United States and Canada differ from the governing structures that you would find in Europe and the nature of them, you will find that ... and even some of the changes that occurred in Europe

come out of the native community and the nature in which they govern themselves.

And most of the time when these changes were implemented, they were very effective and appeared to be a more natural approach to things. And I believe that that's part of the reason why they have worked in the past.

This natural way of including into the sentencing the people that are affected on all sides of it, is somewhat the same as used with children in a school where they are found as a disciplinary problem, and you would find the parents are invited in along with teachers and the child itself. And that is in essence sort of a natural setting.

And I see the sentencing circles to somewhat be an extension or a more formalized structure of this natural approach. And it also means that the segmentation of the society disappears, where things are brought more into a more global or holistic approach, which has been indicated by one of the speakers before.

So from my perspective, Mr. Speaker, I look at this experiment not as one that should be utilized in a manner where it is directed at only a segment of the society, that being the aboriginal community, but rather that it be directed to solving some of our problems related with sentencing throughout the whole society.

And I thank you for the opportunity to have made these remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a few minutes just to make a couple of remarks on this motion which I think is rather significant. Because it deals with a problem that is current before us and one that we don't have a complete solution for.

It's brought to my attention, Mr. Speaker, every time I go to visit one of the penal institutions in my home town of Prince Albert. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, we have a penitentiary which is run by the federal government, which has something like 4 or 500 inmates in it; we have a provincial jail for men; and we have a jail for women in Prince Albert.

And if you walk into any one of those institutions, walk into the penitentiary, you're quick to notice that, oh, there will be at least 50 per cent of the inmates who are in the penitentiary are of native background. And if you look ... walk into the jail, you'll find that there are probably between 70 and 80 per cent of the men in the provincial jail who are of native background. And even more striking, if you walk into the women's jail, the stats show that a full 98 per cent of those incarcerated there would be of some native background.

It really raises rather a puzzling question, Mr. Speaker, when you realize that in the province of

Saskatchewan perhaps 10 per cent of the people are of native background. So why this disproportion? And of course if it's a question that's puzzling to me, it certainly would be even more puzzling and unanswerable to members of the native community.

Clearly the justice system that we have, which is based on a system where you're asked to serve a penalty, is not serving a part of our society as we might hope it should. So for this basic reason, the fact that the system, the justice system, is not serving that aspect of society — those people from native background — in a fair way, we should be looking at ways of improving the system. And I think that this system of sentencing circles is . . . provides at least a partial answer.

It also has forced us . . . forces us to think and consider the make-up of our society and the background of our society when you start looking at sentencing circles. Because in order to understand why they work and how come . . . where they originate, it really forces you to do a new kind of thinking about society and about systems.

Most of us that sit in this legislature have European backgrounds. And the European backgrounds, our philosophy stems from Christian thought, which is considerably different than the philosophy of native people in North America, which is based very much on sort of a circular concept, as is Asian thought.

The basis of Christian morality and Christian thought is that things are either black or they're white. You're either good or you're bad. You do something; you should get punished for it. You live your life and in the end you end up being judged and you go to heaven or you go to hell.

When you apply this concept of being judged by somebody exterior in the ultimate judgement and apply it then to how it's being used in our current system, in our current society, it's rather similar, because the justice system also puts you in a position of being judged by somebody . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, in your gallery we have a special guest, or guests, from Japan. Mr. Okamoto, with Okamoto International from Japan is here with us today; his interpreter, Ms. Miyata; as well as Ken Sexton, who is a business person from Saskatchewan. And then also, if he would stand and be recognized, Mr. Scott Rutherford who works with Okamoto International.

And they are in town doing business, and I'm sure all

members will want to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Resolution No. 65 — Aboriginal Sentencing Circles (continued)

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you. I was just mentioning, Mr. Speaker, of the contrast. There is an underlying philosophy of the western thought compared to native thought that leads us to think and to believe that considering an alternate justice system and integrating it into our system is a very important measure.

And if you consider, Mr. Speaker, that in our system, in the western system, once you're found guilty, or even if you're charged with committing a crime, then what's done with you is you're taken outside of your community and you're put into the justice system, which is supposed to be objective. And then on the basis of evidence given there, objective evidence, somebody who doesn't know you makes the judgement and makes the sentence.

And this compares starkly with this sentencing circle method because there you involve people right in the community, people who know you and who are involved with you and have been involved with you all the time.

So it's a matter in one case you are being tried by people outside of your realm of acquaintances; in the other case you're being charged by people on the inside, people who know you. One case it's supposed to be an objective system and the other case it's a subjective system.

I guess there are other comparisons. We came here to this country and we were instilled with the idea of conquering nature, whereas the native way is to live in harmony with nature. They say things should be natural and you should just adapt naturally whereas we try to change nature. So I think that the whole . . . we're the richer. I believe we're the richer for trying to integrate the two systems because we learn a lot.

And I want to close by congratulating those judges who are experimenting with this and using the system to integrate the native system into the white judicial system. Because as members mentioned before, it is only the sentencing portion that they are using, and the judge in the end still has the decision, the ultimate decision, whether or not to accept the sentence proposed by the circle or to mete out an alternate sentence.

I believe this is a very worthwhile effort and we should continue with this concept of sentencing circles and perhaps even learn to adapt it to youth as the member from Turtleford had mentioned earlier.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to follow my colleagues in speaking to this issue of sentencing circles. It's a very important topic to a great many people. As you would be more than a little bit aware, Mr. Speaker, there's a wide perception, with varying accuracy, but certainly a wide perception that crime is on a rapid rise.

Certainly there are disturbing pieces of evidence in relation to some areas of crime, but as it comes to violent crime, I'm delighted to say that we are north of the 49th parallel and we have not taken the same approach as our American cousins south of the 49th parallel. I say that not to denigrate the Americans — they can certainly run their country — but theirs is a slightly different value system.

I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the April 18th *Maclean's* magazine they talk about body counts, and there's a chart showing the murder rate per 100,000 people. And they use admittedly selected North American cities in 1992, which was the latest year for which statistics were available. But I note with some dismay that the murder rate in prairie cities such as Winnipeg, it's 2 per 100,000; Edmonton it's 3.8; Calgary 4.6 per 100,000. That's disturbing and that's 2 and it's 3.8 and 4.6 murders too many — no question about that. But I look at the U.S.(United States) comparison cities and the rate runs anywhere from 11 per 100,000 up to one city that is 75.2 per 100,000.

(1500)

Now I realize we're not talking about murders when we're talking about the use of sentencing circles, and I think we should keep that into a perspective. In Saskatchewan we have long made use of organizations such as the John Howard Society, particularly for young offenders. My family had some reason to have some dealings with the John Howard Society and their youth services within the past year.

I'm pleased to report that the John Howard Society provided very professional, competent, and capable services. As a result of our interaction, there was two young offenders that I think have a decent chance of redeeming themselves or straightening out their lives. Certainly they've avoided the lock-up as a result of it, and I wish those two young people nothing but the very best as they strive to make their lives more meaningful.

Mr. Speaker, we can build more jails for offenders and clearly, in some instances, jails are still the most appropriate method of dealing with some elements of our society. But the real question is, in my mind, what will work towards reducing the numbers of crimes and the impacts of crime? How will we help everyone in our society to not perpetrate a crime? How can we coexist? How can we live together and respect one another as human beings?

And now I get to the sentencing circle part and I think of who it is that matters most to most of us as

individuals. Mr. Speaker, my constituents mean a very great deal to me. Members of the political party I belong to mean a great deal to me, but I want to make it very clear: my family and my closest friends mean more to me than all of the above — my family and my friends. To me this sentencing circle is all about having family, friends, in a cultural milieu that is meaningful to an offender.

Meaningful, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that people who have erred, intentionally or not is immaterial, but people who have erred will find that a sentencing circle of family, friends, and in the support of milieu, are far more likely to set their lives straight than people who we simply say well, you made an error, it's off to jail you go.

Clearly the system of, you made an error; it's off to jail you go, has not really served us terribly well. I'm not hereby advocating that we do away with jails. That's not the point of this. The point is if we can prevent some criminal reoccurrence, some crimes from happening again, then our efforts will be worthwhile.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand and say that I am supportive of the whole idea of a sentencing circle. I think it's a very worthy and worthwhile, innovative idea and I certainly hope that it serves us very well long into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

Resolution No. 66 — Reduction of Number of Cabinet Ministers

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this worked out very well today that on private members' day we would be discussing a motion one day after the tabling in this Legislative Assembly of a Bill to do just that — reduce the number of cabinet ministers in the province of Saskatchewan by legislation.

And in that intervening period of time, Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to review the comment of both members of the government and others who have looked at the idea. And I naturally expected the reaction I did from this government because they seem to negatively react to all proposals put forward by the opposition as far as the democratic reform of the Saskatchewan Assembly.

And it's a little disheartening, Mr. Speaker, because prior to October of 1991, I used to spend a lot of hours in this Assembly listening to the members of the New Democratic Party as they debated, and particularly on private members' day, when they talked about ways of changing the political process in the province of Saskatchewan to make it more taxpayer-friendly, to make it more user-friendly, I guess, to put it in the vernacular.

Times are changing, Mr. Speaker, and the public out there that pay us and expect us to perform on their

behalf are becoming very demanding with the political process these days. And they are saying to politicians, no matter what their stripe, that it's time that you started to listen and that you once again reflect the views of the people that elect you.

And I can say some of these things quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, because having served in government for a number of years and seeing some of the abuses that come along with governing, that come along with political power, you must learn from some mistakes that you're part of. And I'm amazed that the New Democratic Party in this province does not recognize the errors that they're making, Mr. Speaker, in regards to some of these issues.

