

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 28, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present today for the people of Carduff, Gainsborough, and Carievale areas.

The petition prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers, and urge the federal government to recognize that gun control and crime control are not synonymous.

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

I'm pleased to present this today.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to have the opportunity to present petitions on behalf of the people from the Gull Lake, Tompkins, and some from the Regina area.

I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And I'm happy to table these today.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to allocate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

And of citizens petitioning the Assembly to oppose changes to federal legislation regarding firearm ownership.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 42 ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Economic Development: (1) has the minister contacted the federal government regarding the recently announced closures of all prairie agricultural employment service offices; (2) what action has been taken by the Economic Development minister to ensure agricultural employment service offices in Saskatchewan remain viable; (3) provide copies of any proposal and other correspondence between the Economic Development minister and the federal government on this issue; (4) the number of jobs that will be lost in Saskatchewan as a result of the closure of these offices.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to introduce to you and through you to other members of the House, friends of mine who farm in the Birsay-Lucky Lake area, very near Luck Lake, the wonderful sanctuary there for wildlife — John and Lindy Buhr.

John and Lindy, as I said, are farmers in the area. They are very active participants in the community and the church and the Kinsmen and are generally one of the group of people that make Saskatchewan the wonderful place it is. I'd like you to join me in welcoming John and Lindy.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, a guest in our legislature today in the east gallery. His name is Mr. Dennis Barnett. He was the mayor of St. Walburg for over 12 years, very instrumental in working on the Rural Health Coalition, and has fought for many, many years for tax fairness in the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd be most appreciative if everyone would warmly welcome Dennis to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Presentation of TISASK Awards

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is a business in my riding which has received recognitions for its contribution to the tourism industry. This past weekend the Tourism Industry Association of Saskatchewan, known as TISASK, held its annual awards ceremony in Regina. The *Yorkton This Week* and *Enterprise* was recognized as a media organization which best increased awareness of tourism in Saskatchewan.

I would like to congratulate the staff of this local newspaper for informing the public about the importance of tourism, an industry which means \$900 million to the province annually and accounts for about 38,000 full- and part-time jobs in Saskatchewan.

Some of the other winners included the Eastend community tourism authority, for promoting Scotty as a tourism attraction. The Saskatchewan Science Centre and the Kramer IMAX Theatre in Regina won an award for business marketing. Crown Life was recognized for supporting the province's tourism industry and the Grey Cup bid committee was honoured for its work in bringing the Grey Cup to Regina in 1995. In addition, Lianne Gusway of the Turgeon Hostel in Regina won the president's award of merit.

Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, to all the winners and to all of the people who make Saskatchewan's tourism industry a huge success. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Esterhazy Writer Wins Award

Mr. Knezacek: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate a professional woman from Esterhazy in my constituency who has recently won an award for excellence — Linda Ungar, a freelance writer who won gold in the press editorial category for her article called, "To my community." The article was published in the January, 1994 issue of *Farm Woman* magazine.

Ms. Ungar owns her own communications company, specializing in freelance writing and advertising. This award obviously indicates that she knows her profession, Mr. Speaker.

She has used her expertise over the past four years to build awareness in rural Saskatchewan on the issue of family violence.

One such project was a video called *Fear on the Farm*, produced by Birdsong productions of Regina. Another is the article for which she has just won her award. The subject of her article then is as important and timely as her technical ability in writing it.

As she said, the article was a way for her to talk to all rural communities on behalf of abused rural women who sometimes feel that they are alienated and misunderstood by their friends and families.

Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly we have discussed this problem and acted in a way we believe will alleviate it, but it is women like Linda Ungar who equally help people understand and resolve this lingering blight on our society.

Congratulations to Linda Ungar.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Stampeders Win Hockey Championship

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you. Beat, thrashed, pummelled, topped, pounded, slaughtered, decimated — Mr. Speaker, you probably think I'm about to describe some 15th century war, but I'm not. I'm practising to be a sports reporter, and that's just some of the adjectives that have been used to describe the Meadow Lake Stampeders this past year and what they've done to their opposition. This past Sunday evening was no exception.

Mr. Speaker, the Meadow Lake Stampeders hockey team are again provincial champions. With regrets to the member for Humboldt, the Stampeders defeated the Watrous Winterhawks 4 to 2 to win the SAHA (Saskatchewan Amateur Hockey Association) senior B provincial title. The Stampeders won the best of three series, two games to nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I am told that Stampeders' goalie Rick Dallyn made several gargantuan — that's reporter talk for big — saves at critical points of the second and third periods of Sunday's game to help the Stampeders win the title.

With only about six minutes left in the game, Watrous got a goal to narrow the score to 3 to 2. In a last-ditch effort, the Winterhawks pulled their goalie in the final minute, but couldn't score on Dallyn. Old soft hands — that's hockey talk — Joe McKay scored two goals for the Stampeders, and Shane Buchta and Brent Ross added singles.

Congratulations to the Meadow Lake Stampeders hockey players, coaches, and staff, for winning the provincial title. It's our first at this level in 25 years and I know the entire community is proud of their accomplishment. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Official Opening of the Consulate General of Kazakhstan

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say a few words about the official opening of the consulate general of Kazakhstan in Canada.

It was my pleasure to have been invited to participate in the official opening today. Unfortunately my duties here prevented me from travelling to Toronto for this event. However, I've had the pleasure of travelling to Kazakhstan and visiting with members of parliament, principal cabinet secretary, and also being in their parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the country of Kazakhstan is very young. It declared independence December 16, 1991 and became an independent state when the Soviet Union dissolved on December 26, 1991.

Mr. Nazarbayev was elected president at that time, and in legislative elections held March 7, '94 his party won a sweeping victory. My family and I were pleased to host President Nazarbayev at our ranch when he was in Saskatchewan at the invitation of the former premier, the member from Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that Kazakhstan, which was twinned

with Saskatchewan on November 30, 1989, has a presence in Canada and that this country will continue to forge its ties, both economic and social, within Canada and its provinces.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Thorrlablot Celebration in Wynyard

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me try out a couple of words on you. The first one is easy: thorrlablot. The second one is vatnabyggd.

Anyway, last Saturday in the town of Wynyard, which I can pronounce, I was happy to attend the annual thorrlablot celebration, this celebration presented by the Icelandic Club of Saskatchewan. And even if I can't pronounce it, I and everyone else in attendance had a good time.

Thorrlablot, Mr. Speaker, is the Icelandic spring festival. January 27 is the first day of the ancient Icelandic month of Thorri, the month in Iceland when the sun reappears over the horizon, which is certainly a great cause for celebration.

Traditionally, March has become the time for Saskatchewan Icelanders, and Icelandic Wannabees, to hold this traditional celebration.

As a mark of how effective this celebration is, we can note that the weekend festival was followed by a great amount of snow in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, most of us are aware, I think, that a large number of Icelanders immigrated to Manitoba around the turn of the century following massive earthquakes on the island. And we also know that they and their descendants have made a valuable contribution to the cultural mosaic of Saskatchewan. We are not, perhaps, so aware of the Saskatchewan Icelandic community as others, represented by this happy celebration in Wynyard with the traditional food and song.

I was happy to be present, and I look forward to attending next year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Council of Women

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday I was privileged to attend the 100th annual meeting of the Regina Council of Women. The council is a federation of organizations composed of women, or men and women, whose aim is to serve as a medium of communication and to promote the application of the golden rule to society, custom, and law. An aim, I would hope, that all members of this Assembly share with the council.

The council was founded by Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, wife of then Governor General of Canada, on October 15, 1895. Since then, Mr. Speaker, the work of the council has been a good reflection of the concerns and campaigns of Saskatchewan society.

In the beginning, for instance, in a more rigid time, the council supported rescue homes for unfortunate girls, and pensions for widowed mothers. They formed the first cottage hospital, among other worthy causes.

Later, again reflecting the time, it advocated raising the minimum wage, increasing support for seniors' programs, and most recently, supported the World War I Memorial Project.

Today, they're interested in, among other issues, child support, immigration policy, sustainable energy. There's obviously a common thread here continued for its hundred years and that goes directly back to its stated purpose of making the golden rule applicable in the real world.

The Regina Council of Women has worked, and worked effectively, to ensure that we all do unto others as we would them do unto us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce my daughter who is sitting in the west gallery, and her friend, Beth Guisteau. My daughter is in town getting her teeth fixed and I know the cheque she carries is pretty big. And I just want to remind her, leave my keys when you leave town, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to introduce guests as well.

Leave granted.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, three gentlemen who have joined us and sitting in your gallery. Mr. Murray Newman, Mr. Ralph Tanner, who are councillors for the community of Moosomin, and Mr. Bob Wilson, the administrator. They're in the city to not only observe the proceedings but looking forward to meeting with the Minister of Highways. And now the Minister of Highways knows who his guests will be at 4 p.m.

I'd like the members to join me in welcoming our guests today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — May I also have leave to introduce guests?

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I will be brief. The gentlemen just introduced were people that I knew when I lived in Moosomin. I was going to say how long ago it is; I think I'll just reserve that comment. Some years ago I lived in Moosomin, I knew and worked with these people, and they are indeed a credit to their community. I want to join my colleague from Moosomin in welcoming them here to the Chamber.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crow Benefit Pay-out

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the opposition caucus would once again like to present questions on behalf of members of the public to the Assembly. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we send the government's answers to the people who sent in the questions, and we've started to get some feedback from these individuals.

Mrs. Joan M. Williamson from Pambrun, Saskatchewan, says: thank you for presenting the questions which I had submitted. I think this is a valuable service for the residents of Saskatchewan. This is very typical, Mr. Speaker, of the kind of response that we get from individuals.

My question today is from Ervin Kvisle of Regina. And he says: Mr. Premier, I want to know, since the Saskatchewan government has large land holdings under the former land bank, what will be done about the one-time pay-out to end the Crow benefit which is to be paid to the landowners? Will the money go to the General Revenue Fund, or to the producer, or will it go to reduce deficits as done in the past budget with the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) pay-out?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite probably should be directing his question to his colleague sitting to the left of him.

We don't know yet; we haven't had a final decision from the federal government as to how they're going to pay out this money. They're saying — the last I heard is before Mr. Goodale left for South America — is that, well, they're still considering it. They think they're going to pay it to the landowner.

As the member pointed out, we are in the same position as thousands of thousands of other farmers in this province who have leases. Over 30 per cent of the land is leased and certainly a very, very small portion of that is what is Crown land. We are in the bind of trying to determine what we're going to do with a pay-out we're not sure we're going to get yet, and we will certainly reduce our rents or make offers to have people pass that money through with a purchase offer as soon as we find out what we're getting out of this tangled mess. Certainly we will have to do something on a temporary basis, as will all other producers in this province, if we don't get some answers very shortly, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Surgery Waiting-lists

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this question comes from Mary Woloshyn from Kuroki and it says: Mr. Premier, I want to know why there is such a long waiting-list for surgery. My mom waited eight months for her hip replacement surgery. She deteriorated so badly that she ended up in a wheelchair. Now after surgery, it will take weeks, maybe months, of therapy to make her walk. Where are the savings?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as it has always been and it remains today, that surgeries are booked in this province by priority according to medical need. And those medical needs, Mr. Speaker, are established and determined by the physicians.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report to the individual who writes and to members that overall, Saskatchewan has a very good reputation for waiting-lists for surgery. We have some areas where we need to do some work and we are working with the specialist hospitals and with those districts to try and improve that circumstance. But, Mr. Speaker, overall, the waiting-list for surgeries and specialist treatment in Saskatchewan is second best in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Size of Premiers' Staff

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier comes from Frank Nickel from Langham, and he writes: Mr. Premier, I want to know, with Saskatchewan's low population and all your talk about cut-backs, does it not seem hypocritical of you to have, by far, the most costly staff of any western province? Even at that, you offer them raises when so many children are going hungry.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to answer the question put forward by the member on behalf of Mr. Nickel. To say that it is not the largest staff by a long shot . . . I'm rather surprised the member from Rosthern would repeat that, being a member of the government which did have the largest staff, if not western Canada, in Canada from 1982 to 1991.

It is in fact a staff which is there to serve the people. It's partly, mainly actually, on the one side the policy and the administration of government, the departments, and is very much in line.

The members of the opposition are asking these questions on behalf of the people, as they would describe them, and I think that's not a bad idea at all. But I think what really should happen here is it would be nice if they would table all of the "Mr. Premier, I want to know" letters that they're getting. Would you table them today? Table them today because . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The members of the opposition say they do.

Well I tell you, if they do, the ones that I get, of which I've got folders here, indicate that you're not even touching a fraction of the Premier's "I want to know" letters directed to you as to why

you got us into this mess that you did and congratulating us for getting the province a little bit out of the mess that we're in.

So put all the facts and figures on the table in these questions.

90th Anniversary Celebration

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, this question comes from M.S. Hannem, from Melfort. Mr. Premier, I want to know how you can justify spending \$1 million on 90th birthday celebrations which cannot be enjoyed by all residents of Saskatchewan due to the declining and unsafe medical care being provided in local health care facilities, especially in rural areas, due to your budgetary efforts.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to respond to the question that's presented on behalf of the constituent or the citizen from Saskatchewan.

The 90th anniversary is something that has caught the imagination of people all over the province. There are almost 700 communities and organizations who have now inquired about information as to how they might become part of this event which revolves around the Grey Cup, which is happening in Regina and in Saskatchewan in November.

People of Saskatchewan want to feel good about themselves and they want to celebrate the recovery which they are experiencing after the last several years of some rather difficult times, some of which the members may have . . . some people will allege were responsible for, and some were because of the economic circumstances that were there.