We just had the final act, if you will, of the electoral boundaries changes taken through this Legislative Assembly on Monday. And by that the government reduced the number of MLAs in the province from 66 to 58. I don't think there's a soul in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't agree with the reduction taking place. The problem is the process surrounding it.

The fact that, as we have seen with this government in so many areas, they tend to be very urban orientated. That they tend to wish to disassociate themselves with many areas, particularly rural Saskatchewan; that there is in fact developing a two-tiered system in this province in many areas. And I'm afraid that we've seen it in health, we potentially can see it in our education, and certainly we will see it in the electoral map.

But be it that may, Mr. Speaker, if the reduction of the size of government is on the agenda, and I believe it is, and that it is worthwhile for us to look at ways of reducing the total representation by the province to save those salaries and save the ancillary costs that go along with maintaining 66 MLAs as compared to 58, then we should be prepared to also look at other parts of our institutions.

As we all know in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and particularly those of us that have served on Executive Council, that the costs of maintaining a cabinet minister are far greater than a private member. Cabinet ministers, because of their workload, have to have staff, they have to have access to vehicles, they have to have access to airplanes, they have to have access to cellular phones, they have to have access to a lot of government levers in order to do their job.

And I don't think anyone would want to take those away from them, Mr. Speaker. But the simple fact is that a cabinet minister costs a lot more to maintain.

And I honestly believe that the current cabinet of the member from Riversdale is too large, given the workload and the responsibilities of some of the members opposite that I see not being terribly busy some days. And I think there is an opportunity for a reduction in the size of the cabinet without putting undue pressure on anyone. Because it is really some days a very thankless job, Mr. Speaker — those

meetings that go from 7 o'clock in the morning till 10 or 11 at night.

And the one part about the comments made by the Deputy Premier in the newspaper on this topic, as he responded to the tabling of the Bill yesterday, was that everyone in the province wants to see a cabinet minister. And that is the truth. And I don't suppose that will ever change unless we change the fundamentals of our electoral institution.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that because we have allowed, as a political institution, the power of Executive Council to grow, that there have been severe repercussions for our political system because of that. As the power of cabinet and premiers and prime ministers has grown, and the role of private members has been reduced, you naturally have a want by the public to access those levers of power.

I think it is very important for us, as we rethink some of these institutions, to look at ways of putting back in the hands of private members some of that, not only that authority but that responsibility that would allow members of the public to feel more comfortable with simply going to a private member.

That will be difficult because a mind-set has developed over a number of years that says that isn't the way our British parliamentary system works here. But I think for the salvation, Mr. Speaker . . . and I say that because the public will demand reducing; that's on. And if we're going to learn to live with less and still maintain a credible system, then I think we have to rethink this division of powers which exists, with the governing party particularly, in our House.

And I look at ways of strengthening the committee system. And there has been some discussion, Mr. Speaker, in this session to that regard. I believe personally — and I say this now as a personal note, not as the leader of my party — that we can strengthen the committee system a great deal in this House and in general in our British parliamentary system as we practise it in Canada.

I look at the American experience, I look at the Australian one, and some others around where they have taken that capability and strengthened it. And that is why you've seen a number of the Bills brought before this House by the opposition going in that direction, always recognizing that the majority, which in this case would be the New Democrats, would maintain that majority on the committee. That is a very fundamental part of our philosophy as we practise it in this province. And no one should be able to abrogate the duly elected authority of a majority party through the committee system, Mr. Speaker.

But I honestly do believe that if members are put into that process and given an opportunity to work that you will find . . . for instance, if we were to hold televised hearings on a particular subject with the chairmanship being in the hands of one of the private members of the government, witnesses being called, that type of issue which many people are familiar with

today because they watch cable television, that you would then in the minds of the public create members of the Legislative Assembly who would in effect have more power, to use that word — and perhaps that's the wrong word — more responsibility and authority, Mr. Speaker, perhaps would be more proper.

It would be a gradual shift but I think it is absolutely fundamental because the Deputy Premier was right when he said that it is almost impossible to access in a huge province such as ourselves, the province of Saskatchewan, access everyone who needs the attention of cabinet at all times. So it isn't unrealistic, Mr. Speaker, to start strengthening from the other side of the perspective. And that would give the public some comfort as to their ability to access the levers of government.

The other thing that I think could be done, Mr. Speaker — and it's a two-part thing — I've always believed that when you enter cabinet you should not be required to stay there for ever and that there is some sort of base . . . you lose face if you aren't in cabinet any more. I really believe that our institutions, the way they're structured and the demands that are upon a member upon entering Executive Council are such that it should maybe be mandatory that after serving two years you take a rest period.

It is a terrible lifestyle, Mr. Speaker, especially if you have family. The demands of Executive Council are very onerous. And I think in visiting with my colleagues in my government time — I know in visiting with some of the current cabinet — that it is an incredibly onerous task that you undertake and you must give up a lot in order to fulfil it.

(1515)

And I think it would be very responsible of some future leader in this province to say at the very beginning of the day that there will be a structured in-and-out of Executive Council. Because what that does, Mr. Speaker, once again is it allows the public other options rather than cabinet itself to access the levers of power.

You would then, in a system such as ours, have a number of former ministers who had not left under any cloud, who had not left because they weren't doing a proper job, who had not left because they had lost their political usefulness to the system. They would simply have served and stepped out and were prepared to serve again.

And that concept is tough for some to follow, Mr. Speaker. But I honestly believe for the salvation of the system it is important that that be considered.

The other thing that is necessary, I believe . . . and it has been put to the side because the former Conservative administration in this province employed a lot of legislative secretaries. And I would be the first to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that there were too many. But I honestly believe that in our system, either the parliamentary secretary, the Legislative

Secretary — they go by various names — is a very useful tool, because what it allows that person to do is in effect substitute for a minister in almost all circumstances except at the cabinet table.

It gives them the access, for instance, to modes of travel, to modes of communications, it allows them to have a degree of legislative authority, Mr. Speaker, and it is also an excellent training ground for movement into executive government. And used properly with controls, Mr. Speaker, it would once again enhance the role of private members. And because those private members are far wider distributed around the province than say the members of cabinet, it would give the public some comfort.

So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, there are many ways that the Deputy Premier was not prepared to consider when responding to this legislation yesterday that we, as legislators, can make the public more comfortable with our system. And we could allow that a rule . . . and you have to start somewhere, Mr. Speaker, and it would be interesting to hear from members of the government in particular what they think the proper ratio is.

What I proposed to this Assembly yesterday was that the cabinet be limited to 25 per cent of the total Assembly — not of the government members, but of the total Assembly. In other words, that one-quarter of the members at any given time in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, would be in executive government, or if you wish, less than that number, but that would be the maximum percentage.

And I think it would send a very clear message out to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, that there were some fundamental shifts and changes being thought about, that the expectation of having a cabinet minister on your doorstep sort of on a moments notice is being changed. That there was a look being given to how you deliver that feeling of security which people are demanding from executive government today back to them.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, when you set a rule like that in place, then the other things that many of us think about and talk about but perhaps have never conceptualized would become more apparent. And I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that the public are thinking about these issues.

For a long time, because our economy was growing and we were expanding, it never seemed that there was a limit. People were very complacent about government. They simply thought of it as something that was there, it provided more and more services, but because my wages were constantly going up, that my gross national product was constantly growing, that there was really no irritation with our system. And hence, Mr. Speaker, you did have this increasingly large proportion of decision making put in the hands of cabinet.

Now past governments, Mr. Speaker, and even the current one, have tried to address regional balancing,

political considerations, and the workload by increasing the size of cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that is absolutely the wrong approach in the public's mind in 1994. They don't believe that that is the course to follow. They honestly don't. And I think if any member in this Assembly would go out and listen today, they will tell you that, Mr. Speaker. It's why I took great issue with the fact that the city of Regina and the city of Saskatoon now have more MLAs than they do aldermen. I think there will be a move afoot, as there was in the city of Moose Jaw in the last civic election, to actually reduce the number of aldermen.

People are saying that the size of government has to be compacted. And so, Mr. Speaker, we as an institution have to put our minds to work on how we figure out those other delivery systems which are more cost effective, which go hand in hand with, say, a reduction in the size of the civil service. I don't think there's a political party in Canada today, Mr. Speaker, that isn't cognizant of that.

We see the social compact in Ontario. We see movement all around this country to shrink the size of government, and consequently you always have to shrink the size of the people that manage government, Mr. Speaker. And ultimately in our system that is this House.

If the member from Prince Albert . . . and he seems interested in this topic because he does yap from his seat, Mr. Speaker — I would like to see him stand and talk about this issue. He is a private member, and the access of his constituents to the levers of authority I believe, Mr. Speaker, need to be enhanced. And I think if that member talked to people in his community, he would understand that principle.

The trick, Mr. Speaker, ultimately then is to put more power back in the hands of private members through a whole sequence of instruments. And if they're very difficult for some of the members of the government to conceptualize today, that's all right. But they better start thinking about it as the road lengthens because I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the demand is there. None of us can hide from it. The demand by the public is there and they will increasingly pressure politicians to deliver those demands.

Now what I said today, Mr. Speaker, is my own view on how you possibly could do that. Other members may have a different view. But one reason for a piece of legislation like this is that I believe it then sets in place a starting point. And only a starting point. Maybe the amendment needs to be made that it needs to be a different percentage; I don't know. There's no magic, Mr. Speaker, the 25 per cent, other than it seemed like a reasonable expectation of the average taxpayer.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's not be diverted by side issues. If access to the levers of power and authority in government are the only reason that you have to maintain a bigger percentage than 25 per cent in

cabinet, then, Mr. Speaker, we're doing it wrong. Then we need to think about how we give members of this Assembly, both government and opposition, the opportunity to have the public feel confident in what we're doing in here.

Mr. Speaker, it's I think with a great deal of pleasure that I would move today in this Assembly, seconded by the member from Morse, the following motion:

That this Assembly urge the government to support a legislated reduction in the number of cabinet ministers, specifying that the number be proportionate to the number of MLAs in the Legislative Assembly.

And that if we discuss these things, Mr. Speaker, as private members, then ultimately we will come up with a better system of government.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to enter the debate today to discuss some of the areas of reform that our opposition has raised as a matter of course in this session. And I am proud to be a part of that group of people who have raised these issues for this Assembly to discuss and think about. We have raised a number of issues, Mr. Speaker, and I went to the blues to pick out a number of them, and I believe that they are significant. We deal today with one that deals with reorganization and it deals with setting up a limit to the amount of members that can be in Executive Council or the cabinet. And I believe that it is significant that we discuss these issues as a part of the format dealing with providing efficiencies within the framework of government.

Mr. Speaker, we have asked this Assembly on seven occasions to deal with issues as a road to reform in the province of Saskatchewan — a road to reform that is on the public agenda.

Mr. Speaker, we are, I believe, dealing with an issue and issues that the public are talking about each day. After the session was over on Friday, Mr. Speaker, I went to my home and I took a tire off a tractor and I took it to the repair shop, and I visited a brief time with the people who were repairing the tire. And I just raised the matter of utility rates, Mr. Speaker. And utility rates for about 15 minutes became a topic of a great deal of intensity, Mr. Speaker — intensity that turned to anger and resentment.

Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, the public, the people in the province of Saskatchewan, have no access to the utility changes that were made and they are becoming extremely, Mr. Speaker, extremely angry about the role that this executive branch of government is playing in dealing with the kinds of things that they are.

And they say, well we will make the decision in cabinet and then everybody else has to listen. Well everybody in this Assembly has to listen as well, Mr. Speaker, because we don't have any input into the changes. And we are suggesting, as we go through this

reform package, that it would be a benefit to us in this Assembly to speak about those issues; it would be a benefit, a far greater benefit, to the people of the province of Saskatchewan to know that this Assembly had passed those resolutions about the utility rates or even had a chance to speak for or against them.

But no, Mr. Speaker, we can't do that in this Assembly. And we have never been able to do that. And I believe it's time for a change. Those kinds of reforms are the kinds of things that we have raised on a consistent basis, Mr. Speaker. Seven occasions we've raised changes to the way things are to be done and could be adjusted and altered.

This resolution also is another step that could be taken in the province of Saskatchewan. And it would bring about real reform, Mr. Speaker. It's not whether members can drink Beep out of their glasses or use their computers on their desks, Mr. Speaker, but this is fundamental reform in the way this province and this legislature does its business.

This resolution speaks to a number of reform initiatives brought forward by us as official opposition. People have been asking for these reforms, Mr. Speaker. And I just have to go into my constituency and they say, you're right when you do this and you're right when you're saying that; why don't they listen?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's really interesting that there was a time when they said the same thing. They said, it's time to make changes; it's time to make adjustments. In fact the Premier himself made these promises while he was in opposition. And these promises had to do with the size of cabinet. In the *Star-Phoenix* on October 5, 1989, it states, and I quote:

Mr. Romanow said there is no need for any more than 15 or 16 ministers (Mr. Speaker). What really needs to be the yardstick in every cabinet is the times, and we are in periods of restraint.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we're in today. And the Premier, as then the leader of the opposition, spoke very convincingly and he said: it's times of restraint. Well what have we got? We have 30 per cent of our cabinet is ministers. So what do we need? We need to have those things reduced.

(1530)

Even after being elected, the Premier gave an interview with *Maclean's* magazine . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And if the member from Regina Wascana wants to get into the discussion, she will have ample opportunity later, and she probably will. And she will justify a huge cabinet. We'll just watch and see what happens.

After being elected, the Premier gave an interview with *Maclean's* magazine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I quote from that article dated November 4, 1991. This is only four days after he got elected and appointed as

Premier of this province. And the quote from the *Maclean's* magazine says:

Romanow stated the new cabinet will include only 10 ministers and will be expanded only when the province can afford it, declared Romanow. What people want is not more government but better government.

That was in a quote out of *Maclean's* magazine.

The cost of a minister's office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can be calculated in a number of ways. And I have been in executive branch of government; I have been a cabinet minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so I think I can speak with some authority about the volume of traffic that goes through a minister's office.

Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 1991, my office coordinated and arranged for seven ministers to attend in a period of 60 days about 120 meetings, meeting with farmers across this province. I know what high levels of stress and pressure that created on my office, and I know that it is important for us to meet and come to the people of Saskatchewan because they want to know what's going on.

So let's talk about the cost. Calculations based on answers given by the government during last year's estimates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the average cost for ministerial assistants is over \$250,000 in a minister's office. And I should add that these figures were provided before the last pay raise for the ministerial assistants in each of the offices of the cabinet ministers.

Add to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, travel of both the ministers and assistants, telephones, computers, government cars, media monitoring, subscriptions, contributions to pensions, operating costs, staff training, equipment and furniture, and we're looking at a pretty hefty sum of money, Mr. Speaker. A low estimate in the cost would be \$300,000, Mr. Speaker, and that doesn't include the over \$80,000 salary a minister receives in addition to about 10,000 a year in per diems. So we're talking about another \$90,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again these figures don't include any travel; they don't include any communications that are significant in a minister's office.

And then the Premier was right when he said these were times of restraint. But what have we got? We have a government that wants to spend more. They say, cut back on constituencies — cut back on constituencies. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a debate about that in this Assembly. There are people across this province who have said, why cut back on just the rural constituencies when you're talking about cutting back on constituencies? Why do you point a finger at rural Saskatchewan?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we brought a proposal forward to this House in which we said that for every constituency that there is federally, which is given to us by law out of the Parliament of Canada — we have 14 — each one of them should be divided into four

and then we would have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an opportunity to decide what's the average volume and size here. When the federal government would change theirs, then we would change ours.

In reviewing some of the proposals that were brought forward this spring, the city of Regina would be included in parts of four different federal constituencies; and those federal constituencies could be divided into four; and the federal constituency that I live in could be divided into four. And that was the way we suggested changing it.

And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, didn't bring it down to 58 constituencies, it brought it down to 56. Now you take 25 per cent of 56 and you have a considerable less than what you have here today in the way that these things are being done and being proposed.

Now all the government has to do is support initiatives brought forward by us and the taxpayers in the province could save some money. And we could probably put some of that money to use in my constituency in the health care programs; we could put some of that money to use, or we could just save that and lower the debt. And that, Mr. Speaker, would probably be supported by the majority of the people in my constituency.

Our proposal would limit the number of cabinet ministers to 25 per cent of the number of MLAs elected to this Assembly. For instance, if there's 66 members now, 25 per cent of that total would be 16 or 17 members. That is not an unreasonable number, I don't believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the Premier even agrees. In 1989, again in the *Star-Phoenix*, October 5, the Premier states, and I quote: There is no need for any more than 15 or 16 ministers.

So it's not a matter of proportion to the Legislative Assembly, it's a matter of proportion to responsibility. That's what we're talking about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a proportion to the volume of responsibility. And that's what we need to think about.

Another article, this one from the *Leader-Post* dated November 10, 1990, states, and I quote: Mr. Romanow suggested an NDP cabinet would range from 14 to 16 members.

And that was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before he was elected. He said it before he was elected. Four days after he was sworn into office he said, 10 is going to be what we're going to have until this province can afford more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I sit in Public Accounts, and as I listen to the Provincial Auditor talking about the volume of debt this province has, it hasn't gone down since 1991. It hasn't gone down one penny. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from 1991 till today it's up two and a half billion dollars. The total liability is up two and a half billion dollars. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we're talking about.

Now let's talk about what Alberta does. Consider it. A province with many more people, two and a half times the population base — how many cabinet ministers do they have? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have 17, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 17. Well if Alberta can do a good job of governing with 17 members, why can't Saskatchewan do it with 16 or 17? And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, it probably has to do with, the reason being that they're socialists. That's probably the reason why they can't do it.

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is I believe we can. All the members opposite have to do is agree, just like the Premier said, that we should have 15 or 16 members of Executive Council.

The members opposite spoke time and again about the sweeping reforms they were going to implement if they ever had a chance to form government. Well, Mr. Speaker, they had a chance, they have a chance. And my bets are — and I don't gamble except in my job — I'll bet that they would not even take a chance. Do you know why? Because they're power hungry. They're hungry for power, they're hungry for control, and this is the only way that they can have absolute control.

They were going to extend question period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from 25 minutes to 45 minutes a day. Have we seen that? No, we haven't. They were going to support a set election date every four years. We bring a Bill forward, and do they do it? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did not.

They were going to enhance the role of private members, private members in this Assembly to be able to speak their own mind, to be able to speak the mind of their constituencies. And what are they going to do? They don't do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They don't. And I have speeches that were given in this Assembly to prove it. And all we have to do is go back to the debate on the Bill 39, I think it was, on the role of individuals being allowed for changes in The Department of Justice Act that dealt with the lifestyles of individuals other than the traditional ones.

And those are the kinds of things that people in this Assembly spoke negatively about and said, I don't believe that changes to the Human Rights Bill are going to do what the Minister of Justice said. I heard individuals say that in this Assembly.

Could they vote in this Assembly to their conscience? No, Mr. Speaker. They had to go outside and say it to their constituents, but they couldn't vote the freedom of conscience in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They couldn't vote that way. They had to leave.