It's the 90th anniversary of the province. It's an opportunity to promote tourism in Saskatchewan like we haven't had for a long time, which in itself, Mr. Speaker, will be a great economic boost to all the communities in Saskatchewan. And that's why they're all interested in being part of the celebration that's going to be taking place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MLA Pensions

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a question to Mr. Premier. And this question comes from Theodore Halter from Doddsland: Mr. Premier, I want to know how you justify getting a pension that works out to around \$40 an hour for a 160-hour month when most of the people in this province make only between 8 and \$10 an hour.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I fully understood the question but I will certainly be pleased to attempt to answer the question presented by the member from Wilkie. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member again — which I have said in this House on several occasions before — that there was a major reform of pensions, not only of members of the legislature, but of public servants and of teachers in 1978 and 1979, where at that time it was negotiated that the pensions thereafter would be on a money purchase basis so that there is no continuing obligation to the taxpayer.

People who are under that plan, which is most members of this Legislative Assembly, get the money that they contribute at 9 per cent, which I might indicate is fairly high — but that's okay. It is matched by 9 per cent. It goes into a fund and then at the time when the person retires it becomes their annuity.

And, Mr. Speaker, that was the right thing to do, and this province under an NDP (New Democratic Party) government was ahead of all of the rest in Canada in doing that.

Now it so happens that there are some people who were left in the old plan, which you cannot do . . . You cannot do these things retroactively without . . . retroactively, including public servants and teachers and others, and people who are already on pension — widows. There were some people who remained in the old plan and through the process of evolution and time, that eliminates itself.

But we do have, because of the reforms of 1979, the best pension system in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Effects of VLTs

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that the Premier is usually willing to get up and answer my questions, and hopefully he will do it now as well.

Mr. Premier, I have a question for you. Today on the front page of the *Star-Phoenix*, we see another condemnation of your NDP government's gambling policy. The mayor of La Ronge calls VLTs (video lottery terminal) a symbol of the NDP government's greed and arrogance. He says:

"Those machines bring down the standard of living of those who can least afford it."

Now isn't that something, Mr. Premier. The NDP attacking the standard of those who can least afford it.

Mr. Premier, community leaders in La Ronge say your VLTs are victimizing the poor. They say property crime is up 50 per cent. And worst of all, they say that you don't care. Mr. Premier, when are you going to start listening? When are you going to stop the harm that are you causing in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I thank the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, I would point out that I wouldn't use the term, community leaders, too loosely because in my reading of the article there was one person who indicated their disfavour and two community leaders who indicated their favour with the VLT program.

You know that we're concerned about the impacts this program would have, and because of that we've expanded public education, prevention and treatment services. We're the only province that has prevention programs aimed at youth, and

we've spent a decent amount of money on dealing with prevention, education programs.

Now if there's a crime problem, we believe as we always have that the solution to crime is jobs, and because of that, we've instituted a northern development fund with 4 million targeted assistance with new and existing ventures in the North; development of Saskatchewan gold mine, hundreds of construction jobs and mining jobs; McClean Lake uranium project with 250 million for construction, 200 full-time jobs — 60 per cent to Northerners. And I could go on with a number of other initiatives.

But I would point out that Dave McIlmoyl, who's a general manager of Kitsaki Development corporation for the La Ronge Indian Band, says they discussed this issue thoroughly within the Indian band before deciding to proceed. The Indian band represents 5,500 people, which is a third of that local population there, and they have decided that in order to be competitive within the tourism business they had to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Premier, let's try this again. While your minister rambles on, there is something that you could do about this VLT problem, and that's by appointing a new minister. This is the fifth minister, Mr. Premier, that you've bet on, and each time you've busted — each time. In fact I would go so far as to say that this is the worst minister of all so far. She blames gambling expansion on churches and charities. She calls stealing from your church a learning experience. And now she accuses community leaders in La Ronge of hyping their concerns about VLT addictions.

Why would they do that, Mr. Premier? What motive would these community leaders have, other than the best interests of their community?

Mr. Premier, would you not agree that these are legitimate concerns that these community leaders have? Or do you agree with your minister who says concerns about VLTs in La Ronge are being hyped?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might find this whole approach a little more credible had I not lived in La Ronge for 12 years. And I know the conditions that exist there and I know that people are very fond of gaming there. That has always been the case. And so it does not surprise me that they also enjoy the VLT program in their community.

I would repeat that Mr. McIlmoyl, representing the Indian band, has said that they had this discussion within the Indian band, who is also part of the community — a substantial part of that community, at least a third of the total population of that particular town area there — and they have decided to support the program.

So I guess you have on the one hand Mr. Gabrush who doesn't, and on the other hand the Indian band who does. And you tell me, I guess, who we will be listening to on this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Well, Madam Minister, for a person who has lived in La Ronge to come up with an answer like that, all I can say is shame on you. That's all I can say, Madam Minister.

And as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, the first step in solving any addiction problem is, first of all, admitting that you have a problem. Nobody over there, Mr. Speaker, nobody over there seems to admit that there is a problem. Crime is up by 50 per cent. People who can least afford it are blowing their pay cheques and their family allowance cheques. One bar owner calls it a sign of despair.

The mayor says the town will never receive enough VLT revenue to address the social and economic damage that is being done in that community. But the minister gets up and says we can't help it, that there's no problem, it's all hype.

Mr. Premier, the only hype is your government's pathetic attempts to downplay the serious problems that your slot machines are causing. Mr. Premier, I ask you, will you put an immediate halt to gambling expansion during the . . . and ask the Saskatchewan people during the next provincial election whether they really want VLTs in this province? Will you do that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now again you might be able to tell some of the people your story, but I would have to say to the member that I lived in La Ronge when the friendship centre ran a little, tiny bingo with a small prize board; and then you guys came in, privatized bingo, increased the prize boards, and basically expanded bingo gambling by 2,500 per cent.

I tried to provide some alternative programs, and your privatization of the bingo drew all the activity towards those bingo halls. Now I guess we could say that you started the thing and I'm not sure I've seen any evidence that you cared at all about it. There was no addiction prevention programs, no education programs, no attempt to show any social accountability at all.

And I might add, if you care to have a referendum I suggest you talk to your pals in Alberta, maybe in Manitoba, maybe in the United States, and see if they'd care to withdraw so that our industry can be competitive on a different basis.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tax Increases

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I tabled a document showing that people in Saskatchewan pay more provincial taxes and levies than any other province in Canada but one. Today I table further

information derived from the Provincial Auditor's report that shows just how much the NDP has increased taxes since coming to power.

It shows the total taxes went from just under \$6 billion in 1991 to almost \$7.2 billion in 1994. An increase, Mr. Speaker, of \$1.22 billion in just three years.

My question for the Finance minister: these numbers are from the Provincial Auditor; how can you justify an increase of \$1.22 billion in taxes and levies in just three years when your government is just as big and expensive as ever?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say this with respect to the Leader of the Liberal Party, but this is really a grossly misleading and totally inaccurate statement of the facts.

What the hon. member is talking about is revenues — not the taxation levels — the revenues. Everybody knows we've had increase in land sales, increase in oil activity, all kinds of new revenue which is generated from that. And she extrapolates from that the taxation levels.

I mean this is absolutely a pattern of inconsistency which the Liberals have instituted over the last now several months of being footloose and fancy-free with the facts and the figures, trying to guise it up with the statements of the Provincial Auditor. You know this is absolutely inaccurate. It is misleading. It is confusing. And I don't know whether it's confusing because you're confused, with the greatest of respect, or whether you want to try to confuse the public of Saskatchewan. Please try to deal with the basic facts here.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, let's look at who has been footloose and fancy-free with comments, Mr. Speaker. In 1991, during the NDP campaign, the Premier, who is now sitting in the Premier's chair, said, and I quote:

I say the people of this province are fed up with Devine's taxes and we're going to change that.

The Deputy Premier is on record for promising no tax increases as well, Mr. Speaker.

In 1992, the Deputy Premier stated, and I quote:

The problem is on the expenditure side. We have a structural deficit. Revenues cannot fix this deficit.

Good advice, Mr. Speaker, but advice the government itself did not follow.

My question to the Premier: why would your government promise that the solution lies in reducing expenditures and not raising taxes when you obviously had absolutely no intention whatsoever to keep your promise?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's . . . I wish I could coin a phrase which would describe it. The Minister of Finance was the closest to it yesterday in describing it as flip-flop finance. And I mean that's basically it;

flip-flop finance is describing the very, very misleading approach that the member is taking here.

And I don't know honestly — I say this with respect — whether she's confused or whether she tries to confuse the people. Her basic lead question was: here is your revenue figure, 1.2 billion, from which she then says, that is the taxation level. I've already spoken to that point. If there had not been more people working — there are 7,000 since 1992; 9,000 more, February '95 from February '94 — more people working, more people paying taxes, higher revenues; that's an entirely different circumstance than what you're asking about.

Farm income is up. We've had a very good year in 1994. The Crow rate now of course has thrown a bit of a pall — and that is thanks to you and your party for doing that — over all of rural Saskatchewan. We don't know about the deficit situation federally which has thrown a pall on us as well. But I think Saskatchewan people will pull through.

I don't know what the hon. member is talking about. I think she just simply does not know her facts in this regard and it's very, very troublesome to try to see this portrayal of some sense of direction when clearly the member is lost somewhere in Saskatoon Greystone on financial matters.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government completely contradicts its own logic. First they say expenditures are the problem; then they say they raise taxes; then they say tax and debt reduction are the priorities, but they commit 33 cents of every surplus dollar to more government spending.

The Gaming minister, interestingly enough, says Saskatchewan is not an island, that we have to compete with other provinces and offer what they offer or the people will take their money out of this province and go elsewhere. Somehow the logic they used to justify their gaming policy is not actually ever applied to their taxation policies.

My question to the Premier. Sir, when will you admit that if people might drive across the border to gamble, they might also drive across the border to avoid sales tax, and they might in fact definitely move across our borders to avoid the rest of your government's tax burdens.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks me to admit hypothetically that people might do this and they might do that. They might even ask some very confusing questions in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan as, I say with the greatest respect, you have today.

I want to tell the hon. member, and this is indicated in our financial statements, our expenditures of government to 1999 will — to be absolutely careful about this, I'm going by memory so if I'm a little bit wrong, I hereby forewarn . . . it's 4.3 to 4.4 billion is our expenditure on government, right through to 1999.

Compare that to Manitoba at 4.6. Compare that to Alberta, on a

per capita basis, of over 6 billion. Our expenditures in western Canada are as low — I would argue lower — than any other provincial government.

That's not the problem. The problem is you use the figure of 5.1 billion; 5.1 billion is there, but you know what it is? It's interest at \$850 million on top of that \$4.3 billion operating. I didn't create that. Those Tories created that. I didn't create the deficit in Ottawa; the Liberals created the deficit in Ottawa.

And so long as you have this kind of a profligate spending, then I tell you, you have the mess that the people of Canada have to work their way out of. We have done an admirable job — I don't mean as a government, yes as a government, but I mean as the people of Saskatchewan — in controlling our expenditures.

Please don't play footloose and fancy-free with the facts and the figures. Do not flip-flop financially on your positions. Tell us the absolute truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, the government can't have it both ways. We cannot have lower taxes and more spending. I mean I agree with that. The key to lower taxes is reducing debt — reducing debt and reducing the size of government, which is something they have not done, Mr. Speaker.

Liberals are committed to lower taxes and reducing the debt. But it's the NDP who are truly confused on this. In her recent budget, the Minister of Finance had a chance to put our tax money where her mouth is. And my question to the Premier: you cannot expect people to believe that you are really committed to lowering taxes and paying the debt when you couldn't resist the temptation to spend one third of every surplus dollar on more government instead of further reducing the debt or further reducing taxes.

Will you admit, sir, that your debt reduction scheme misses the point by spending one-third of every single dollar on more government.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this gets curiouser and curiouser. For two and a half years in opposition the Liberal leader was saying the following: lower taxes, increase the expenditures of government by \$300 million. We will be very shortly tabling an official document of the Government of Saskatchewan detailing \$300 million more of government expenditures. In due course that will come out.

Now she's changed her line to saying: no, she didn't mean what she'd been saying for two years — much like on gambling, much like on the statistics on unemployment, much like on anything she's been saying in life. Now she's changed. She's trying to take the position of the Conservative Party, sensing that the Conservative Party presumably is coming up in the popular support or something — at least judging by *The Financial Post* opinion poll of a few days ago which shows her at 30 per cent, shows the government party at 46 per cent, and the PCs (Progressive Conservative) at something like 14 per

cent and increasing.

I don't know what the reason for this is. But do not accuse us of this inconsistency. You're the one who is exhibiting flip-flop finance — flip-flop finance.

This is not a question of adding to government the one-third surplus that she's talking about. These are programs to buttress the reforms of health care renewal, buttress the need for education and job creation. These are programs which have been announced in the partnership paper, in the wellness paper, in the agriculture safety net programs. These are not new programs. They're within a scheme and a plan. I only wish the people of Saskatchewan could hear from you just once a credible plan on anything that would last beyond one week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1415)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Canadian Cancer Society Call Centre

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the opportunity to represent the Government of Saskatchewan as part of a team of volunteers and corporate sponsors announcing another national call centre to be located in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Cancer Society announced and has selected Saskatchewan as the site of its new national call centre because of the strong team work and innovative thinking exhibited by the Saskatchewan bid team.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the government has been working in partnership with Saskatchewan industry to create a climate of investment and growth. Our efforts have met with particular success in the developing of new information processing and telecommunications technologies and eliminating the E&H (education and health) tax on 1-800 numbers which has attracted a variety of companies to set up call centres in the province.

One of the most recent you may recall, Mr. Speaker, was the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Call Centre with the potential of 500 new, full-time job equivalents. With this new call centre, Mr. Speaker, we have \$1.5 million operating budget and the potential of 20 jobs, and this is significant in the addition to our growing Saskatchewan call centre establishment.

Mr. Speaker, it's also the first such project to marry two of Saskatchewan's most prominent strengths — our leadership in health care systems and technologies, and our internationally recognized expertise in information processing and telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan corporate sponsors represent a who's who of leading edge information processing and telecommunications technology. But equally, Mr. Speaker, important in this process is SaskTel, ISM (Information Systems Management Corporation), and Sears Canada, and they

represent a deep commitment to the well-being and betterment of the community and to the society of our province.

Mr. Speaker, Sears Canada, whose major call centre is located here in Regina with a branch in Montreal, has offered to assist with the promotion of the cancer information services and has offered to house the centre within their existing facilities at no cost to the Canadian Cancer Society.

This achievement by the local cancer society volunteers is remarkable in itself and is a reflection of Saskatchewan's approach of cooperation and partnership and innovation, and that is an integral part of the way of life here in our province.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of creative thinking and non-profit corporate and interprovincial partnership we have found has been . . . enabled us to form an accomplishment, and this triumph makes us all proud to call Saskatchewan our home.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Assembly I want to say are proud of the fact and I'm sure all will join with me in thanking and commending everyone involved on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A few comments in reaction to the minister's announcement, I believe that we could call that.

Any time, Mr. Minister, there are jobs being created in Saskatchewan, it's a situation where all of Saskatchewan will benefit, and all of the people in Saskatchewan should feel a little bit better.

However, Mr. Minister, there's always this "however" attached to any announcements that you make. When we consider the fact that we are still in a deficit of 1,000 jobs compared to 1992, you still have a big catch-up factor to try to accomplish here.

Now if we have international or even national companies coming to Saskatchewan, that is good. In most cases, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is in spite of this government, simply because when we had the big fanfare about the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) coming into Regina . . . certainly we welcome that. We welcome that, but we know that the only reason that happened is because the employer, as the CIBC, is under a national charter; it's under national laws; it's under national labour laws.

The kinds of things that this government has done to small business, to part-time workers, does not affect this particular bank and they can come in and be competitive in spite of the expense and the cost that would normally be assumed by the general employer as such, Mr. Speaker.

So when we talk about those kinds of things, again we are pleased to see this announcement but I cannot help thinking, Mr. Speaker, what might have been — what might have been in this province had we not had those folks across the way decimating the business community in this province with the

types of legislation that they have seen fit.

So with those few comments, a plus and a negative — I'm not sure it comes out in the wash — but certainly I'm very, very pleased that there are a few more jobs in Saskatchewan at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan really has been very, very slow off the mark in pursuing call centres for our province. And the Liberal caucus is greatly relieved that Saskatchewan is finally getting into this particular market.

In fact a lengthy article by Randy Burton outlined the deficiencies of this government in attracting this industry to Saskatchewan. We're absolutely delighted with any progress that is going to take place in development in the province, investment in the province, and in particular, jobs for the people in this province.

So if this indeed is going to bring 20 jobs to some individuals of the 40,000 unemployed people or the 86,000 who are on welfare today, we are thrilled that 20 out of those masses of thousands will now have an opportunity for employment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 2:22 p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

- Bill No. 01 - An Act to amend An Act to incorporate the Briercrest Bible College
- Bill No. 02 - An Act to amend An Act respecting Our Lady of the Prairies Foundation
- Bill No. 03 - An Act to provide for the incorporation of The Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- Bill No. 04 - An Act to amend An Act respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, being an Act to amend and consolidate "An Act respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, being an Act to amend and consolidate An Act to incorporate Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Limited" and to enact certain provisions respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

Bill No. 55 - An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 1996

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:25 p.m.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of sadness that I rise today on behalf of the Legislative Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan to note the passing of a very well-known and, I might add, extremely distinguished former member of this Assembly, the Hon. Mr. Justice Clarence Estey.

Mr. Justice Estey's death occurred suddenly on March 5, 1995 at his home in Saskatoon, and he was aged 77. He leaves to mourn his wife of 50 years, Virginia Grace, and their children: Jean, Susan, and Jim. He's also remembered by his brothers, the Hon. W. Z. — otherwise known as Bud — Estey of Toronto, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada; and a very distinguished physician and surgeon, brother Dr. Harold Estey of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to pass this Assembly's most sincere condolences on to Mr. Estey's family and friends, and I'd also like to do so on my own personal behalf and that of my wife Eleanore. We both came to know Clarence Estey and Ginny Estey when I was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1967. In that first election we were selected to opposition, and I was seated somewhere about where the member from Shaunavon is currently seated, and the government of the day in 1967 was that of the late premier, Ross Thatcher.

It was, to put it mildly — I'll say a few words about this — a government which had a lot of interesting facets to it, but one of the very endearing and warm relationships, as far as I'm concerned, that developed was that involving Clarence Estey and his wife — not only with respect to myself and my wife but to almost all of the members of the Legislative Assembly. No matter how the battle in the House got heated up and how excessive our words on occasion might be, Clarence Estey was truly a gentleman and one who was able to rise above the particular partisanship to extend a hand of friendship.

And I think I can say this, even today for new members of the Assembly, when this does happen from time to time, even if you're on the opposite side of the fence, it makes you feel a little proud of being a member of this rare institution. The privilege given to us to serve in this institution makes you feel a little more comfortable at home and it also, I think, is an important dimension in which the debate takes shape, in the way that public policy should generally be debated. I know that Eleanore received much good advice from Mrs. Estey during those periods when we served in opposition.

Now Clarence Estey served in the legislature — and I'll say a word about that again, as I say, in a moment. He was born in Saskatoon in 1917 and was a proud resident of Saskatchewan for his entire life.

The Estey family, Mr. Speaker, as most people will know, is an extremely distinguished Canadian family. In fact when I was invited to join the government of the former premier, Allan Blakeney, back in 1971, June of 1971, the year that we won office, and asked to serve as attorney general, I quite naturally walked into the office quite awestruck by the responsibilities.

And as those who have served in the front benches know, the tradition is to have pictures of former ministers serving in the portfolios in the offices. And there, although I knew it but I didn't quite know it, was the picture of the Hon. James Wilfred Estey who was elected to the Saskatchewan legislature in 1934; was minister of Education in the Gardiner cabinet, Jimmy Gardiner's cabinet; reappointed to the Patterson cabinet; and sworn in as attorney general in June 30, 1939. He resigned as attorney general in 1944, having served in the dual capacity of minister of Education and attorney general.

(1430)

I quite naturally took an interest in this because I had actually known Clarence Estey before 1967 and before I walked into the Legislative Assembly. I can't say I had known him in any very personal way or very deep or intimate way, but certainly I had known him in Saskatoon and circles. He was a lecturer at the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, and at that time, I was a very, very, very, very young student working my way through law school.

And at that time, Clarence Estey, in addition to being a sessional lecturer, was also a person who was involved in serving as an examiner, as I recall, of me and my capacity to serve as a member, a full-fledged member of the Law Society of Saskatchewan. And it was then that the discussion of law was part and parcel of his role, of necessity, but as was obviously his nature, the discussion of political and policy life also took place. I remember that very much as a young student.

And I have to say that, looking back at the period that I just finished describing, 1967 to '71 when I entered the legislature, going all the way before that, Clarence Estey was there encouraging that I should seek elected office, or at least be involved in political life.

I'm not sure he knew which way I was going to head in terms of political party selection. But I know for sure that it didn't matter to him. He might have had a preference, but it didn't matter to him. He felt strongly to his last hours, I'm sure, although I hadn't seen him for some several months before that time, that public service was perhaps the highest calling that one could serve in the democratic institutions of our country and of our province.

And so when I entered the legislative office and the attorney general's office in 1971 as attorney general, there I saw Mr. Estey Sr., and all of a sudden you realize how distinguished this family really is.

Here is Mr. Estey Sr.; Clarence Estey, the person that we're honouring and remembering today, serving in his capacity. I'll say a word about that in a moment. Two brothers, Bud Estey, a retired justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and an outstanding jurist in his own right even today — members will recall his service to the people of Saskatchewan at the time of the NewGrade inquiry a few months ago . . . a few years ago here when we assumed office — and of course Clarence Estey's other brother Harold, a very accomplished physician and surgeon.

These are people who have always contributed willingly, unselfishly, in a very dedicated way, dedicated manner, to improving the quality of life because they were and are proud Saskatchewan people with a proud Saskatchewan heritage.

That was certainly the case with Clarence. Born in 1917, as I say, in Saskatoon, he served his province in a variety of ways. And it began I suppose most traumatically in defence of the nation during the Second World War. And there in active duty he was wounded at Caen in France.

Upon return to Saskatoon after the war years, he served his community not only as a professional person but in a number of areas, including sitting on the Saskatoon School Board, both as the trustee and later as the Chair of the entire board. He was very active in his church, as was his wife, and he supported a variety of provincial sports and cultural activities.

Clarence Estey practised law with distinction. He was an eminent barrister and solicitor of his time, right up until his election to the Assembly in 1967 — the same year that we entered together — and his service in the government of the former, late premier, Ross Thatcher, where he held a number of portfolios . . . Municipal Government was one of the them, as I recollect, and that he also retained with a great deal of distinction.

I wanted to say a little bit about the Thatcher administration of the day, and I say this admiringly. It was a collection of very strong-minded individuals and very capable individuals of accomplishment and good record. They were solid, and they were consistent in their ideology and their approach. And although we had many, many bitter battles . . . and, Mr. Speaker, there were bitter battles in '67 to '71.

The one example that I draw to the attention of the House was the battle on the issue of deterrent fees on health care. The Liberal government of the day introduced deterrent fees; you had to pay \$2.50, as I recall was the figure, for every visit to a doctor and \$2.50 for every day in hospital. Let's forget about the merits or demerits of that issue, simply to say for the purpose of this remembrance, that was a period of high debate; it was a period of high oratory.

There was a sharp cleavage of philosophy and direction toward medicare. And the orators of the day were perhaps unparalleled. I do not say this disparagingly of any of the current orators that we have in the House in this current session of the Assembly, but they were really something.

When Ross Thatcher got up to speak, you didn't know whether to hide under your chair or to leave the Assembly and take leave for a moment, or how to handle it, but you knew you were in for a Royal American barn-burning speech which was not personal, but was a defence of the ideology and the direction of the government of the day.

Darrel Heald was another one. Davey Steuart of course was the debater with wit *par excellence* — no one could match Davey and his wit. If you ever tried — and I did on one or two occasions before I learned very quickly when to fight and when

not fight with Davey Steuart — you always came out second-best.

And there was Clarence Estey in the cabinet. He was not by nature of training, and I suspect by temperament, the kind of a person who would be bombastic, as the late premier, Ross Thatcher, was. I don't say this disparagingly of him. Ross Thatcher was a deep thinker but he had a bombastic nature of oratory; he was not as caustic or as witty as Davey Steuart. He didn't have the sense of real partisan passion that those other members in the front bench communicated.

Not that he believed less in what he fought for — he believed in them just as strongly — but he had a different demeanour. His demeanour was one, I think, occasioned by his professional background. It was an argument based on logic, an argument that felt you could, after the debate was over, test in the corridors without fear that it would end up on some television or radio or newspaper clip.

You could exchange this in a legal context, in a kind of civil, gentlemanly, appropriate context, which would be very, very much the nature of the individual. He was a strong defender of his government, but he was fair. And I have to say this — there are stories legion about the control on the former, late premier, Ross Thatcher. I think a lot of those are exaggerated.

Ross Thatcher, as I say, knew where he was going. A lot of the mythology is that sometimes he was unpredictable. I don't believe that for one moment. But if there was an element of unpredictability, Clarence Estey played a very solid, solidifying role, a sobering voice — a voice of balance which gave the government its direction and its purpose. That is a very strong contribution to any government; it's a strong contribution to the Legislative Assembly; it's a strong contribution to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Well in politics, as we know, we get elected and we get defeated. And in the case of the Thatcher administration and in the case of Clarence Estey, the government was defeated in 1971. As I alluded earlier, the time that I walked into the attorney general's office upon the request from Premier Blakeney, and Clarence Estey, as other very able members of the House, lost his seat at that time.

In 1974, he was appointed a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench where he served ably again to his retirement. I will spare the House my reminiscences when I practised, on occasion, law for a while there and appearing before Clarence Estey. But again he exhibited all of the characteristics that I have attributed to him earlier.

One last comment that needs to be made, and that is the role of his spouse, his devoted spouse, Virginia, who was beside him for 50 years. We say this over and over again, and I don't think we can say it too many times. This is a very tough business on us. And I'm not saying in the context of debate and questions and answers — yes, but it's just a tough business and it's getting tougher with the information flow and the media, all of the problems which attach to public life. And I think it is impossible to succeed, or very difficult to succeed, if one does

not have the understanding of a spouse of the character, of the intelligence, of the principle, of the integrity of Mrs. Estey.

She too was and is strong-willed and strong-minded. This wasn't the question of being simply a back-up voice, although that was the case. This was a partner as I could see it. In any event, I didn't know them in their personal family relationships, but in anything that I observed in the House and in the community of Saskatoon and area, she was a partner. There was an equality there and she had a strength — she has a strength.

I'm sure that we don't pay enough attention and we don't acknowledge enough the role that our partners, that our friends, provide to us in fulfilling our overarching mission of public service to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. I want to pay a special tribute to Mrs. Estey and to the children in the family for putting up with the difficult years that they must have been in public life, but being a partner in support of Clarence Estey's task in building a better province, as indeed he helped to contribute, and the province is better for his contribution to public life.

So, Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly with those few brief words, seconded by my colleague the hon. member from Morse, by leave of the Assembly, I move:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

Clarence Leslie Baldwin Estey, who died in Saskatoon on March 5, 1995, was a member of this Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana Centre from 1967 to 1971. Mr. Estey was born in Saskatoon on June 29, 1917. He received his early schooling in Albert and Victoria schools and at Nutana Collegiate. He continued his studies at the University of Saskatchewan, from where he graduated with Bachelor's of Arts and Law degrees.