In fact one of the members did take the courage to speak out about it. And, Mr. Speaker, I complimented him on his integrity, his honesty. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a serious, serious problem. We should all have the freedom to do that. All of us should have the freedom to do two things: one, speak our conscience, vote our conscience; and the other is to be able to speak and vote the conscience of our constituencies.

Those are fundamental to this place, and the people in this province want to have that. They want to have not only that, but they want to have the leadership shown by the quality of people that will speak their mind, and speak on behalf of their constituents. And that's, Mr. Speaker, why we are raising and bringing these kinds of reforms forward.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they were given an opportunity to form government. They had all of these things that they were going to do. And then they had a chance to form government on November 1, 1991. They took over power. And what has changed, Mr. Speaker? What has changed?

Today I made an observation about the members' statements, members' statements as being made by members of this Assembly. Some of them were good, some of them were bad. But who was paying attention?

Mr. Speaker, I commented about this very important fact, that by the end of this session, if it wasn't just ahead of question period, nobody would be here to attend to listen to what other people were saying.

It's exactly as it is in the House of Commons in Ottawa, where those individuals who are speaking about various items that are of significance to them, are of no significance to the other private members. That's the changes that this executive branch of government, the NDP party, the NDP Government of Saskatchewan have made.

Those are the changes that I believe are very, very small to what the people of the province want to have. They want to have a change in the way we do govern. They want to have a change in how we respond to them. They want to have a change in how we react to their needs, their requirements. They want to have a way of responding to the people's work in this Assembly.

And how do we do that? We have suggested seven different ways in this session for that to happen — seven different ways for those people to bring these issues forward. Free votes — I talked about that. What better way for a private member to enhance his position in this Assembly? What would happen if one of those members would bring a Bill forward? What would happen if one of them brought a Bill forward?

Well we had an example of that last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member for Regina Rosemont wanted to bring a Bill forward. On his own initiative he wanted to bring it forward. He has a personal view about trade unions and he wanted to bring it forward. Should we have said no?

But you know what happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The government members said no to their own member. That, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what happened. They said no to free speech in this Assembly. They said no, you cannot do that. We will limit you to being a private member with no say.

What these individuals in the front row have done is they have said to those individuals who want to be individuals, who want to bring forward issues from their constituency, saying no, we will not allow that to happen. We can see exactly how serious these people are about enhancing the opportunity for their private members.

Then we have another issue that I want to talk about a little bit and that deals with the issue that I raised earlier about utility rates. Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly we are supposed to deal with the budgets of this Assembly, with the budgets of the province of Saskatchewan.

Executive branch of this Assembly brings forward budgets, but what do they bring forward budgets on, Mr. Speaker? They bring forward budgets on the Consolidated Fund which is about 60 per cent . . . well it's not even quite 60 per cent; it's about 55 per cent of the total volume of dollars of business done by this executive branch; 45 per cent is outside, Mr. Deputy Speaker, outside the framework of this Assembly. We can't even talk about it.

And what do those people need to do on the other side of the House? They need to say we will give back, we will give back to the people of Saskatchewan the opportunity to have a control of the agenda for these utilities that we have to pay taxes on. But what did this group across the way say? No, we can't do anything like that.

(1545)

What I want to point out to this Assembly is we get the criticism over here and say oh, you had PURC. You had the Public Utilities Review Commission established, and what happened to it? You killed it yourself.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just point out by asking the question this way. Why is it that every time an NDP socialist government gets into power, people get afraid of their utilities? Why do they get afraid of the utilities? The power increases; the energy . . . SaskEnergy, natural gas increases; the SGI increases; and the SaskTel increases. Why are they afraid of them? Why do they get angry at this executive branch for doing that?

Well that, Mr. Speaker, there is a reason for it. Because they just indiscriminately raise those rates all the time. And that, Mr. Speaker, causes the people in the province of Saskatchewan, it causes people in the province of Saskatchewan a great deal of frustration.

And I want to point out to you, when is the last time you went into a small business in your communities and said, how do you like the utility rates so far? How do you like the power rates?

An Hon. Member: — They don't mind at all.

Mr. Martens: — They don't mind at all. Well I just

want to point out, Mr. Speaker, they haven't been talking to the same businessmen that I've been talking to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the public is completely fed up with these rate hikes, and they are handed down by these executive individuals who are wielding power. This great family of Crown corporations is delivering another tax hike.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the executive branch of this government is the reason why we're here talking about it and we don't think that the government is doing the right thing.

We brought proposals, Mr. Speaker, to the Rules Committee that would have allowed for more free votes in the Assembly; they would have enhanced the private members' Bills and motions. And what did we get? No, we didn't get any of those changes brought forward.

We yesterday raised the point, we're debating it today in private members' day — An Act to amend The Government Organization Act (Executive Council Reduction). Reduce the volume of cabinet ministers in this province, Mr. Speaker. And people in the province have said yes, that's the right thing to do. They said yes, it was the right thing to do with reducing the members of the Assembly. But why did you take only the rural ones? Why did you only take the rural ones?

You've got more people in city council in Regina . . . or less on city council than you have MLAs in the city of Regina. Is that the way this province should operate? And yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have in the south-west part of the province huge areas. The constituency that I live in runs all the way from Swift Current to Pense; that's the new constituency that I live.

If I wanted to have my discussions with my MLA, and if he would happen to live in Pense, Mr. Speaker, it would take me two hours driving to get to see him — two and a half hours. And that's one way, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of thing that they're asking.

And then they have 11 — they have 11 MLAs in the city of Regina, they have 11 MLAs in Saskatoon, and they just have to go across the street and say hi to their MLA.

And then they want to say okay, we'll reduce the volume of this Legislative Assembly to 58, but we will not reduce the size of Executive Council. If they'd have reduced the size of Executive Council, they could have kept the amount of MLAs they had in this province. But why not use it for reduction in the volume of taxes paid by the people of this province.

So what we're saying, Mr. Speaker, is we made 12 . . . or there were 12 government proposals passed by the Rules Committee, but none of the rules that we brought forward are even tabled. We haven't an opportunity to bring them forward. In fact the

chairman of the committee has not called a meeting to have us bring them forward. Now that's what I call cooperation. That's what I call an approachable government.

They won't even listen. We have seven Bills on the Table, including the one we brought forward yesterday which deals with a topic we're talking about here today. We're dealing with An Act to amend The Government Organization Act (Executive Council Reduction). That's the kind of Bill we brought forward to make this government realize that somebody has to speak on behalf of the people.

They are not reforming the Assembly even though they said they would. They are proving that government is all talk and no action when it comes to really wanting to bring the wishes of the people inside these walls. And that's, Mr. Speaker, why I'm supporting this motion before this Assembly today, brought forward by the member from Thunder Creek:

That this Assembly urge the government to support a legislated reduction in the number of cabinet ministers, specifying that the number be proportionate to the number of MLAs in the Legislative Assembly.

That's the reason why I'm supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker — to give back to the people of Saskatchewan an opportunity for control, and regulating the business and the conduct of the individuals in this Assembly so that they have a say and that they have the freedom to access that opportunity with their members of the Assembly and have them speak on their behalf. And so I'm proud to support the motion brought forward by the member from Thunder Creek.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks, I'd like to move an amendment to the resolution no. 66 before us by the member from Thunder Creek to:

Remove all the words after "Assembly" and replace them with:

recognize the Premier's and the government's efforts to maintain a cabinet of reasonable and efficient size, currently at 18, unlike the previous administration's cabinet which had up to 25 members; and further, that this Assembly recognize that cabinet size is only one element in an overall effort to streamline the operations of government.

Mr. Speaker, I think people at home today listening to this probably are turning and trying to adjust the fine tuning on their set and see the contrast and see if they really are listening to the members from a Tory caucus, the same ones who are not able to walk the talk, the ones who have not apologized to the people in this province for what they did when they were in government.

And it's the complete hypocrisy of the members opposite from their recommendation and their

government's administration that I guess, tongue in cheek, all you could say would be that their formula for the numbers in their cabinet would be, let's have at least one cabinet member for every two of our private members, or about 50 per cent plus or minus.

And there were times when all we could do was in a half-hearted way joke about the idea that every member opposite had an additional salary or was paid an additional stipend either as a cabinet member or as a Legislative Secretary, except for Lorne McLaren. So if you ask cabinet and legislative secretaries to go out of the caucus room, you would have a caucus meeting of one member from the members opposite.

But then the people of Saskatchewan know why that member wasn't rewarded by being a member of the cabinet opposite, of 25 members of cabinet opposite, or was being paid additional dollars as a Legislative Secretary or assistant. It was because he was the chair of caucus and had another way to finance his additional expenses and the things that he wanted, through the monies that were allocated to the caucus members opposite.

It's no wonder the people of Saskatchewan are trying to figure out what this is. Is this a conversion on the road to annihilation by the members opposite? I think so. When you look at them standing up and trying to say they now, after 10 years of an administration that laid on the people of Saskatchewan the enormous debt that they put forward, the mismanagement of the Crown corporations sector that they participated in, can now say they've got seven new ideas for democratic reform and we're not willing to comply with any of them. What a surprise.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan aren't interested in some short-term political game-playing speeches by the Tory members opposite. They're not going to fall for that. And they have more meaningful reforms in mind, and they know that if you got rid of the entire cabinet today, took them all out and said we don't need a cabinet in this province, well I think you'd probably be able to address one-tenth of one per cent of our budget.

What next? What do we do next after we've removed all of that representation and the people who are working hard for the people in Saskatchewan? Well that wouldn't even pay the interest on the debt for a day and a half.