On August 17, 1945 he married Virginia Grace Smith. Mr. Estey was a barrister by profession and a noted jurist. His distinguished legal career began with his call to the Bar in 1941 and followed with his appointment first as Queen's Counsel in 1956, and later as a justice of the Court of Queen's Bench in 1974. He served on the bench until his retirement in 1990.

Mr. Estey was proud of his Saskatchewan roots and devoted much time and energy to the service of his community, his province, and his country.

His public service began immediately after his university graduation in 1941, when he enlisted in the 67th Light Anti Aircraft Battery of the Canadian army. He served for three years in Britain before landing in Normandy a couple of weeks after D-Day. He was wounded in France during the Battle of Falaise near Caen and evacuated back to Canada.

At home in his community, Mr. Estey was a member of the Law Society of Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon Kinsmen Club, the Rotary Club, and the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). He served on the Saskatoon Public School Board for several terms and assumed the responsibility of chairman of the board. Mr. Estey was an active member of the Knox United Church. Local artists also benefited from his patronage, as did his favourite sports teams, the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the University of Saskatchewan Huskies.

In 1967, the focus of Mr. Estey's public service shifted following his election to the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Estey held several cabinet portfolios during his term of office, including Municipal Affairs, 1967; Indian and Metis Department, 1969 to 1970; Industry and Commerce and Minister responsible for Saskatchewan Power Corporation, 1970 to 1971.

Although Mr. Estey was unsuccessful in retaining his seat in 1971, he returned to his law practice and continued the pursuit of his many interests.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by my colleague, the member from Morse constituency.

(1445)

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the official opposition to express with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and express our grateful appreciation for the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to this province.

Mr. Clarence Leslie Baldwin Estey passed away on March 5 of this year. He was a member of this Assembly for the Saskatoon constituency of Nutana Centre. And I want to point out to the Assembly here today that he took his early education in Saskatoon and also his university education.

One of the things that I think are of very significance is his appointments, first of all as a Queen's Counsel, and then also as a member of the justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. And he served there for 26 years. And I think that that's credible not only for his ability but for his drive and his energy.

Mr. Estey, when he graduated, became involved with the Canadian army. And I think that many times as I've spoken to members of my family — uncles and cousins of mine who served in the Second World War both for Canada and the United States — I have listened with a degree of respect for the vision they have for democracy. And I think Mr. Estey exemplified that probably as a part of his work and role in the responsibility as a justice of the Queen's Bench.

He not only served but he was wounded in action and brought

back to Canada. I believe that he needs this special recognition for those things that he did. He not only did activities in relation to his role as a lawyer and as a justice, he served in many organizations like the Kinsmen Club, Rotary Club, and the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). I think though that his recognition needs to be acknowledged, dealing with the role of his work on the Saskatoon School Board and also as the chairman of that board.

The opposition would like to extend to the family, condolences. And we would also like to say to the family that a lot of times people who have experienced these kinds of incidents in their families, as I have, my mother told me one day, she said, you know, the pain never goes away; you just get used to it.

And Mrs. Estey will have that same sense of loss. And as she recalls the times and the events of her husband and of her family involving themselves together in community work, as they think about the involvement of the family and their home, they will remember. And today they might cry and tomorrow they may laugh, but they will always remember it with a certain degree of fondness, the value that each of their family members contributed both to Mr. Estey's life and also Mr. Estey to theirs.

And so our official opposition would like to extend our best wishes to Mrs. Estey and her family in view of the fact this is very difficult times. And so we want to . . . I feel privileged, Mr. Speaker, to second this motion by the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I join with other members in this House as we pay tribute to a former member, Mr. Clarence Estey. On behalf of the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan and the members of our caucus, I extend to the family of Clarence Estey our most sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

Clarence Estey's public service began more than 50 years ago when he joined the Canadian army in 1941. His service with the 67th Light Anti Aircraft Battery ended when his knee was injured by friendly fire while he was in a foxhole near Caen.

He served his country, his province, and his community at every level, including a term in this Chamber representing the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana Centre, as well as several terms on the public school board, culminating in 16 years on Saskatchewan's Court of Queen's Bench.

Clarence Estey was a very patriotic man who was dedicated to the Liberal Party. He worked hard in the legislature and in his constituency. He was a patron of the arts and supported Saskatchewan artists throughout his life. He is also known as a great fan and supporter of the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the University of Saskatchewan Huskies. Clarence Estey loved this province and demonstrated his commitment to Saskatchewan through his many years of public service.

His greatest love however was his family. His children and grandchildren were very special to Clarence and his wife of 50 years, Ginny. I want to mention today his children who mourn the loss of their father — daughter Jean and husband Bob

Cameron of Regina; daughter Susan and her husband Bill Leonard of Calgary; and son Jim and his wife Jacquie of Toronto. His passing is also mourned by his brothers: the Hon. Willard — better known as Bud — Estey of Toronto, a former Supreme Court Justice; and Dr. Harold Estey of Saskatoon. His presence in their lives as well will be very sorely missed by his seven grandchildren.

In closing, I want to make reference to the fact, as the Premier had, that Clarence Estey's father also served in this legislature for two terms, beginning in 1934 and again in 1938. Mr. James Estey represented Saskatoon City as well as serving as a minister of the government of the day. As members of this House will know, Mr. James Estey went on to serve on the Supreme Court of Canada. These facts were brought to the attention of this Assembly on February 19, 1968, during the throne speech debate of that newly elected government.

Mr. William Forsyth, the member for Saskatoon Nutana South said, and I quote:

To follow in the footsteps of such an illustrious parent is not easy. But those of us who have lived and worked with Clarence Estey for many years have no hesitation in predicting for him a distinguished career in the service of his fellow citizens.

That prediction, Mr. Speaker, of 27 years ago more than came true through the life and work of Clarence Estey.

On behalf of the party he represented and the people he served, I express my gratitude and appreciation of the life and the legacy of this very distinguished public servant, Mr. Clarence Estey.

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour for me to be able to add a few words to this tribute to the late Clarence Estey. My remarks will deal with the Clarence Estey that I knew as a lawyer practising law, not with him but at the same time, and as a lawyer appearing in his court after his appointment to the bench.

The Leader of the Liberal Party used the term "distinguished," as did the Premier and the member from Morse, and this is the word that captures Clarence Estey better than any other single word that I could think of, Mr. Speaker — a distinguished gentleman from a very distinguished family.

He distinguished himself in a number of careers. He distinguished himself probably first of all as a member of the armed forces fighting overseas in Europe. He distinguished himself in the practice of law in Saskatoon where he was a partner at an early age in what was at the time Saskatoon's most distinguished law firm.

He then went on to a political career which the Premier has described in this House, in which he served again with distinction in this legislature and in the cabinet of the late Premier Thatcher and was known to be at the time a solid and stabilizing force within that cabinet.

And then, Mr. Speaker, following his defeat at the polls in 1971, he went back to private practice for a short time and then was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench. He served there as a judge, as a trial judge, for 18 years, in effect a whole additional career in which he again distinguished himself as a solid jurist, as a solid legal thinker, and as a very diplomatic and accomplished judge.

I had the privilege of appearing before him both in trials and in chambers and he was, in the finest traditions of the bench, courteous, attentive, and handled the cases with a great deal of legal acumen, producing judgements that while you didn't always win, Mr. Speaker, you didn't feel badly about losing because you knew you'd been heard and heard fully and your arguments were carefully considered.

So I had the honour, Mr. Speaker, of attending the funeral of Mr. Justice Estey in the company of Mrs. Romanow. And it was a mark of his respect held by the Bar and by fellow judges that, I think, the entire Bar of Saskatoon showed up for the funeral as did almost the entire, I think, the entire cadre of judges from the Court of Queen's Bench. It was quite a sight to behold, and it was a mark of the respect and the affection in which Justice Estey was held by his colleagues and by members of the Bar.

I would extend to Mrs. Estey and the family my deepest sympathy and my respect for the late Clarence Estey.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to take a long time in the Assembly, but I certainly want to add my words to what's already been said.

If there were a single word which would characterize the career of Clarence Estey, it would be service. I think if there were a single word which would characterize his personality, it would be gentleman. Indeed, his career in public service began relatively early. In 1941 he went overseas; was, as would happen sometimes in any battle, was hit not by enemy fire but by what is called friendly fire — misplaced fire by his own forces.

That happened to others; in some people it produced bitterness — with Clarence Estey it just seemed to renew his determination to dedicate his life to public service. And so he did.

He practised, as has been said, with the firm of Moxon and Schmidt, was in any number of organizations in Saskatoon and that led, as it often does, to a career in politics. Was elected in '67 — his stature, his ability, was such that he served in cabinet during the entire period of time in which he was an elected member.

My memory of . . . I came to the Assembly as he left. But it was to some extent the same era. It was an era, as Mr. Speaker will recall, before television, when the atmosphere in here was quite different. People called each other . . . we referred to each other as gentlemen, not only because there were very few of the distaff side in the House but also because people were gentlemen. They treated each other with civility and respect.

In such a group of people, Clarence Estey stood out as a particular gentleman. And with the coming of television and the changing of times, we no longer use the term gentlemen when referring to each other. Not only because there are, happily, more members of the distaff side, but also because we no longer treat each other with the kind of civility and respect which was a part of that era.

If Clarence Estey had remained in this Assembly, he would have, I'm sure, regretted the changing in demeanour and the changing in attitude which has taken place. Having left the Assembly in '71 when a new group of MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), which included the current member from Riversdale and the current Speaker I might add, swept the city of Saskatoon, he then went on to a career as a jurist in 1974.

(1500)

I associate myself with the comments made by the member from Saskatoon Fairview. He was a gentleman. I appeared on occasion before him. There are some judges which one appears before with some trepidation. Mr. Estey was not one of those. He treated counsel with respect; never any sort of servitude but with respect, and the respect was returned.

He was a person . . . I would describe him as being compassionate but also having considerable clarity of thought and clarity of expression. And one was never left wondering, after you'd read the judgement, why he decided what he did. It always made sense.

He was a person who loved Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan returned that love. He will no doubt, Mr. Speaker, be missed by his family and his friends. It must be some comfort, however, to his family and to friends to know that Saskatchewan is a better place because he was here and that all of us owe a debt to Clarence Estey.

Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have this opportunity to add a few words, comments, on the passing of Mr. Clarence Estey. When I was a young court reporter, in fact when I was certified first as being qualified to work in the Court of Queen's Bench, it was the then Hon. Clarence Estey who signed my certificate of certification which I still have.

I just wanted to say that as distinguished as he was and respected for all the good reasons that have been stated here today, he certainly was a man who never lost his common touch.

And so on behalf of all of the people who served him in the court system, all of the people that worked for him, who appreciated his wisdom and the respect with which he treated them, I want to add my condolences to the family, and it may bear some comfort for them to know as well that Mr. Clarence Estey will live on in the hearts and minds of all of those who served him. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Morse, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with the transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

The form of the motion is not quite as clean as it normally is but the intent is, I think, quite clear. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORT

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to table the report from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And also . . .

An Hon. Member: — Who's in conflict?

The Speaker: — You must read the report.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on Bill No. 50

The Speaker: — Also, before orders of the day, I would like to make a Speaker's ruling. Standing on the order paper for second reading, under the name of the member for Souris-Cannington, is Bill No. 50 — An Act to amend The Expropriation Act and The Expropriation Procedure Act (Land and Chattels). The Bill was introduced on March 16, 1995.

It is the Speaker's duty to review all Bills in respect to rule 33 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*. The rule states, in part, that any Bill which proposes:

. . . to impose any new additional charge upon the public revenue . . . (must be first) recommended by the Lieutenant Governor before it is considered by the Assembly.

I also refer members to Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, Twenty-first Edition, where it is stated generally that a Bill which contains provisions extending the purposes of expenditure already authorized by statute might require the royal recommendation.

More specifically, on page 715, May indicates that a Bill which provides the extension of cases in which compensation can be paid requires the recommendation.

In these respects, Bill No. 50 was compared to the Act it seeks to amend, namely The Expropriation Act. I find that the member's Bill proposes to extend the application of The Expropriation Act to chattels, including firearms, and in consequence would cause the Crown to provide compensation in the event firearms are expropriated. Therefore I find that Bill

No. 50 requires a recommendation from the Lieutenant Governor.

In applying rule 33, it is the practice of this Assembly to observe the parliamentary principle of the Crown initiative in financial matters. A ruling of the Speaker on March 30, 1965 confirmed this practice when it was stated that, and I quote:

Nothing is more firmly established or clear than that the right to initiate legislation involving the collection and/or the expenditure of public money rests solely with the government.

Because Bill No. 50 requires a recommendation, and because the member for Souris-Cannington is not a member of the Executive Council, I must rule that the said Bill is out of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Repeal of MLA Pension Plan

Mr. Martens: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, at the conclusion of my remarks, will move a motion:

That this Assembly urge the provincial government to repeal the overly generous pension plan for members of the Legislative Assembly elected previous to April 1979, which is an unfunded pension liability which burdens future generations, and instead urge the government to replace it with a new defined contribution plan to relieve Saskatchewan's overtaxed citizens.

Mr. Speaker, for years we have heard members of the NDP government state, we're all in this together. While they were raising taxes, hiking utility rates, Mr. Speaker, they said, we are all in this together. Closing down rural hospitals, we're all in this together; do it for the province of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, while the average Saskatchewan family is paying \$4,800 more per year in taxes, premiums, and utility fees since the NDP formed government in 1991, the Premier and a few of his colleagues haven't shared that burden, Mr. Speaker. I'm referring to the old defined benefits plan for the members' pension of which the member for Riversdale is a part.

Mr. Speaker, how does this plan work? For every 9 per cent MLAs contribute to their retirement, taxpayers contribute 24.5 per cent to fulfil the defined benefit. Mr. Speaker, the people of the province of Saskatchewan contribute 9 per cent for every member in the money purchase plan, but in the defined benefit plan, the taxpayer contributes 24.5 per cent.

Every elected member here today should be asking ourselves, is this fair? Of course it isn't fair. After all, why should politicians be receiving a much richer pension plan than any other government employee? They shouldn't, and I think that if each of the seven members that are members of the old plan were asked today if they believe it is fair that taxpayers fork out over

24 per cent to the members' 9 per cent contribution, these MLAs would hard-pressed to come up with a defence.

Mr. Speaker, why should a select few politicians be reaping the benefits of an unfunded plan, and one that is far too generous? They shouldn't, Mr. Speaker, and that's why the plan was changed in 1979 putting pensions of MLAs in line with other government employees, where a 9 per cent salary contribution is evenly matched.

The new defined contribution plan pays its own way, with no unfunded liability. The old plan simply doesn't; in fact it's not even close, Mr. Speaker. As one article from the *Leader-Post* reads: where some NDP politicians draw the line when it comes to breaking the unconscionable contracts seems to be some place in their own backyards. That's where a few of them have buried their treasure troves, most commonly referred to as their MLA pensions.

How much this old plan is costing taxpayers remains an issue. As Provincial Auditor Wayne Strelieff notes in his recent annual report: for every 9 per cent MLAs under the old pension plan, the old pension formula, contribute to their retirement, we taxpayers contribute 24.5 per cent to fulfil the defined benefit.

The auditor also notes: the total unfunded pension liability throughout the government is now in the neighbourhood of \$3 billion — Mr. Speaker, a problem the auditor considers a very serious one. This may lead one to conclude the next unconscionable and unaffordable contract in need of breaking are those involving unfunded pensions, perhaps beginning with the MLAs' own.

After all, last year they had few qualms about breaking their law that gave judges a 20 per cent raise because it was an unconscionable amount that would have had to be paid out by the taxpayers, an unaffordable 800,000 more annually to the judges. Unconscionable and unaffordable, however, are words you don't often hear uttered by MLAs when it comes to their old pension formula. You don't hear that very often, Mr. Speaker.

The editorialist ends the column by adding: evidently though this is one place where a contract is a contract. Mr. Speaker, this government has made null and void many contracts for the people of Saskatchewan, but this one they very likely will not.

(1515)

I say this is a good point, Mr. Speaker. The problem is that there are seven MLAs who were elected before April 1, 1979, who stand to collect large sums of money under the old plan. Specifically, the Premier under the old plan will collect \$1.8 million; Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier, \$1.7 million; the Justice minister, \$1.7 million; the minister responsible for Economic Development, \$1.4 million; Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Nutana, \$1 million; Associate Economic Development Minister, \$.9 million; former member for Quill Lakes, Mr. Speaker, \$.7 million.

Mr. Speaker, to put the old pension plan in perspective, if the

Premier retires this year and receives no increases whatsoever in his pension plan, he will collect close to \$80,000 per year. As well, if the aforementioned MLAs are around for their golden years, till age 80, taxpayers will have shelled out, Mr. Speaker, \$9.8 million, which is likely twice what a defined contribution plan would have cost taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, this inequity must be addressed. It is only fair that the Premier lead by example and repeal his own and his colleagues' pension and adjust them to the new plan. Anything less is completely unacceptable. We have requested just that, Mr. Speaker, and so far the members opposite remain mum on the issue even though they know that the old pension plan is wrong. It's unfair.

We heard today in question period, Mr. Speaker, that the member, the Deputy Premier, spoke today that he would not ever change it, because he is a primary beneficiary of that plan.

Mr. Speaker, knowing what's right doesn't mean much unless you do what's right. Understanding what's right and knowing what's right and not doing anything about it is wrong, Mr. Speaker. The right thing to do is obvious to everyone here today.

It seems that when the Premier said we're all in this together while asking taxpayers to tighten the belts, he meant everyone but himself and a selected few of his cabinet.

In light of this over-generous, unaffordable, and unconscionable old MLA pension plan, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House believe that it's time to review these pension plans and do something about it. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why we have brought to the attention of the public of Saskatchewan some of the things that we've talked about here today.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly strongly urges the provincial government to repeal the overly generous pension plan for members of the Legislative Assembly elected previous to April 1979, which is an unfunded pension liability which burdens future generations, and instead urge the government to replace it with the new defined contribution plan to relieve Saskatchewan's overtaxed citizenry.

I move, seconded by the member from Wilkie.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before you call the question, it is my privilege to speak in favour of this motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I went to look for some words to prepare this, I was hoping to quote a few choice lines from the previous debate back in 1979. And guess what? There wasn't any. The Hon. Premier, who was then the attorney general, simply rose to move second reading, made a few brief remarks, and the Bill was passed, second reading, with absolutely no debate.

This speaks volumes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only about the relative fairness of the current pension system, but also about the odiousness of the pre-1979 pension. Apparently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members of the day were so embarrassed by the generosity of the previous pension scheme that no one wanted to rise and oppose it.

And this again brings up a point we have made since this came to the recent attention of the House. If the current plan is so good and the previous plan is so bad, then why do we not make it consistent for everyone?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is another thing that I get out of the two scant pages of *Hansard* that cover the 1979 Bill. No one who was sitting in the House at that time had to worry about the consequences of the Bill that they were passing. None of the members of the House at that time would have to make any sacrifice, so it was very easy for them to say, go ahead and pass this Bill; it will make us look good and it's the next guys who will be affected by it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it was improper for members at that time to take that attitude and is an injustice that we should correct today. It is an injustice that we should correct today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is underscored by the remarks the Premier made back then. He didn't much talk about how the new pension was less exorbitant. It was fairer to taxpayers. Instead he spends several paragraphs of his short speech talking about how the new plan was actually more favourable to MLAs — how the pension formulas for previously elected members and former members would continue, how the years of service had been reduced, how the rules for payments to surviving family members had been loosened. He spends an entire paragraph talking about how MLAs need special consideration for their pension plans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he also mentions the cost elements of the new plan only in passing. It doesn't seem to even enter his mind that the MLA pension plan was being amended for the benefit of the taxpayer and not for the benefit of the MLA.

This attitude seems to have persisted to the current government. This shouldn't surprise us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, considering how many legislative dinosaurs from the '70s the government still has in its ranks over there. Whenever we have raised this issue in the House, the government gets up and automatically resorts to the legal, technical arguments about the rights of the pre-1979 MLAs under this Bill.

They praise the current pension plan but they refuse to discuss why it should not be extended to all legislative pensioners or potential pensioners. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't think that's good enough.

We have a population that's on the verge of a tax revolt, largely due to the efforts of the members opposite to squeeze every last penny out of the taxpayers of this province. They see their roads deteriorating, their hospitals closing, and many other services cut. And in the meantime, government spending on 18 out of 23 departments continue to raise. The people start to ask

themselves, I'm getting bled dry and the government isn't making any sacrifices. The politicians and the bureaucrats at Regina are still getting fat at my expense.

This sort of situation is creating crisis in the public confidence of our institutions, and this is obviously unhealthy for any society. On top of all this, the people have to live with the knowledge that the people who are taxing them to death and spending their money wildly, have made good and sure that their nests are properly feathered.

No matter how thoroughly the government destroys the economy of this province with its high tax policies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier will have no worries with his \$1.8 million pension benefits waiting in the wings.

It's also a sore spot for the taxpayer to see who else in this House is entitled to these gold-plated pensions. The Deputy Premier, the Economic Development minister, the associate Economic Development minister, and the Justice minister. To the average taxpayer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this looks all too much as if the closest to the centre of decision making in this province are awarding themselves special privileges. Also the former member from Quill Lakes is eligible for this pension. And with respect, I must point out that the public does not like how that looks, given the circumstances under which the member came to retire.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given that many of those who are eligible for this pension are of the inner circle of this government, we must hold them to the highest standard. It's disappointing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Premier, for example, would not voluntarily forgo this exorbitant pension. And it's puzzling that the Deputy Premier, a former Finance minister, would not see at least the fiscal advantage to the province of forgoing this pension.

The pension that I will receive under the new pension plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is quite adequate. I don't think that there's any reason why we have to have a gold-plated pension scheme like the old . . . before the 1979 pension plan.

And I should say to you, sir, that it is uncharacteristic that the Economic Development minister would not see the political advantage in making this kind of a dramatic public sacrifice even though in his case he might actually need his pension for his household bills. Surely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these and other members who have been in the public service this long should feel some motivation to do the right thing, to do what the taxpayers and their constituents expect of them and withdraw these pensions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder indeed how the members who are eligible for this pension face their constituents on this matter. What do they say on coffee row and in their reports from the legislature? Do the people say, oh, sure, I'm getting a million dollar pension, and if it was up to me, I wouldn't get it. But to be fair to the other guys who are collecting it, I guess I just have to take it. I don't think they would get a very good reaction if those were the kind of words used, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I want you to keep in mind that we are not talking about cutting off those who are already getting their MLA pension; they would just get the same pension that most of the members sitting today would get, and that pension is far from being stingy. We contribute 9 per cent of our salary to that pension. We pay our way. It's not underfunded, and it's quite generous.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I began my remarks by saying that I wanted to quote from the 1979 debate, and I will. The Premier, who was then the attorney general, said at that time:

Election to the Legislative Assembly creates special pension problems for many people. As we all know, the average term of a member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly is very short. In many instances, a member's term of service comes at his or her peak earning years in other job, profession, or business enterprise. This means that the person can lose the advantage of pension contributions in these areas.

Well I would challenge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all the other members of this Assembly, to find a former MLA who is doing as poorly financially as the Premier suggested at that time.

I would suggest that most of the members of this House, past and present, leave their service here and go back to private life as successfully as they originally left it. Most are quite capable of looking after their own retirement and their own interests.

Consequently many end up having two or more incomes or pensions. Even for those who do not . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. The member's time has elapsed.

(1530)

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to enter into this debate which seems to me, as I reflect on the wording of the motion and the comments of the members who have spoken, to be motivated either by political cynicism or maybe perhaps more sinister motives than that.

I listened very carefully to numbers that are very selectively used. And I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also do give notice that I will be listening very, very carefully to what the Liberals will have to say on this motion.

We have to put this debate about pensions for MLAs into a broader context. And it will be true that through the 1950s and '60s and '70s, the normal format for pensions in those days was to be described as defined benefit. And it was also seen in those days to be reward for long service. That was the original thinking on pensions.

But in the '70s, as the world of work began to change, also the notion of pensions began to change, and rather than be seen as reward for long service, it began to be seen as deferred income.

So there was income that someone may be receiving currently, and then some is set aside for retirement years.

That became what is described, Mr. Speaker, now as the defined contribution. So rather than knowing what the payment out was going to be, the thing that was set was the payment in.

In April 1979, changes were made here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a result of this review. Changes were made at the same time to the pensions for MLAs as well as the pensions for public service employees in the province of Saskatchewan. At that time, people were given the option, MLAs and public service employees, and in fact some chose to opt into the new pension plan, the post-1979 plan, because they saw it as better for them.

Teachers came into this formula . . . into the new plan, the defined contribution, and passed out of the formula plan in July 1, 1980. This addressed two concerns, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One is from the point of view of the province of Saskatchewan. What had previously been an unfunded liability, that was a debt owing to be paid out when people became pensionable age, changed then to a funded pool.

So what would happen is that people would have deductions taken from their pay cheques that would be matched by the provincial government, put into investment pool, and made available at pension age for those when they came of that age. Clearly, clearly, clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was adopted that the thinking was this is deferred income.

Now I note with interest that *The Taxpayer*, the publication of The (Saskatchewan) Taxpayer, in the winter of 1992 edition in an article entitled: Other MLA pension plans should follow Saskatchewan's example, said, and I quote:

To date Saskatchewan MLAs are the only legislators, federally or provincially, to have such a plan. As a result the other legislatures are seeing huge deficits beginning to develop in their MLA/MP pension plan.

And when I look at what has just recently developed in Ottawa as put forth by the federal Liberal government — not yet finalized, but currently being drafted — it looks interestingly enough to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as though the new, improved federal Liberal MP (Member of Parliament) pension plan is at least as rich as the former formula plan here in Saskatchewan, the one that was done away with by the NDP government back in 1979.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to ask: is there anybody who actually believes that this is something other than the tip of the iceberg? They have come forward here today with a motion to change the structure that affects 104 former MLAs and their widows, along with seven or eight current MLAs.

Does anybody believe that they are proposing to change the one that affects 104 former MLAs and their widows, and not at the same time intending to come forward sometime later with the same changes to the same kinds of structures that are used for pensions for 3,300 former public service employees and their

widows and widowers, and some 5,500 superannuated teachers and their widows and widowers?

Does anybody believe that this is only motivated to change the pensions of those MLAs and their widowers who were in the plan prior to 1979 and not the others? Get real, I think is the advice that . . . for anyone . . . should be asking these folks to do.

Now as I said at the beginning of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this seems to be either motivated by political cynicism or perhaps there are more sinister motives. And I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think it is both. And others can judge for themselves what their own conclusions are.

But let me conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying that pensions clearly today are deferred income, and employment commitments to deferred income must be honoured so that people who are told, this is your income, this is what you receive today and this is what's being set aside for you and being matched from your own deductions for your pension years, so that those people are able to plan for their pension years and their retirement years.

But clearly it's easiest to manage the provincial financial obligation when the contribution is defined and then made — as has been the case in Saskatchewan since 1979. And the principles that are applied, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think must be equally true whether we're talking about MLAs, public service employees, or teachers — or teachers — all in the same category, Mr. Speaker, because they are all structured in exactly the same way and changed at the same time.

And therefore, I move an amendment to this motion, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld, to amend the motion to read:

Strike all the words after "this Assembly" and replace them with these words:

And that it'll read:

This Assembly reaffirm the province's commitment to honour its pension obligations to all those who contributed in good faith to the formula-based pension plan, including 104 former members of the Assembly or their surviving spouses, 3,300 former public service employees or their surviving spouses, and 5,500 superannuated teachers or their surviving spouses, who served the people of Saskatchewan in their professional careers; and further reaffirm the province's commitment to continue the defined contribution pension plan in place since April 1979.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld.