So where would we go from here in their great and wondrous schemes of now to reform the measures that are put before this Assembly? And that after they didn't prepare and put forward a budget in this Assembly their last year in office — they walked out of the legislature saying that it was too hot for them and they couldn't control it.

They had some areas of this province without representation for up to two years, Mr. Speaker, leaving people without a voice in this House for up to two years. And now speak about, after they left election periods of more than five years for their own

political gain, to tell us now that they've been converted and we should be looking at legislation to say every four years when they didn't even come forward with a way to replace the people who were missing from this House and speaking for the representation in areas that were without anyone to represent them here. One has to wonder what this conversion experience is all about.

The amendment I'm placing before the House today, Mr. Speaker, recognizes that this Premier and this government have been responsible in maintaining a reasonable-size cabinet. Cabinet make-up shouldn't just be reflective of some arbitrary proportional figure. People want that number to reflect the priorities of government and have the amount of cabinet be able to address the issues and areas of concern of the day.

I'm quoting from the member opposite who said times are changing and people are more demanding. Yes, they are. People today demand accessibility of their cabinet members. They want to be able to consult with their cabinet when new Bills are being contemplated or when new policies are being formulated, when we're planning to amend some previous legislation that's been before the House. They want us to work with groups to form consensus building in this province rather than divide-and-conquer mentality that was put forward by the government before.

They know that major initiatives require many aspects of public policy to be considered, and they know with integration of services, such as the child action plan that requires a drawing together of many departments in a collaborative manner, that it requires the hard work and diligence of a number of cabinet members.

I want to read to them from an article that is from the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, which I believe is very close to the member from Thunder Creek's area, and it says in the heading, "A bigger cabinet much needed."

To the editor: I would like to take issue with the editorial in your edition of September 30 which criticized the recent expansion of the provincial cabinet. Even the *Leader-Post* has acknowledged the need for more ministers to relieve the burden of some overworked members.

It would be false economy to restrict the numbers with so many areas demanding attention at this difficult time, so many areas left in disrepair and disregard by the members who were in government before. It would take the expertise of all 17 ministers to wrestle (and it was 17 at that time) with the deficit and the problems in our economy as they try to put our province back on the right track.

I really don't envy them their job of coping with problems which they inherited from the former Tory administration. They have been getting some unfair criticism because of some unpopular decisions which they have been

reluctantly forced to make. Premier Romanow and his government have displayed and will continue to display a financial responsibility which was lacking by the Grant Devine government and his regime.

A negative editorial such as that one does do nothing to foster the confidence of people in the elected government. I think we should be able expect more objectivity from our newspaper.

And this was from Addie Hughes from Moose Jaw in the *Times-Herald* at the time.

(1600)

And she reflected a lot of what I was hearing out in public at the time when we had a very small cabinet and people were having difficulty accessing them. They knew the job that was before them was an immense task. We knew we would be going forward in a way into a major health reform initiative, that we had many outstanding issues to address in our economic development plans, in the *Partnership for Renewal*, the consultation that that needed, and in addressing and updating of the labour legislation that's before this Assembly now.

People expect and demand more involvement in their ideas and their initiatives. They want to be consulted and they want to feel a part of the process. They know the selective memory of the members opposite.

So I think I should refresh the memory of the Tory members who were an active part of that cabinet and of that caucus. And I would have loved to have been there to see what they were saying and they were doing then about these important items of reform that they've just discovered now. It shows up the complete hypocrisy of the motion that's put forward today.

In a comparison between the size and expense of Devine's cabinet and our cabinet, Mr. Speaker, at one point in his first term of office, Mr. Devine during 1983 had 25 members of cabinet. From June 1989 to October 1991 he had 20 cabinet ministers, still far more than what the member is contemplating in his motion today. I wonder if then they spoke up to their caucus and to their cabinet which they were a part of.

During that same period, 11 legislative secretaries were assisting cabinet. Only one Tory MLA, as I mentioned earlier, Lorne McLaren from Yorkton, was neither a minister, a legislative secretary. And we couldn't figure out at that time what poor Lorne had done not to be on the receiving end of all of the additional padding of their pockets from the members opposite.

They mention the cost of a minister's office. The average cost of a minister's office during Devine's last term was about \$412,000. This includes as I said, minister's salary, a car, salaries for staff members. Ministers at that time were allowed about 7.7 staff positions per office. The premier's personal office

costs were a part of this average.

But it's also a telling tale, when you look at the former premier's office staff and costs, because the costs for one year of operation in Devine's office was \$828,000. Where were these reforms then, Mr. Speaker? Did they stand up and talk to their premier? I wonder.

Now this also includes 23 hidden employees that were working for Mr. Devine . . . I'm sorry, the member from Estevan, whose salaries were paid by other departments, to pad that number paid by other departments. And the number again was \$828,000.

Each legislative secretary was paid an additional \$7,000 above the normal MLA stipend to do the work of the so-called reform that they would put forward. Let's cut the costs out of that end and let's get more people being legislative assistants and we'll pay them. So where is the saving? I know, let's not do that. Let's get the legislative committees up and working and give the members opposite an additional per diem, plus some of their travel expenses to come and serve on a committee. Where's the economy and the better service in that recommendation?

And in fact, as chair of the Municipal Law Standing Committee, when I took the committee, all-party member committee out to the public, it was the members opposite that stood up and said, this was just a little make-work project and it was adding extra cost to government, and they didn't see the valid part of the process. Where are those members now, when they've now had a conversion and want the democratic reform that they've outlined in the motion before us?

And they say, we haven't done anything, or we've said something when we were in opposition and we haven't been following through. That is far from the truth, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan know that. They know we have a plan. We have done many reforms and we've put many reforms forward in this Assembly and within our own caucus. And it speaks to the active role, the strong role that my colleagues and private members play in the committee structure of our caucus, that hears from the public and plays an active role in the formation of policy and new legislation that comes before this House.

And if they haven't heard about that now, then I'd say they haven't been out and talking to the people in Saskatchewan. And they hadn't done it in the past; it wouldn't surprise me that they haven't done it now.

So we began our term with 11 members of cabinet; that was eventually expanded to 18. There were no legislative secretaries. And when we had a smaller number of cabinet members, we knew that there were areas in government that needed some extra support and some strong leadership; and not allow it to fall to the hands of the bureaucrats in those areas to run in the absence of having a minister paying attention to those areas.

We knew the people were saying that it's difficult to get a response from a minister's office because there were so few hands on deck, and it was very difficult to get ministers out to talk about major reform areas and major initiatives. We know that they feel that with the increasing numbers of members of cabinet, that they've had the opportunity to speak on those initiatives.

And you look at health care alone. The job that's required to do in the area of health care and moving a system from curative care to a preventative mode and a wellness model takes the full time of two cabinet ministers — the minister from Regina Hillsdale and the minister from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

In each office now we've gone from 7.7 on average from the old Tory offices, to staff members of six, complements of six. And the average cost of a minister's office today, including all of the above that the members talked about, is 329,000, compared to when they were in office and it was \$412,000 per office. The cost of the Premier's office today, in one year, is \$543,000 compared with close to a million dollars of the premier during the Tory era.

They know that we are moving to have a more cost-efficient and effective government and to look at freeing the costs.

Now in all of those costs, I didn't even begin to talk about, in the auditor's report that first year, what the other members opposite felt were the necessities of a cabinet minister's office. These didn't include the perks that they felt were necessary to run a cabinet minister's office, like the free liquor that was hauled in to the cabinet ministers' offices; like flying into the Big Valley Jamboree with their friends and having a big party there at the taxpayers' expense; preferred sitting at the Centre of the Arts and tickets delivered to the ministers' offices at the taxpayers' expense.

Those were the necessities of the members opposite. Where were they when this was going on? Now all of a sudden they're a new and revitalized Tory caucus on the road to conversion. On the road to conversion or reform, on the way to annihilation. And no wonder, Mr. Speaker, in this province why the people are saying that the members opposite should stand up and ask for forgiveness for the way they acted during the past 10 years in this province.

So what's changed with them? For someone who was a key part of those 10 years in this province, what has changed now? Well finally, and thank the people of this province, things have changed. And I want to outline for you what a New Democratic government has done in the area of planned democratic reforms since we've been elected.

We've begun a process that is restoring the public's trust and confidence in government in Saskatchewan. It would be good to have the media onside in at least giving out the basic facts of what's happening in democratic reform in this session in this legislature and in this government — at least a balanced view of

what's going on — and if they want to urge us to do more, fine. But at least let the public in this province know what's happening in the area of strengthening the democratic process and public's trust and confidence in government. But I just don't see it lately in the media in Saskatchewan and I'm still hopeful that that might happen one day.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are pages of things that we've tried to accomplish, since we took over government, to restore the public trust and confidence in government. All of which doesn't somehow register in the memory banks of the members opposite, so I want to tell them. And I think it's important to tell the people in the province, in the absence of the media doing it, what we've been doing.

We can go back to . . . and it's only two years — two years to some people seems a long time. When you're galloping, trying to turn around the massive debt and the mess that was left to us, when you're trying to fix every aspect of government, and trying to restore the faith in management of the Crown sector, two years is not a long time in the life of a government around here who has been galloping with the number of members we have in cabinet, trying to address all of those issues.

But if you remember back to the very early days of government, we appointed the Saskatchewan Financial Review Commission or the Gass Commission to open the books — open the books and provide an independent audit of the province's financial affairs.

Why did we need to open the books? The public were calling for that. I won't mention right now what the public also wanted to see happen that rhymed with books and should be administered to the people who were responsible for the mess that we did find in those books. But, Mr. Speaker, the people had a loud voice then when they wanted to know where we stood in the province of Saskatchewan; and when they found out, were horrified.