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't intend to speak for very long. The member for Moose Jaw has made an amendment which I support, of course.

This problem was largely dealt with in 1979 when the pension plan was amended by the then government of Allan Blakeney in a way that is satisfactory actually to the taxpayers' association, who hold up our pension plan as a model for the rest of Canada.

But what I want to say is that I find it a little bit tough to take, listening to the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party getting up and crying crocodile tears on behalf of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, when in reality the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kindersley, has publicly stated that the worst thing that would happen if these pensions that they complain about were paid out would be a total liability of \$9 million by the time the present Premier reached the age of 80.

And I'd like to put that in perspective, because we're paying \$850 million a year in interest payments on the debt created by the Conservative Party in this province. And I'm not saying that \$9 million isn't a lot of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But what I'm saying is that every day of every year we spend \$2 million-plus paying interest on the public debt created by those members opposite.

And when those members opposite get up and try to pretend that the biggest issue in the world is a pension plan for 104 people, some of whom served in the '60s and '70s and have small pensions or their spouses do, they're just trying to deflect attention away from themselves.

As for the Liberal Party, which we're about to hear from, I'm sure, if the Liberal Party had any sincerity at all and any concern for the taxpayers, the Liberal Party would do something about the MP pension plan. They would look to Saskatchewan and try to amend the MP pension plan to be more in accordance with our pension plan. The Liberal Party would do something about the Senate which it's been stacking for the last 125 years with its cronies and hacks.

And if the Leader of the Liberal Party, who professes to be concerned about the taxpayers of Saskatchewan and pretends that she has the common touch, Mr. Speaker, was the least bit concerned about taxpayers and had a common touch, then she wouldn't ride around in a chauffeur-driven limousine owned by one of the Saskatchewan senators. That's what she wouldn't do, Mr. Speaker. But now I'll let her get up and talk about her concern for the taxpayers. Never mind the fact that when she accepted the member from Shaunavon into her caucus, who was not elected as a Liberal, I think her own budget went up quite considerably. And that was okay. But we're going to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party talk about her concern for the taxpayers.

This plan of course has been in existence throughout the Tory years and the Liberal years in Saskatchewan. And I would suggest to the members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if they would have got serious about these issues a long time ago, as Allan Blakeney was when he was in office, we wouldn't have many of the problems we have that have been created by the Conservatives and the Liberals.

With that, I'll sit down. I certainly intend to be voting in favour of the amendment, and thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate being acknowledged. This government talks a lot about fairness, but talk is cheap. And the fact is that there are some career politicians in this very Assembly, and yes, including some career politicians in the House of Commons, who have to bear a great deal of the responsibility for the cynicism the public feels toward elected representatives.

Those of us who are fairly new to this Assembly and new to political life must consistently struggle with the double standard that has been created by some of the very people who sit in this House and talk about fairness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's been a great deal of hypocrisy exposed about the NDP since they were elected. And nowhere is it more evident than when it comes to the rich pension schemes of the career politicians opposite, the ones who, Mr. Deputy Speaker, made the rules, the ones who stand to benefit from the rules, and the ones who steadfastly refuse to change the rules for themselves.

How many times has the Premier risen in his place and talked about how his government will do whatever has to be done in the name of the Saskatchewan people to erase the wrongdoings of the past, where he and his colleagues have believed that contracts were not in the public interest. They went in and they hammered out a "new deal" for the people of Saskatchewan. Wasn't that their slogan at one time, a new deal for people?

Yes, sir, Mr. Speaker, they tore up the contract with NewGrade, tore up the contracts with civil servants, tore up the contracts with farmers, and they were indignant, indignant at the idea of paying judges the raise in salaries that their own binding commission recommended, so they tore up that contract as well.

The fact of the matter is that this government acted as if there were no sacred cows when it came to doing what was right by the people of Saskatchewan, they said.

I was personally very disappointed at their application of justice and fairness because I thought they completely abandoned some very important, underlying principles of democracy and justice. But they are going to have to answer for that to the voters of this province.

Things got really interesting, Mr. Speaker, when they finally ran out of contracts to nullify, and their own pensions were staring them straight, square in the face. But they wouldn't go so far as to bite the hand with which they feed themselves, Mr. Speaker. No, sir, they draw the line when it comes to applying fairness and justice to themselves — no leading by example for the political icons opposite. No, what they do is bring out this amendment, talk about everyone else, but don't stand in front of the mirror and decide that they are going to do the things that are within their power to do with themselves, leading by example.

Mr. Speaker, explanations and justifications about fairness in

honouring past agreements just don't hold up in the face of this government's endless rhetoric and dismal record on those issues.

The facts are that there are eight sitting MLAs, most of whom hold or held cabinet positions, who were elected before 1979. All of these people put in 9 per cent of their salary over the past years, and the taxpayers have sweetened the pot by 24.5 per cent on top of those contributions.

(1545)

Now the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld started to talk about what the taxpayers' association was saying. It's very, very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to actually recognize in print something entitled: taxpayer funded pension plan. And it talks about how do these two differ — a picture of the Alberta Premier Ralph Klein and a picture of the Saskatchewan Premier.

And it talks about the fact that the Premier in Alberta led by example, stating he completely scrapped his own pension plan. Meanwhile the Premier of Saskatchewan keeps his massive taxpayer-subsidized pension intact. And the question is: does the Premier of Saskatchewan feel it's fair that a privileged group of MLAs should receive excessive pension pay-outs while the other MLAs don't?

This is a most interesting situation, given the comments from one of the members opposite.

The taxpayers did not volunteer to do this, Mr. Speaker. It was a behind-closed-door decision, one of the many made back then which created the perception . . . and not the perception, the actual reality that these politicians, these eight members opposite, supported the view that they deserved special treatment.

The fact is that the MLAs elected before 1979 have a pension plan which is way out of line with what anyone in the province would expect to receive today — or in 1979. An even sadder fact is that these MLAs who occupy the front benches of the highest elected office in this province, the Premier and his cabinet, cannot summon the decency and the sense of fair play to put their own personal well-being on a level playing-field with the rest of the people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more which needs to be said on this issue. The ball is clearly in the court of the Premier and his colleagues who stand to collect. If they wanted to play fair ball, they would have taken the initiative to rewrite the rule book on their own pensions. We're not talking about the pensions of others, we're talking about them leading by example. Deal with themselves. That's what we're saying — deal with oneself and lead by example.

By choosing not to do so they are thumbing their noses at the people of Saskatchewan. And I remind the member from Riversdale, the Premier, I remind the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Economic Development, the Minister of Justice, the Associate Minister of Economic Development — two others as well, I might add, Mr. Speaker — that while the people of

Saskatchewan labour under excessive tax burdens to do their part for the province, they resent double standards. They resent the double standard that makes them do with less so that all of them can have more.

And the saddest tale of all is that this list of MLAs who receive these jackpot pensions do not end with the members I just listed. There are two more, and let's talk about them, Mr. Speaker — the former member from Quill Lakes and the independent member from Arm River.

Not only will the taxpayers be forking out more in taxpayer-financed contributions to them than any pension plan would pay any regular citizen, these are members who chose to repay the generosity of the public by committing acts of fraud against the public purse.

If there were ever a time when it was important to do the right thing, to do the right thing by the people of Saskatchewan, a thing that this government has so often purported they want to do, that time is now.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I support the original motion before the Assembly today which urges the provincial government to repeal the pension plan of the members of the Assembly elected previous to April, 1979, which is an unfunded pension liability which burdens future generations, and instead urge the government to replace it with a new defined contribution plan to relieve Saskatchewan's overtaxed citizenry.

I support the original motion fully, without any amendments, and in doing so, I urge all members of the Assembly to commit their support to the legislation which will be introduced by our caucus this week to bring this motion to a legislated reality. Thank you.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the motion not only on my own behalf as an MLA, but on the behalf of my constituents.

One constituent summarized for me what the working people of Saskatchewan are saying. She says, and I quote:

I find these pension plans appalling. It's true. My husband and I both work, we have four children in university, and are unable to put anything toward an RRSP.

Mr. Speaker, I ran for MLA because I felt it was my duty to serve the people of Regina North West, not to be served by them. I didn't run to line my pockets. In fact I refuse to accept per diems because of my constituents' concerns.

Less than 50 per cent of the labour force, Mr. Speaker, is able to pay into pension plans. Less than 17 per cent of Canadians are able to contribute to RRSPs (registered retirement savings plan). In that context, Mr. Speaker, and in the hard economic times we've been living through, I am also appalled by the richness of the pre-1979 MLA pension plan.

Saskatchewan has two MLA pensions. It has the old one, which is a defined benefit plan; and the new one, which is a defined

contribution plan. The old MLA pension plan currently has only eight contributors and 108 people actively drawing from it. It is currently \$24 million in the red. Each year it receives just short of \$50,000 in contributions from the old MLAs.

The old MLA pension is a defined benefit. A defined benefit will ensure that regardless of what MLAs contribute they receive a certain benefit. On the other hand, a defined contribution plan does not ensure that one would make a certain pay-out but only make certain that contributions are standard. The defined contribution plan involves the MLA paying out a certain amount of their salary, the government matches the contribution, and the benefit is paid out.

Mr. Speaker, being an MLA is not a salaried position. What we receive in pay is an indemnity. Because we receive an indemnity rather than a salary we are being compensated for the time we take away from our regular job and our regular life.

In that context, Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest that we should consider eliminating MLA pensions. Certainly the indemnity should reflect the worth of the time MLAs contribute to serving the people of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, we as MLAs serve many constituents who are unable to contribute to either a pension plan or an RRSP. Even though they cannot contribute for their own retirement, they are forced to contribute to MLAs' pensions. This seems to me to be a basic injustice to a significant portion of our constituents.

That injustice, Mr. Speaker, is exacerbated by the richness of the pre-1979 pension plan. In that plan, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers pay four times more into the plan than does the old MLA. And the other fact is that the old plan is \$24 million in the red. Mr. Speaker, I believe people who have been unable to put money away for their own retirement — and that's a majority of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker — should not be forced to pay for pensions for MLAs.

As I stated earlier, politicians must serve their constituents. I didn't get into politics to line my pockets and I don't think politicians should line their pockets getting out of politics.

In conclusion, I support the original motion.

Amendment agreed to.

The division bells rang from 3:57 p.m. until 4:02 p.m.

Motion as amended agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Van Mulligen	Tchorzewski	Lingenfelter
Anguish	Atkinson	Johnson
Goulet	Lautermilch	Calvert
Cunningham	Carson	Penner
Upshall	Hagel	Bradley
Koenker	Lorje	Teichrob
Cline	Crofford	Renaud

Murray	Serby	Whitmore	
Sonntag	Roy	Langford	
Scott	Kujawa	Stanger	
Harper	Haverstock	McPherson	

— 33

Nays

Swenson	Neudorf	Martens	
D'Autremont	Toth	Britton	

— 6

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 3 — Rural Health Coalition Agreement

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to speak today on this motion. In fact when one looks at what this government has done over the few years that they've been in power, Mr. Speaker, it became obvious that probably the biggest disappointment that the people in Saskatchewan — and especially rural Saskatchewan — have had with this particular government is in the area of health care, Mr. Speaker.

And of course the New Democrats, when we take a look at what they've promised before being elected in 1991 — in the fall of 1991 — they had promised to be a compassionate government, to provide compassionate care and treatment for the people of Saskatchewan and especially the seniors. They promised such things as to restore the dental program which the Conservative government before them had dismantled, and on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

But what they did was something quite different. In fact the present administration was the . . . they were the ones to finish the sale of the dental equipment, Mr. Speaker. And we found that out in estimates the other night when Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation was before us.

And in fact they did away with the prescription drug plan — any form of a plan — and what we now have today is a prescription drug plan which is \$850 every six months, \$1,700 a year, Mr. Speaker. That's no drug plan. People of the province are saying, well that's unaffordable. We have people in this province that are going without medication because of what that government did, Mr. Speaker.

Other things that . . . what they did which were quite contrary to what they campaigned on — dissolved boards, Mr. Speaker, health boards which oversaw the services and the delivery of those services. And it was the . . . boards were made up of essentially volunteers from rural Saskatchewan. Volunteers which over the years built up this province to be as great as what it was, providing the services that they found that the people in their communities and area were in need of getting.

And, Mr. Speaker, they replaced those volunteers, those people in rural Saskatchewan that put their life and dreams into making Saskatchewan a better place. And they replace them with, of course, very expensive, heavily administered health district boards.

They also changed the taxation structure which provided a good portion of the funding for those rural hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and they changed it from the union hospital districts Act to the new Hospital Revenue Act. And they did this so that in fact when they were going to deliver the crushing blow that they did to rural Saskatchewan, they wanted to ensure that when they hit, and hit hard, that these communities wouldn't have the ability to stand up and fight back, Mr. Speaker. And they had to ensure that they couldn't access funds to defend rural Saskatchewan. That government didn't campaign on that either.

They in fact gave notice at that same time that they would no longer be willing to fund or support the pioneers in our province, the people that built up this province over the years. And in fact and in their golden years when they themselves are needing some support, Mr. Speaker, that they themselves need the support, the government chose that they wouldn't be there and they gave warning that they would be pulling away.

And finally I think the most disappointing thing in the eyes of the people of Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan, is the fact the government unilaterally closed the doors of some 52 rural hospitals, with no regard given to geography, their needs, the age of the population, demographics — no regards to the people out there in the rural areas that through their hard work had provided the services and the volunteer efforts to run those services in the way they saw fit, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government proceeded without a plan. And, Mr. Speaker, that did not go unnoticed by the people of the province — not at all. In fact what happened was that we had rallies all throughout the province, we had rallies on the steps of the legislature. There were communities all over this province that held meetings, packed halls, gymnasiums.

And they packed those halls with one consistent message: you have no right — you have no right — to decimate the services that were out in rural Saskatchewan. You didn't campaign on it. And if you really felt that your government had to go ahead and make such dramatic and drastic changes, why didn't you have the guts enough to put it in your election platform? But they didn't, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, it was after all the rallies and the tens of thousands of letters and calls to the government ministers and the Premier and a show from the rural people of the anger and the fear, the frustration and helplessness of these people that the government started to think that, you know, we're in a lot of trouble here and perhaps we should start to rethink perhaps where we were and what it was all about.

But from these rallies and the letters and the anger and the fear and so on, there was born the rural health care coalition. And that was, I believe, in September of 1993, Mr. Speaker. And they had some goals I guess which people in rural Saskatchewan still hold near and dear to their hearts, and that is to ensure that they have a level of comfort in living out in the rural areas.

Firstly, they needed some essential emergency service and acute care. I mean that's a must when you're living out in the rural

areas, especially in agriculture with the amount of accidents and tragedies that are happening out there, and they have got to have some sort of rural care.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, some form of respite care to give a break to the family; palliative care so that . . . to provide that compassionate care for people in their last days; convalescent care when people are leaving these larger centres, the larger hospitals, base hospitals, and needing some sort of treatment when they get home. And in fact, because of the ageing population that we have in this province, there had to be a lot of concern for long-term care. These were just some of the goals of the rural health care coalition, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government, they got into some of these agreements and negotiations with the rural health care coalition, and I'll tell you what was agreed to. It was to provide some level of 24-hour emergency care to the affected communities. And I think in the end it wasn't all the 52 affected communities, but I believe there were 40 or 40-some-odd communities that were part of the rural health care coalition.

And the government agreed to . . . signed the documents that they would provide this 24-hour care, Mr. Speaker, to these communities. They would provide lab and X-ray services so that . . . I mean it only makes sense if you're living in the community of, for an example, Mankota, why would you close down the lab and X-ray services and yet keep some semblance of a clinic. But you can't do anything there. I mean, and there's no sense shipping people two hours away to get an X-ray or to have some lab services, Mr. Speaker.

So this was one thing that the government had agreed to and in fact all the above services which I stated were some of the goals of the rural health care coalition.

Now what we have to ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, is what the results were of this agreement. Did the government hold up to its end of the deal? Well let's have a look. I mean it was easy enough. If the government really wanted to find out just how acceptable their actions had been and in fact how well-received their agreement with these rural communities and the representatives of these rural communities, they could have done a questionnaire or a survey of the affected communities and of the people. Since they didn't have enough nerve to go to the people in a general election over some of these issues, they should have at least surveyed to find out exactly how much pain and grief and frustration and helplessness they had created out in the rural areas, Mr. Speaker.

So in fact because the government didn't do their survey, they didn't do their homework, some members of the coalition decided that it would be interesting, from their point of view, that perhaps they do a survey. And we have some of those surveys with us today, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not going to go through them all, but I do want to touch on a few. And in fact there's several questions to the survey, and I'll only deal with one question because I think it's relevant to the motion here today, Mr. Speaker.

And the first question on this survey of members of the rural

health care coalition to the affected communities is: what parts of the rural health care coalition agreement is your district health board failing to live up to? A very straightforward question, Mr. Speaker.

And when I go through some of these survey responses and see the answers, I think it's appalling, Mr. Speaker. In fact when I take a look a few of these . . . here is a note on the back of the one survey. And it just says:

I am afraid since Louise Simard (this is a quote, Mr. Speaker) dismantled our hospital board, I am not involved in the health care in our community as I was in the past so I'm not able to answer the questions.

(1615)

And this is the feeling from the community of Kincaid, and this is in my area, Mr. Speaker. The people of Kincaid felt they couldn't even pass judgement. They knew they had lost everything — poor day to lose my voice, Mr. Speaker — they knew they had lost everything, but in fact we're not being in touch with the government enough, or the government wasn't being in touch with them enough, to in fact give an answer to some of these questions.

But I'm going to go through some of these communities and deal with just that one question: what part of the rural health care coalition agreement is your district board not living up to?

And here's one that was returned to the community of Ponteix. And in fact Ponteix . . . I want to touch on a few other aspects of what happened in Ponteix. But just a few of the quotes from their own document, Mr. Speaker:

Neither the board nor department were willing to acknowledge the agreement. Whether they didn't have one or they just had a predetermined agenda, but they were adamant on only using the press release.

I mean what these people are saying is that the government never really intended on living up to any of this stuff.

I'm going to keep quoting from this document from the community of Ponteix, Mr. Speaker:

The community has had incidents such as where a middle-aged male had a heart attack and it was immediately diagnosed and treated by the physician and nurse. However, the lab tech who was on call had to be located 20 miles away, which resulted in more than an hour wait. Once again our physician was put under the gun, and the physicians and surgeons department investigated the incidents afterwards.

Which was appalling, Mr. Speaker, because if you have a physician that wants to do the best for the community, go the full nine yards, and yet because of the rules set forward by the government, that he wasn't able to and allowed to.

Incidents of palliative and convalescent patients being looked

after in other facilities some 55 miles away, or as far away as Regina, it states.

There have been horror stories of the district boards expanding on — expenses, I believe that's supposed to be — on meetings and renovations and for purchases. Needless to say, the bureaucratic positions . . . made available. The safe level of quality care is of great concern in our community, and we feel that the sense of security is now definitely lacking.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stay on the community of Ponteix just for a moment because Ponteix is one that . . . the people of that community absolutely felt betrayed by this government, Mr. Speaker.

To be roughly an hour from every other facility, they could never have imagined that their facility would be one that would be just cut off right at the ankles, Mr. Speaker, and with no regard to the cultural situation in that community or the age of the population or the distance that would have to be travelled.

So in fact the community of Ponteix felt we must do something. And in fact they did do things. They were part of the rural health care coalition agreement, fighting the government on one hand, but on the other hand they took matters into their own hands, Mr. Speaker, and they took the government to court.

In fact in the first court case, what they were actually fighting for was an injunction so that it would stop the government from taking the funds out of the community until this whole question of whether there was safe and reasonable health care out in these rural communities was actually decided. And whether in fact the terms and the spirit of the health care coalition agreement were actually being lived up to, because those people in that community, they said they weren't.

And how could we say that they are wrong? I mean they're willing to go to court. They're willing to spend thousands of dollars and the effort to in fact take on a government, and that's really something that a lot of people are nervous about doing, as you can appreciate, Mr. Speaker.

Well the judge's ruling on this was an interesting one because in fact the judgement basically stated that he himself could not . . . he couldn't give the injunction because in fact the health district boards now had all the power. And in fact the judge couldn't say to the province, well you have to live up to your agreement because in fact the province had no right making the agreement outside of the district health board.

So unless they were prepared to back up the agreement with funds — which they weren't — then it was all for nought, Mr. Speaker. And that's what was the frustrating part I think for the community of Climax, knowing full well that they would have to see this right to the end to determine if in fact this government overstepped its bounds in destroying health care in rural Saskatchewan before even court . . . before the injunction could be granted, Mr. Speaker. Because as the judge, I think it was Judge MacPherson in fact — no relative — stated, there just wasn't anything he could do for that community in granting it an injunction in this particular case, Mr. Speaker.

So in fact I dare say I don't think this is over in a few of the communities such as Ponteix or Climax, and they're going to hold the government to account in the future.

Let me go through a few others, Mr. Speaker. Here is one from the community of Borden, and I'm going to quote, and remember that first question, Mr. Speaker, is whether or not this health care coalition agreement had been lived up to by the district board. And here it says, and I'll quote from it:

Our community health committee has met several times with the district health board and the department representatives, and we have not been able to agree on long-term plan for our community. The need for 24-hour nursing, long-term palliative care and respite convalescent care has not been met.

And that's really the need for this motion today, Mr. Speaker, is that the communities themselves are the ones that are saying, well we had an agreement but no one's living up to it. In fact we're going to just keep going through this whole stack, and I can show you how many times the communities are saying none of the agreement is being adhered to.

Let me go on here, Mr. Speaker. We are told by the district that financial restraints are the main impediment. The department states that no money other than the \$50,000 one-time payment will be forthcoming, and it is up to the district board to decide if their global budget will continue . . . will include these delivery services in our community.

And that really brings us back to what I just talked about in the community of Ponteix, Mr. Speaker. Here you have one community saying, well the department is telling the community that in fact the district board must live up to this agreement. And yet in the community of Ponteix the judges say, well no, the district board can't live up to the agreement because the province should have never struck the agreement unless they're prepared to back it up with money. That's the only way this can all work. And they weren't prepared to do that.

Let me quote on, Mr. Speaker. The district states that it's cheaper to run large facilities. Our community wishes to use our foundation money to build an addition to enlarge the former hospital building to accommodate more long-term care beds. We have a number of clients in long-term care homes in Saskatoon as well as other places, some of whom have been . . . have given us written statements stating their wish to return to Borden.

Population statistics show our community is to be an aged population. Our needs assessment indicating the need for such services has not made much impact on decisions. The district states that when and if capital funding is available, they'll be considered.

Well I'll tell you, the community of Borden have no faith that anybody's going to consider them in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Let's read on to a few others. Here's the community of Climax. Climax is also in my area. And as you recall, Mr. Speaker, all the headlines in the newspapers for days on end, Climax was the first community in the province to say enough is enough and we're not taking it any more, and in fact threatened legal action on many occasions on this government.

The government finally tried to satisfy Climax somewhat. And I mean there again the community had to sit back and decide whether they themselves felt big enough to take the government on. And I mean that you can sense, Mr. Speaker, a terrible frustration from some of these communities.

But here's what Climax had to write about that first question: district board and Department of Health have not met with the community in relationship to the \$50,000 grant. And that \$50,000 grant was part of the agreement where there would be some semblance of service in that community, Mr. Speaker. So the money is still sitting there because no one is willing to meet with anyone in the community.

In fact, it goes on to say that the district has been able to get some of the funds, but they have spent them with absolutely no community input. And I'll tell you, the feeling of the people in Climax is that they were sold out. I know each and every one of those citizens personally, Mr. Speaker, and they just feel they're been really sold down the drain by this government.

If we take a look at the community of Vanguard, another one of the affected communities, Mr. Speaker. You know, I have a letter here that I'm going to read right now. And this one is from Dorothy Saunderson, mayor, village of Vanguard, and this was in the newspaper, *The Southwest Booster*, November 28, 1994. And I think this will really sum up exactly what they're going to be saying in their survey answers, Mr. Speaker, to that first question.

And it's to Ms. Louise Simard, minister of Health at that time, province of Saskatchewan:

After two years of organized planning, you and your department have succeeded. You have, by many different methods, moved all of our elderly patients out of the district into places away from home, family, and friends. The last terminally ill patient, who has without a doubt been a thorn in the departmental flesh, has finally obliged by dying. Only God understands the timing of this.

Your department can feel a real sense of accomplishment. The Vanguard facility is now downsized to a health centre for five days a week, from 9 to 5 o'clock. A doctor is to be present on three of those days for a few hours a day.

And I know, looking, Mr. Speaker, at the only doctor in the present government, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, and listening to some of his comments and seeing some of his writings in the newspapers, I know he completely agrees with it. And I get that sense from looking at him here today, Mr. Speaker, that he is in agreement with what these people feel.

But of course that government chose to even do in the good doctor.

Let me read on:

It is of no concern to you and the department, and the residents left in the village and community that have no emergency care, no long-term care, no place for a 24-hour fire alarm, no police protection, and no way of using cellular phones.

In fact the comment on cellular phones is an interesting one, Mr. Speaker. Because I remember when some of these health care reform initiatives were first being discussed, the government of the day was talking about the enhanced use of cellular phones without realizing most of those rural areas don't have cell sites. You're keeping the cell towers in fact in only your populated areas of the province.

Let me quote on here:

Nothing (in bold print, it says), yet we are told we will be better off than we have ever been before. Has your government thought of what you will do when there is no tax base left in rural Saskatchewan? When residents must move from the boondocks to the city to obtain health care? It is necessary to wait hours and even days to be given an appointment or receive referral treatment. Thank you for your government's consideration for those who live by choice in rural Saskatchewan. Dorothy Saunderson, mayor of the village of Vanguard.

I just think, I think that really says it all from a lot of communities, Mr. Speaker, just on how disappointed the people in rural Saskatchewan are, not only with how this whole health care reform process came about through the back door, underhanded, however you want to call it, but in fact even after that when these communities worked together in cooperation to form a health care coalition agreement and in fact it wasn't lived up to.

(1630)

And I don't know if the government ever intended on really living up to it. All they want to do is get the heat off of them for the moment. And I'll tell you, that's what drives this government. It doesn't matter if you're talking about their gaming policies or their agriculture policies, all they do is take care of things for the moment. There is absolutely no long-term vision with the government at all, Mr. Speaker.

And let me read on here from the community of Vanguard back to the survey, Mr. Speaker:

It is felt that the provision of adequate emergency care has still not been provided. Doctor services only on three days a week and for three hours each day. Ambulance services will be downgraded January 1, '95, as there is still no provision to replace the previous operator who is finished at that time.

There are no emergency beds, no long-term care beds, no palliative beds left in our community. With no facility there is no way of knowing about the numbers of people on waiting-lists nor what problems there are in getting placements.

The elderly in this community have very little choice in where they go when care is required. Basically they have to go where there is a bed.

That's the community of Vanguard, Mr. Speaker. And obviously from what I've read here today, the community of Vanguard don't feel that the rural health care coalition agreement has been lived up to.

We now have the town of Cut Knife — Cut Knife, Mr. Speaker. At the moment we only have two eight-hour observation and assessment beds. They are available for use during the day only. According to the agreement, these should be available on a justified need and basis. We understand the physician is the person who decides what is justified need.