Shortly after that, we restored fair and open tendering for government contracts. It wasn't a tendering process that said the minister's office would open their top drawer and determine which one of their friends today would get the contract. We restored fair and open tendering for the government of Saskatchewan.

We passed legislation to ensure by-elections are held within six months of a vacancy — within six months. It didn't translate into the best of weather this year, I'll tell you, but we held our promise and we lived up to our commitment and we allowed representation to sit in this House very quickly after the by-election, at the beginning of this session rather than leave people in this province without the representation they deserve.

We proclaimed the province's first Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The Act established a right of access to government records and sets out rules for how government handles personal information.

We introduced an MLA Conflict of Interests Act to ensure political representatives carry out their public responsibilities openly and fairly; introduced a conflict of interest commissioner to enforce that Act.

We've introduced a code of ethical conduct for MLAs which commits them to the highest of ethical standards and guides them by a set of fair principles, to ensure honesty and fairness.

Introduced a Crown Corporations Act to ensure proper notice is given to the legislature and the public when a Crown is being considered or created, unlike the Crown corporation that was developed under the previous member, Grant Schmidt from Melville, who had his little slush fund from his Crown corporation that he would hand out dollars to his friends, and the fiasco that that created, outside of accountability of this House.

Introduced a new policy to release to the media and the public all public polling and market research conducted throughout the government every 90 days; reintroduce the ward system in Regina and Saskatoon, after the municipal government standing committee went out to talk with people and find out really what they wanted to see happen in the municipal elections later this year; introduced The Constituency Boundaries Act, and the members have alluded to that; open the doors of the Board of Internal Economy meetings to the public and to the media; appointed the Provincial Auditor to be the auditor for the Crown Investments Corporation; release the *Public Accounts* on time for the first time in a number of years.

Not only that, we've included summary financial statements in the Saskatchewan *Public Accounts* for the first time; released annual reports within 90 days of year end. What a novel idea, but the people of Saskatchewan had not seen that for a number of years from the members opposite.

We re-established an independent Public Service Commission and we could go on just about the horrors that existed within that.

Introduced elections of the Speaker of the legislature by secret ballot by all members of the legislature rather than by being appointed by the Premier. And no easy task some days, Mr. Speaker, to keep us in line in this House. I know it was very difficult for me to sit in an orderly manner and listen to the kinds of things that the members opposite could say after we know what they did and what they said when they were, not only in government in the previous administration, but were a key part of cabinet doing the things that they did, and now say that somehow they're new and renewed Tory government.

We've adopted the accrual accounting method. Now for some people that doesn't sound like a lot, but it's a major step forward in assuring the people of this province that the debts that are incurred are going to be shown to the public in the year that they incur, and not the whoops episodes after the election

experiences we've had in the last two elections from the Tory members opposite. This is a cash-based accounting system used by the former government that allowed those things to occur, and where were they when they could have introduced an accrual accounting method?

(1615)

I'm certain that they didn't introduce that before this legislature and I'm sure they didn't wax eloquent within their caucus to bring forward such sweeping changes, and call the tune of the mortgaging of the children in this province because of the debt that they've incurred.

We've introduced the tabling of financial statements in the legislature for Crown Investments Corporation and its subsidiaries, and if the members of the Crown Corporations Committee really want to pay attention and get working at the Crown Corporations Committee level, they would have known, and they are participating in sweeping changes to the Crown Corporations Committee that would make the Crowns more accountable and open to the discussions that they want to see occur in the context of the overall plan of the Crown corporations and the performance review of those Crowns, to make some sense of some of the rate increases they've been talking about.

It's things like SaskEnergy, when you have to pass on a 9.5 per cent increase in the utility rates there, but you cushion the people from the 40 per cent increase in costs that we've had to incur to purchase the gas because they sold off our gas supply and gas fields in the first place, and leave us at the mercy of the market-place. And they should be ashamed if they don't go forward into the Crown Corporations Committee and help us get forward the proposed amendments to bring before this session of the legislature.

Well that's what we've been doing as a government. But I also want to go on to say that in the daily life of an MLA and the daily operations of our constituency offices, things have changed as well.

Mr. Speaker, when I was elected, it took a few months but I negotiated the same kind of consideration that was given to the former member from Wascana Plains, Beattie Martin, to have his office space. And so when I moved into that office, I walked in and I thought, well maybe there would be a filing cabinet. I didn't expect to see his files there, but maybe a filing cabinet, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I could use the computer. I don't know what would have been wrong with the equipment that I couldn't be able to use that. Perhaps a desk or a chair. For, after all, those things were paid for by the people and the taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when I walked into that office I was left with the jingle bell hanging over the door. And I don't think that's all the taxpayers paid for to help the cabinet minister in the government opposite, help him do his job in the previous Tory administration. I don't

think so.

So what have we done? Well in the life of our constituency offices we've eliminated the right of the MLA to remove all of the office furniture and equipment after he or she is defeated. MLAs are required to file an inventory of office equipment and furnishings that will be updated regularly — accountability to the people of the province of Saskatchewan who paid for that equipment through their taxpayers' dollars in the first place.

All claims from office and communication allowances must be supported by original invoices and give a complete description of the product or service that's been obtained. And I won't tell you the nightmare of some of the procedures that happened from the members opposite.

Radio and broadcasting expenses must be documented with original invoices that indicate when the broadcast occurred, or a copy of a document that you're going to circulate to your constituency to know what you've bought with your communication allowance.

Mr. Speaker, some members of the government opposite did set up an office. Then there were others who sort of set up an office but the office was their home, and then charged the government a substantial amount for rent on that office space in their home. And because they needed some money to set up that office space in their home, they also needed some money to pay their spouse or their relatives to be assistants in that home.

And so what have we done to recognize these things were happening? We've instituted some reforms there as well, Mr. Speaker. MLAs must operate a constituency office to use their office and secretary allowances. The office cannot be in the residence of an MLA.

Where were the members opposite? They could have put forward that reform. I don't remember it in the *Hansard* records as coming out of the members opposite.

No new management companies may be contracted to operate constituency offices. Purchasing or renting of office space or staffing by family members . . . I see the members opposite, I'm hitting a few sore spots here, hitting a little bit of a twinge of conscience. I haven't seen it often from the members opposite, and I guess I still don't see it because they're not willing to stand up and ask for forgiveness from the people in this province.

But anyway, we've allowed now to have purchasing or renting of office space or staffing by family members or companies owned and operated by the family as being prohibited. It makes good sense, Mr. Speaker, when you're dealing with the trust of the people of this province for the efficient and wise use of taxpayers' dollars. And we've prohibited the hiring or contracting with an MLA family member, Mr.

Speaker.

It's with all of those things in mind, I think the people of the province want to see their politicians walk the talk. They don't want to see them stand up and look at the cheap political theatrics that we've seen earlier today. They want to see someone who's committed to putting forward measures of democratic reform, to acting responsibly when they're looking at appointing cabinet members to carry out the duties of government; and that those members should be able to have enough time in their day to consult with the people in this province, to be able to wisely address the issues because they've got the time to do that and they've got the wherewithal to carry forward in the very necessary reforms that are before this government at this time.

They want to see a more active role for private members, and we've introduced those through private members' statements; we introduced that through a more active private members' day, and I'm participating in one at this moment and members opposite have the opportunity to participate in both of those.

They want to be able to approach the members of the caucus committees and to know that when they're speaking to those caucus committees, private members are involved in their issues and will take those issues to the ministers and will be responsible to carry their voice forward when considering new policy development and formation of policies that will come before this House.

It's the best system of a democratized caucus across this country bar none, Mr. Speaker. And it's the people of the province that know about this system, if it's not the members opposite who have taken the time to find out what their caucus could have done to improve the role of the private member and they failed to do. But then of course there weren't many private members, were there?

They were cabinet ministers, they were legislative secretaries, raking in additional stipends from the province's taxpayers so that they could pad their own pockets, and stand up today and say that they're now new and reformed and want to put these important initiatives before this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it's no doubt the reason why they've put the motion forward is to get a little bit of cheap political hit and some small-time theatrics. And it's every reason why I'm moving the amendment to the resolution no. 66 before us, seconded by the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster:

Remove all the words after "Assembly" and replace them with:

recognize the Premier's and the government's efforts to maintain a cabinet of reasonable and efficient size, currently at 18, unlike the previous administration cabinet which had up to 25 members; and further that this Assembly

recognize the cabinet size is only one element in an overall effort to streamline the operations of government.

I'm proud to be able to stand in support of the amendment that I've placed before you today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to support the amendment from the member from Regina Wascana Plains for the reason that I realize what people in my constituency and other constituencies want.

People do not want silly rules. What people want is good government. They want good, accountable government. They want government to take care of their money; spend what you take in, not a billion dollars more a year than you take in. People want more input into government and people want less partisan politics when it comes to serious problems, and they want less wrangling between people and they want people to cooperate, people that are in government, and to work together.

This is why I am against the member from Thunder Creek, against his motion, because I don't think arbitrary and silly rules as to how many members are in cabinet are the important . . . or the things that we should be discussing.

What we should be doing when we are in power is giving good government. I'll give you an example of what I mean. To run the previous administration for one year, the Executive Council, it took a total of \$10.377 million. Over \$10 million.

We have cut those expenses to just over \$6 million to run the Executive Council. Those are the kind of things that people want. People know that it costs to run government. What they look at is what is a percentage of what it costs to run government. If it's a reasonable expense, people will pay that expense.

I mean there are democratic reforms and there are democratic reforms. We have to be honest. People out in the country tell me, look, you just take that government and run it the way I would run my business or I would run my farm. And I agree with them.

When I make decisions in caucus as a caucus member, I take care of their money in the same way . . . I take care of their money the same way as I would take care of mine. And that's what people want us to do.

Let's just review some of the facts that the member from Regina Wascana Plains gave us. Okay. Like I said, people don't mind if you have some expense to run government. What they do mind, if you set the record in the Commonwealth for the size of government — that they do mind.

At one point in 1983 we had 25 members of the

cabinet; 25 members, 11 legislative secretaries, as she has said. And only poor old Lorne McLaren who was chair of caucus. You know people didn't . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, that was 1983; I don't have my dates mixed up. So anyway, accumulatively this was a big cost to the people of Saskatchewan. That they did mind. Like I said, they set the record in the Commonwealth.

I think what a person should do when they are in government, what people should do is reasonably sit down and say, if we expect the people of the province to behave in an accountable way, we should behave in an accountable way.

What I mean is, the people . . . our caucus has set up a system second to none. We have done that in our own caucus. How can we expect other people to reform if we don't reform our own caucus. We have set up a caucus committee; all the Bills are passed through the caucus committee, through cabinet, and then through caucus. And they are voted on democratically. If they do not pass caucus, they do not pass, no matter what the Executive Council says.

(1630)

This is the most democratic NDP government — I can't speak for Liberals or Conservatives — but this is internally the most democratic government that the NDP or CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) has ever had. We have consciously shifted from the Executive Council having all the control to back-benchers like myself having say and control. And I can tell you that people in my constituency believe me, because I can look them in the eye and say, I have some influence in that huge caucus, and they believe that.

So I would say to the members opposite, make some changes in your own caucus; make sure that you conduct your own affairs democratically before you come into the House and try and impose rules on us; run your own place, run your own caucus democratically.

Now what has the Romanow government done? I should say . . . pardon me, I shouldn't use the Premier's name. What has the member of Riversdale done to restore public trust and confidence in this government?

Okay, here's one thing. We appointed the Gass Commission, the Gass Commission which led to a lot of reforms. We have to date taken many of their considerations and put them into action. For instance, we passed legislation to ensure that by-elections are held within six months of a vacancy.

You know, I don't know, you guys, why the members opposite are chirping like this. I mean, I would never have believed that I would have attracted so much attention in this legislature, for heaven's sake. I can't believe this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, yes. Well I think, you know, they're trying to get me off my line of thought. They don't realize that in my family

everybody talked at once. So it is very hard to get me off the line of my thought when I'm determined.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — Okay, what have we done? By-elections — to ensure by-elections are held within six months of a vacancy. Now this may have seemed . . . might be seen by some people as not that important, but I can tell you when it was minus 35 below and I was on the doorstep in the North West by-election, it seemed very important to me that democracy was upheld in this province.

Okay, introduced a new policy to release to the media and the public all public opinion polling and market research conducted within 90 days. This is very important. I think the former government did all of their governing on polls. I mean now if we do take a poll, the people know about it and they know the results of the poll and they know how much it cost. Just think of that. I would have loved to have seen the polling results of the former government and the polls they took and how much those polls cost.

We've put ourselves right on the line. I mean people know we do poll, but they can see the costs of the poll and they have it right there. I mean, that's honesty. What more do you want?

Okay, we introduced The Constituency Boundaries Act to reduce the number of MLAs from 66 to 58; an independent commission to establish the boundaries.

Here's another important one. I'm not going to go through all of them, but some that I think that are important, I've checked off: appointed the Provincial Auditor to be the auditor of the Crown Investments Corporation. Isn't that wonderful? Wouldn't we have loved to have seen that in 1987 or 1988? Here's another one: release the *Public Accounts* on time. Isn't that a revolution?

An Hon. Member: — That's a novel idea.

Ms. Stanger: — Isn't that a novel idea, as my colleague from Nipawin says. Now at least the Public Accounts can function with some efficiency. Included summary financial statements in Saskatchewan's *Public Accounts*; introduced mid-year reporting of the province's financial situation. I think this is very important even to me as a private member, to have the Minister of Finance make a mid-year financial statement. That helps me to know exactly where we are going as a government too and helps private members make decisions. This is a very important thing to do as far as financial accountability is.

I don't really think that . . . these are small points and people don't realize how important they are for us to do our jobs properly.

Here's another one: introducing the tabling of financial statements in the legislature for the Crown Investments Corporation and its subsidiaries. A very important thing, because this is ultimately where the

decisions are made and where the vote is taken and where the debate takes place.

I think maybe I agree with the member from Regina Wascana Plains, that maybe some of our media should realize how our rules are made and how they come into being. I was surprised to read Murray Mandryk and he didn't realize that we had already seen the auditor's report before it's tabled. I think if he'd . . . he's been around here long enough; he should know things like that.

I mean it would be helpful in this democratic reform, in the new way that people are thinking, it would be helpful if the media and the opposition and the government could work together to give the best kind of representation to people in this province.

In our term, new rules were adopted to streamline government, to make it more accountable. I agree with the previous speaker. When I was elected, there wasn't a single stitch of furniture — nothing — in my office. I received over 2,000 petitions saying that people wanted MLAs to be able to keep their furniture and office equipment. I wrote back in a column and said look, folks, I agree with you. I wish that the first three months that I had had something to work with. But I had to take second hand furniture from my own home and start my office that way.

If I am defeated next time, there will be a full, equipped office left for the MLA succeeding me. And that is the way it should be. And if I am re-elected, I won't have to spend more money for furniture except when you have to replace things like fax machines and telephones.

So that is a very important thing to have changed and to have inventory to see what is in the office.

Another important thing I think — and I had done this from the beginning — is most of my claims, instead of reimbursement, they were paid directly by the original invoice. And I followed that personally, I would say — my assistant has figured it out — about 96 per cent of my invoices were paid for the original one, and I agree with this. I think it is better. There are some cases where you have to have reimbursement, but it's better to pay directly to the invoices. And I support that.

Radio and broadcasting expenses must be documented with original invoices that indicate when the broadcast occurred. That's another change. MLAs must operate a constituency office to use their office and secretarial allowances. The office cannot be in the residence of an MLA.

And again, I think it's incumbent today to be accessible to our taxpayers. And we are given these allowances and, I think again, I don't think they find the cost of running the offices that unreasonable if they can contact you and have some input into the decisions that you make and so on.

So I've think we've started to make our government a

good, accountable government. That was the number one thing that taxpayers say to me. They want us to run the government well and they want us to be accountable. And I think we've started down the road. There are more improvements that we can make.

And again, the second point: people want government to take care of their money as they would take care of their own money. And I think we've started on that. Certainly the decisions that my colleagues and I make, this is the way we make them.

The other thing is they want more input into government. We can improve. We are just beginning to learn how to get opinions and consensus from people, and sometimes we omit people that we should include in the process.

Sure, we've made mistakes. You're only human. But we're learning how to do this. This is a new way of doing it. I had never, never — and I was politically involved all my life — ever been asked by any MLA to come to a meeting where I would have input on a draft Bill; never, ever in my life. And like I said, I was a very political person. This is just something new that we are beginning to do and we should . . . and we will improve on the processes and the less partisan politics.

Look, I'm not naive. We're all politicians at the end of the day. But the thing is that some of the serious problems that confront Saskatchewan and Canada can be resolved if at times we work together for the good of the people that we represent, whether we are NDP, Conservative.

An Hon. Member: — Why not all the time?

Ms. Stanger: — All the time . . . one of my colleagues from the opposition said, what about all of the time? Of course all of the time we can, but there are times when we are not, like in this debate, we are not going to agree on how we come to the same place because philosophically we come from different ends.

But that doesn't mean when we're discussing an infrastructure program with the federal government and municipal government and the provincial government, we cannot be sensible and we cannot cooperate. That's what I mean.

What I meant was that philosophically there are going to be times we are going to disagree. But when it comes to a problem or a solution, we should be working together more. And people are telling me that all the time — and I agree with it, by the way.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are a few of my comments that I wanted to add to the debate. And I will support the amendment.

Remove all words after "Assembly" and replace with:

recognize the Premier's and the government's efforts to maintain a cabinet of reasonable and

efficient size, currently at 18, unlike the previous administration cabinet which had up to 25 members; and further, that this Assembly recognize that cabinet size is only one element in an overall effort to streamline the operations of government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been sitting here and listened very attentively to the speakers. I find it very interesting — some of the comments being made and the suggestions that were made. And I think the two members, the member from Regina Wascana Plains and the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd had some positive comments to make, although it's interesting to find them as well just continuing to defend the government position.

And they talk about reform on one hand, and yet on the other hand they would suggest that any reform that may even come from an opposition caucus is not the appropriate type of reform. Even the piece of legislation or the motion brought before us this afternoon by my colleague, the member from Thunder Creek regarding establishing the size of cabinet and making it proportionate to the number of MLAs in this House. It would seem to me that that is a fair motion and it's a . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Is the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster still debating or has she sat down? I do believe I recognized the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think what we find, across the land there's certainly if not a breeze but a wind blowing for change across our land and in the whole political spectrum. I'm not sure it's blowing as strenuously as the breeze that was blowing outside yesterday, where you had to really hold your hat on if you were going to keep it on your head, but there is a change being demanded by the public.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this Assembly and you look at the number of ideas that have been raised, the number of questions that have been raised, suggestions that have come forward, and as my colleagues have indicated, we have eight private members' Bills that are before this Assembly, I think that is a reflection of what the public in general are asking for. Certainly any time I've talked to people on coffee row or even last night at the meeting at Davidson regarding . . . with individuals, the fuel tank owners and the service station operators who are affected by the environmental legislation, I find that people are looking for change.