And it goes on for quite some time, Mr. Speaker. But in fact the physicians, as you heard me talk about the physician in Ponteix awhile ago, in the end wasn't the one to decide who the justified need was; in fact it was the district health board, and it was those people that were in control of the funds. That's who said what the justified need was.

Now it's the town of Cut Knife. Here's the community of Ituna. No doctor after . . . you've got to bear with me, Mr. Speaker; some of these are hard to read I guess due to some photocopying problems: no doctor after clinic hours and patients must be transferred; travel costs to the patient are very expensive. That's Ituna. And in fact then it goes on to say, no, there has not been any agreement that . . . no living up to the agreement.

Here is the community of Gull Lake, and it states . . . the first question, Mr. Speaker. Gull Lake — I'm just going to pick out a few lines here — the district board refused to recognize the advisory committee in consultation on community needs. And in fact, no, parts of the agreement have not been implemented; they have no idea when they're going to be implemented, or if at all ever implemented.

Let's go on. Here's the community of Mankota. And what does Mankota have to say about whether this rural health care coalition agreement has been lived up to. It says: agreement between rural health coalition and the Department of Health has been ignored. Communication is poor at best, and usually in the directive form only.

I won't waste a lot of time going through these, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to pick a few lines because I think it's pretty obvious what the people are really saying here.

Oh here's the community of Norquay. And I hope some of the members that are listening, I hope these are communities that are in your ridings, because I tell you at the end of the day you're going to have to go back and at some point answer to the

citizens of these communities.

From Norquay, it states here: at a regular meeting on January 18, 1995, the chamber of commerce of Norquay moved, seconded, and passed unanimously that our health centre must have at least two acute care beds. Because they're taking a position that they were taken away and they shouldn't have been taken away.

And they give a few examples here:

We had one man sent to Canora and there was no bed when he got there. He was told to come back tomorrow . . .

Well I hear members over there heckling, but perhaps you'd like to enter into the debate later on. Let me go on:

. . . only tomorrow he died.

That fellow died.

Another man was sent to Yorkton to be tested for blood clots . . .

And it goes on to say how there was no bed available. He then had to be moved to a different community. In fact it's on and on and on. There's no beds available, and agreements aren't being lived up to. Here's another one. It states that no, the agreement hasn't been lived up to. No staffing. Oh we could go on and on.

I hope that you people have some explanation for these people in all of these communities.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know how much some of these government members are going to be anxious to get into this debate because I think it's best for them to get into the debate because they're the ones that have so much explaining to do. And I don't know if there's enough time in a 28- or a 30- or a 31-day campaign to explain why you people were part and parcel of the devastation and the destruction that you caused in rural Saskatchewan, especially out in health care, in the dismantling of health care in what our pioneers — your grandparents — built up over the years. You people with a quick vote and no thought decided that you would just take it all down. Somehow you felt you had that right.

Well I'm telling you one thing, the member over there heckling, I hope you decide to get up and talk later and state your position, state your position clearly to the communities that you're hoping to represent, because you know, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter what newspaper article you pick up, for about two years there was a crisis happening. And there still are.

Here we have one from . . . oh actually, this one is only from a few days ago. This is in March. This happened at . . . this is from the health care in Prince Albert: PA health care slapped on the wrist, is the headline here, Mr. Speaker. And it talks about, it talks about a young lady who had actually broke a limb, an arm I think it was. I read this here the other day.

An Hon. Member: — A wrist.

Mr. McPherson: — A wrist. And in fact when she went to her health facility in Prince Albert, in Prince Albert . . . now this is supposed to be one of the larger base hospitals that in fact were going to take care of a lot of these problems. She went to this facility and couldn't get treatment. They told her, well go on to Melfort.

Well you know what people in rural Saskatchewan are thinking? She . . . (inaudible) . . . a bad thing, and well, if I can't get treatment in a community the size of Prince Albert, why then would I go to Melfort?

So, Mr. Speaker, she attempted . . . I'm just going to go from memory. I don't have to quote. She attempted then to make it into Saskatoon to get treatment. She didn't feel it was safe to stay there because 10 minutes after she had been in the hospital, someone else came in with a broken limb and was told the same thing — go to Melfort.

Why on earth, if they've devastated so many of the small rural hospitals, couldn't the base hospitals take care of the problems? Have you cut back on the funding to the point where they can't operate either? Heavens, is there no compassion, is there no thought in your actions?

But, Mr. Speaker, she tried to get to Saskatoon; didn't make it because, I guess, of the weather. Went back to Prince Albert, was given painkillers, said you must get there. You must get there because leaving it another day or two is too late. I mean there's people with broken limbs that are having to wait one and two and three days out there for treatment.

We're almost to the year 2000. Like aren't you with it a little bit? It's fine for you to sit there and heckle, but aren't you with it at all? There's people that are needing care out there. You want to come out in the rural areas, Mister, and don't heckle me in here, but come out to the rural areas and debate me and we'll see how far you get.

Because there's lists and lists and lists of people that are saying, we've had enough of your actions. That's what they're saying, Mr. Speaker.

I think I'm going to close on this, for the fact that this government has so much to answer for. And in fact, you know, when the government decided that they would have to get into health care reform, you recall, Mr. Speaker, that they were going to do it to save \$20 million over a three-year time frame. But what have we found out in the last 10 days because we've raised it so many times in the legislature here? That in fact you're spending, I think it was \$12 million more in health care this year than before health care reform started. And what you've done is shuffled off . . . we had I think it was 18 statements from 18 out of the 30 health district boards, and 16 of those 18 are showing \$27 million of debt.

And the people, I'll tell you what they're asking me, now that we've made this public. Perhaps the books of the province really aren't balanced at all. If we happen to find out in this one

instance \$27 million that you people have shovelled out there in debt to just health district boards, where else have you hidden the debt? But the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, this problem is going to be around to haunt them for some time.

And you know, it made us wonder too here in the past week or 10 days when we were raising this, all the debt that is out in these health district boards, in fact how it was that the minister could not really tell us what the debt was. In fact he said he didn't know what the debt was, but yet he was still signing and he was still allowing health district boards to run deficits into '94-95.

When the media questioned him — I recall his statement to the media; it was something like, oh well, we're going to have to analyse this. Well I think you're going to have to analyse a lot of things. I think you should go out and analyse what the feelings of the people in rural Saskatchewan are. I know in June they are more than anxious to show you exactly what their feelings are.

And with that, you know, some of the members opposite, you can get up, amend the motion, make yourselves look good to just a few of the people sitting in here today. You go ahead and do that but, you know, it's not me that you're going to have to answer to. I only raise these concerns on behalf of the citizens of the rural Saskatchewan, of the people of these communities, in the communities that some of you people represent. That's who I'm raising them on. You should be sticking up for your own communities but you chose not to do it. So you go ahead and make any amendments you want, do whatever you feel you must do. But remember, at the end of the day we all have one boss, and I can't wait to see what your boss is going to say to you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That this Assembly condemn the Minister of Health for his disregard for the health, safety and well-being of rural Saskatchewan residents through his failure to honour all of the agreed-to terms and conditions of the Rural Health Coalition Agreement between the provincial government and certain health districts.

I so move, seconded by the member from Regina North West.

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that I welcome the Minister of Health back to the Assembly and I hope he is feeling better. I think we all agree that we don't think enough about our health and well-being until something critical happens and then it comes as a shock to be reminded that we do have limits to the stress and neglect our bodies can withstand. So on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I welcome the minister back.

I also welcome the opportunity to enter this debate today because there are a great many unresolved problems in health care, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, our health care system needed to be carefully evaluated, and it was very important that a plan be developed to secure the quality and availability of health care delivery fairly and affordably across the province.

The fact is that a great deal of change has taken place in our health care system, but it has become obvious that there has not been a plan from the outset. The point at which it became obvious was when 40 communities joined together to form the Rural Health Coalition in protest over the failure to provide adequate services to the communities where hospitals were reduced from full-care facilities to wellness centres.

The formation of the Rural Health Coalition confirmed what many people feared. The wellness plans for Saskatchewan were not carefully constructed plans after all, and the safety of Saskatchewan people was in jeopardy as the result of the decisions made to withdraw services wholly or partially from 51 local rural hospitals.

But why was it necessary for townspeople and community leaders to take up the challenge? It was necessary, Mr. Speaker, because this government not only failed to listen to people's concerns, they also failed to act on their promises to the rural communities whose hospitals were converted to wellness centres — promises that certain levels of service and care would be sustained. In their discussion, the Rural Health Coalition and the Department of Health finally came to an agreement that there would be a provision of certain level of services to the communities which had experienced conversion from hospitals to wellness centres.

(1645)

It is hard to image that the communities involved actually became so frustrated with the lack of cooperation from the Department of Health that they came to the point of threatening legal action in order to get action on the commitments that had already been made to them. What were they asking for? Were they asking for special treatment, Mr. Speaker? Were they asking for something different than other communities were asking or receiving? No, they just wanted to see basic services provided out of the facilities that were a big part of their communities. All they were asking was to be left with sufficient services to protect the health and safety of their citizens.

When the reports started to come in about what was happening in rural Saskatchewan with respect to health care reform, we found them hard to believe. The minister knows that we support the need for change in health care, and you can go back to the record and realize that we were not levelling criticism at the idea of thoughtful, well-planned changes to health care. The problem is the changes this government implemented have not been thoughtful or well planned.

We have spent countless hours since that time meeting with people from rural Saskatchewan, from northern Saskatchewan, and in Regina and in Saskatoon, and they all have stories to tell. What is becoming increasingly obvious, Mr. Speaker, is that what started out as a commitment from Saskatchewan people to work with this government to try to improve their health care system, quickly turned into a battle.

First the government asked the people what they want. And while people were still trying to figure out what they need and

what they want, along came the Department of Health and said, never mind what you need or what you can get by on; here's what you get and don't make a fuss.

Reform of rural health care had no rhyme or reason, Mr. Speaker. New facilities were closed while initiatives were being devised down the road to build or upgrade ageing facilities. Fully equipped hospitals were converted to health centres, where the priorities became office space and administration instead of people and patient care.

I give full credit to the members of the Rural Health Coalition for having the courage to stand together and demand some accountability from the minister. That was not an easy thing to do. It shows us just how much health care matters to these communities and how much sacrifice the people of Saskatchewan are prepared to make to protect the services they pay taxes to receive.

But it also shows that there is only so much compromise in the countryside. People know the difference between cooperation and coercion. They understand the difference between sacrifice and social suicide and they know that communities without accessible and dependable health care will not survive.

One of our party's candidates in the imminent election is an integral part of the Rural Health Coalition. He understood what the changes were going to mean, not just the changes to his community, but to rural communities across Saskatchewan who were facing conversion by coercion.

And his was one of 40 communities who would not accept the blatant coercion of the rural health reform agenda. And so they threatened to sue the government for failing to provide certain basic services — threatened to sue, Mr. Speaker. I have yet to hear an explanation why 40 communities had to threaten legal action just to get their own government to come to the table and discuss health care reform.

You see, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that a reform is a good reform if the reform process has been developed with the support and consultation of the people who will be affected. Then there should be an expectation that dialogue and discussion about what is working and what is not working will be an accepted part of the process.

We have received so many complaints about the process in the wellness reform that I could not even begin to communicate them all to this Assembly. But the whole issue of process is certainly equal in magnitude to the issue of actual health care which is being discussed. People's concerns about the mechanics of health care are the deep and overriding concerns. But the concerns about process are not to be ignored or dismissed.

In fact one of the things the coalition insisted upon was services, and the other, Mr. Speaker, was process. They committed to provide certain basic services that were stripped from communities and they agreed to institute a process for people to resolve outstanding issues.

The government signed an agreement to put the dispute resolving mechanism in place by April 30, 1994. But when did they finally deliver on that agreement? Not in April, 1994, not in September, not even by the end of 1994. No, Mr. Speaker, the minister could not even get it together to put the dispute resolution in place until January, 1995 — eight months past his own deadline.

So setting aside the issue of services, I say shame on this government for not being able to develop the process to resolve disputes for eight months during such a crucial time in health reform.

Just at the time the process was finally announced, Mr. Speaker, our candidate in Meadow Lake canvassed a number of his fellow Rural Health Coalition members for their assessment of whether the Rural Health Coalition Agreement was being addressed in their communities. He also asked them a number of direct questions about the status of the services they were promised.

The motion before the Assembly today, Mr. Speaker, condemning the government for failing to implement the agreement with the Rural Health Coalition, is fully supported by the comments from the members of that coalition.

From Climax, I quote:

District board and Department of Health have not met with the community in relationship to the \$50,000 grant that was part of the agreement and which was to have been spent to bridge the transition to a longer-term health plan.

Mr. Speaker, these communities were assured they would be part of the planning; that they would have input into the decisions.

From Vanguard the comments are:

It is felt that the provision of adequate emergency care has still not been provided. Doctor service is only three hours each week and for three hours each day. Ambulance service will be downgraded January 31 as there is no provision to replace the current operator who is finished.

Mr. Speaker, ambulance service was part of the services agreed to.

And from Cut Knife, they had to say:

We have not had convalescent care other than that provided through home care, even though Cut Knife's health centre is an integrated facility.

Government members have a choice this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I notice that they chose to delay introducing the condolence motion for Judge Estey until today and to use as much of the private members' day debate as possible to avoid the issues of pensions and rural health care.

Rural health care will continue to be in a state of mismanaged crisis, Mr. Speaker, as long as this government refuses to stand and be accountable for its actions.

I second the motion of the member from Shaunavon and urge the government to immediately address this serious issue.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, being near 5 o'clock, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The member can't do that because we are still on the motion before the House and that motion has not been adjourned.

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I disagree with most of what the Liberals . . . in fact all of what the Liberals said and move this debate do now adjourn.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.