Now they're not necessarily demanding all the change that maybe we're bringing. But I think they're asking for bits of change and little pieces of change, one at a time. And so I think it would be appropriate if this Assembly would indeed give some additional

leadership and show that the Assembly is able and willing to work and look at private members' Bills, even private members' Bills brought forward by opposition members that would benefit each and every one of us as sitting MLAs. That would give us not only a greater ability to represent our constituents, but as well, Mr. Speaker, open up the doors for real reform of our parliamentary procedure and the parliamentary forum in this Assembly.

I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to the members as well, and they talked about . . . and of course the cajoling about the Conservative caucus at this time, how come all of a sudden they've reformed. And I want to just make mention to a number of the members here that because we didn't necessarily talk about our actions all that openly prior to 1991 doesn't mean that there wasn't a lot of change, and that individual members had looked at ways in which they could deal with the constituents and ways in which they could be a lot more open with the constituency.

(1645)

And both of the members from . . . the member from Regina Wascana Plains and the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster talked about the office allowance and talked about equipment. And I'd just like to bring to their attention that even prior to, considerable time prior to the 1991 election, I ran a personal column in my local paper indicating that I perceived my office equipment as being something that the taxpayers had purchased, and that it was all laid out there and it was there for the taxpayers at the end of my term. And that was long, long before we'd even got into the real mode of changing some of the rules.

I think it would be interesting, Mr. Speaker, to look at what took place in the past. But I don't think we want to dwell on the past. I think it's time we started looking to the future. And it's obvious members don't want to listen to what some of the things that took place in the past, some of the initiatives taken by individual MLAs or even governments in the past that were productive and open.

Let me bring to the members' attention — and of course I look around the Assembly and I don't see too many people presently here who were here in the last Legislative Assembly — when the opposition of the day said it time and time again that they would make this place and this province ungovernable. And most of the members sitting here on the government side of the House were not here when they . . . were not here or were not part of that opposition, so we'll maybe give them the benefit of the doubt. But time and time again we were faced with an opposition that was not constructive, but obstructive, and the most obstructive opposition that I've ever seen.

The member from Regina Wascana Plains talks about Crown Corporations Committee and how Crown Corporations Committee operates. Maybe the members should go back to *Hansard* and from the Crowns, and just look and see and follow the format that their former members took when they went to

Crown Corporations, or even in this Assembly. Is it little wonder that it was difficult to get any format or proper business done, to bring in any initiatives?

Maybe what the government of the day should have done, Mr. Speaker, is what this government did — change the rules unilaterally. There was a lot of discussion at the time about changes and about how the House would operate, but there was never a consensus reached amongst the parties. The opposition wasn't in favour.

I can remember standing in this House when for day . . . time after time and minute after minute in the House, one member after the other would go down one row and up the other row with one petition in hand. They'd read the whole petition — pretty well everybody's name from Mickey Mouse — to the Assembly, present it to the House . . .

An Hon. Member: — To Donald Duck.

Mr. Toth: — To Donald Duck — and that filled in one day after the other. In fact I'm not exactly sure how many days we spent in that mode.

Was that proper? Was that right? Now the rules have been changed. And I don't dispute the fact that the rules needed to be changed, but basically the government of the day, the opposition — the government presently sitting today that was the opposition of the day — now has found it better to change the rules so that a new opposition will not have the same opportunities.

Now I don't think, dealing with my colleagues around here, that you would have faced that type of format. But I think, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there's time for change. We face change in our lives on a daily basis; we all anticipate and face and realize that change is going to come about.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the motion brought forward by my colleague, the member from Thunder Creek, is a very appropriate motion, and I don't see anything wrong with limiting the number of cabinet members. I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the number of cabinet ministers we presently have in this Assembly or in this House at the present time, Mr. Speaker, if you were to say that even 56 or 58 members, as we will have in the next provincial election, at 25 per cent you'd be looking at about 15 cabinet ministers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think if a cabinet minister finds that the positions and the responsibility that is laid on his or her shoulders is a little too great, would there be anything wrong with the Premier of the province, rather than appointing another cabinet minister or making an associate minister, would it be wrong with the Premier appointing someone to a legislative position, Legislative Secretary position, to work along with that minister?

It would seem to me that, Mr. Speaker, you would be able to appoint, for the price of one cabinet minister, I believe you would probably be able to appoint five

legislative secretaries. So even if you reduce the cabinet to that number even from the present, you could still have a savings in cabinet by having someone to work along with the cabinet minister. And that would provide a means as well for other MLAs to get a better understanding of how government operates. And who knows? It might even be a format to groom individuals to fit cabinet positions.

Now maybe a person in cabinet may find that just a little threatening to have someone in their office as a Legislative Secretary working along with them, thinking that maybe in a year's time they are going to be moved up into the position of cabinet and the cabinet minister is going to be pushed to the back of the Assembly.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of alternatives for change. And I think it would be very unfortunate if this Assembly, when it adjourns later this summer, would find that it has failed to take the opportunity of bringing some real reform.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that we as MLAs certainly have an opportunity. As I've indicated, there's a wind blowing across the land. We've seen what's happened on the federal scene as new parties have emerged. And we've all seen what the public has done and jumped on the bandwagon and accepted some of the reforms that the Reform Party has brought forward.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that those reforms are genuine, that people want to see their legislative bodies change. They want to see the Legislative Assembly change. They want to see the way government operates change. Is there anything wrong in allowing members the opportunity to stand up and speak freely and represent their constituents? That's something that I've argued for a number of years.

We can argue, as the Minister of Economic Development did, I believe, about a week or 10 days ago argue the fact that every member has the opportunity to represent their constituents. But where did he mention? Did he say they had that opportunity in the House? No, he said they have the freedom to speak out in caucus.

And we all know, Mr. Speaker, that caucus meetings are not open meetings, as we have in the Assembly here. They are behind closed doors. And at the end of the day, when the discussion is complete and the member leaves caucus office, the member usually falls in line with what the general consensus was, reached in caucus.

And I don't think that's wrong, Mr. Speaker, because consensus in caucus is an indication that even though the member, and even though his constituents wouldn't agree with consensus, had the opportunity to speak out, the government still has, and the government members or the caucus itself, whether it's government or opposition, still come to the House having reached a consensus, and this is the policy they're going to follow.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate part though is the fact that to an individual representing his constituency . . . an issue that, as I've indicated time and time again, on one side of the province may not mean a lot. We've just gone through a fair bit of debate in my area regarding time. And certainly people in the Moosomin area and the Esterhazy area, along that eastern side of the province, have been arguing for a number of years that maybe it's time that we moved to daylight saving time.

But if you go to the western side of the province, as we've sat in our caucus, certainly, as I was trying to represent my constituents, and you can appreciate there's quite a diversity of opinions in my constituency being on the time issue, but when we discussed it in caucus, my colleagues on the west side of the province weren't all that interested in daylight saving time. They felt that the time we were on right now, mountain standard time, or central standard time certainly fit in well with their schedule.

So you can see the differences, even in this Assembly. Is there anything wrong? So while I'm arguing in caucus, did my constituents know that I was arguing on their behalf, raising these issues? Whereas if I would have had the ability . . . and I believe we all took that ability on this side of the House to stand up on a number of issues and say these are the concerns my constituents are raising. And we will continue to raise them. But at the end of the day, we realize that democracy will prevail, that the number of members who are speaking and the ideas that have been brought forward, we will . . . the decisions that are made will be based on the vote that is taken and how the vote has come down.

So to allow members to have the freedom to speak in this Assembly will not destroy a government. It just gives that member the ability to speak out a little more openly about the concerns that their constituents are raising.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the motion that is before this Assembly, I don't think there is anything wrong with us taking a look at, if we're going to downsize the number of MLAs in this Assembly, and certainly the government has made a lot of arguments as to why we should downsize. My colleagues have raised the fact that we suggested a proposal that would have allowed for four provincial MLAs for every federal seat; that would have even downsized this House by even two more members, down to 56. I think that was a good and positive alternative and solution.

And the reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, because it would identify constituencies with the federal boundaries and so you're dealing with one minister, rather than the overlap as we see takes place in our province on a daily basis where we have municipal governments dealing with two or three health boards, or two or three boards of education, or health districts, or home care districts — all these issues that overlap. And I think it's time we looked at ways in which we

can combine our boundaries and establish boundaries whereby members are able to speak with one person rather than 10 other interested groups, Mr. Speaker.

So it would be nice if . . . and I think it would be fair, and I think government members would be honest if they would sit back and look at some of the Bills that have been brought forward by the opposition caucus. And I understand that we are going to probably have a Bill or two even brought in by government members on some of the legislation that they brought forward such as The Trade Union Act. I think it's only fair that we give the time of day and allow for full and open debate on a number of these issues, rather than having them die on the order paper.

And the debate that is taking place in this Assembly today regarding the limitation of cabinet ministers is a good and healthy debate. It gives members from all parties the ability to stand up and give the reasons as to why they believe one form of . . . is appropriate enough, whether they believe in open cabinet . . . number of cabinets members is appropriate, or a restricted number of cabinet ministers.

Now I think, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting the feeling that some of the members may be thinking I'm getting a little long-winded. But I don't know why they would even think that way. But I think it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that we do take the time to address these issues carefully.

I trust that a number of the members in this Assembly, government members in fact, also have been listening, and that they will give us the opportunity to debate some of the private members' motions and pieces of legislation as well as the legislation that the government is bringing forward as well.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, even though there is much more that I could add to this debate, I would adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.