

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
April 4, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present petitions on behalf of the people from the Gull Lake, Shaunavon, and Hazlet, also Eastend area of the south-west. 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.

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

I'm happy to table these for the people today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the prayer for my petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to support Bill 31 — An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (Property Rights) which will benefit all property owners in Saskatchewan, and specifically firearms owners, in order to halt the federal Liberal government from infringing upon the rights of Saskatchewan people.

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

These petitions come from the Carlyle, Arcola, White Bear area in the south-east corner of my constituency. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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 toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

And of citizens of the province 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 Thursday next move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Unsolicited Goods and Credit Cards Act (Negative-options strategies).

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw to your attention and that of the members, a group of students who have come to visit us today from St. Augustine School in the constituency of Regina Victoria. It's a group of 15 grade 3 students; they're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Melinda Redman and by Mrs. Heather Kurz.

And I look forward to meeting with them after the question period, Mr. Speaker. I would ask all members to make them feel very welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted today to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly, some guests that are visiting us from my end of the world, up at Tisdale. Today in your Speaker's gallery we have 16 young people from the Tisdale Composite High School and they are accompanied by Shirley Burtman, their teacher.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the members of the Assembly to wish these grade 12 students success in this year and best wishes as they go out next year into the world. And we would like to welcome you to the Assembly today and I'll meet you later for questions.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Cancer Month

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada, April is Cancer Month. This is a very important month for the Canadian Cancer Society. It concentrates its fund-raising activities in April for donations to cancer research. We all hope some day research will lead to the end of this scourge of modern society.

Cancer as a disease has always been with us, but today it is a plague. It blossoms from many biological, chemical, environmental, nutritional, and hereditary conditions of modern life. It is a plague that will infect one in three of us during our lifetime.

We appreciate the efforts of the Cancer Society and the thousands of individuals, schools, and groups who volunteer their time, money, and effort this month. It is a necessary month, and for those of us whose lives have been diminished by cancer, a difficult one.

Cancer victims have families, they have friends, and we suffer as well. We grieve from our loss and from our helplessness in the face of the slow suffering that is the most pernicious fact of cancer. Too often in the past cancer victims and their families have had to suffer alone, but we are finally making some progress here. It is good that Saskatchewan now has improved home care services. It is good and compassionate that palliative care is now designated a core service.

Mr. Speaker, we need a cure. Until then we need continued compassionate care. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Palliative Care Week

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is Palliative Care Week in Saskatchewan, a week in which we honour all those care-givers in our province who are giving the sensitive and necessary core services to the dying and their families in our health districts.

The Saskatchewan Palliative Care Association has helped to make Saskatchewan a leader in this kind of compassionate care for the terminally ill. I would like to pay tribute to Saskatchewan palliative care workers and read from a bill of rights for palliative care workers as a means of honouring those committed to this service in our province.

I have the right to try and ease the fears of the dying, even though deep within myself lie those very same fears.

I have the right to feel relief when someone's death means the end of their pain and to be angry when someone is taken too soon, while they still have much to give the world.

I have the right to have pity for the afraid and unfulfilled, and to be in awe of the courageous.

I have the right to be mystified by the miracle and wonder of life, and to be resigned to the finality and reality of death.

I have the right to my own religious beliefs and a faith that whoever the true God is, they would approve of my work.

(And finally) I have the right to be realistic about my own mortality.

So on behalf of all members, I offer my humble respect for these workers and all of our sincere appreciation for their efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Law Students Win Gale Moot Cup

Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to recognize four U of S (University of Saskatchewan) students who have won top national honours.

I'm referring to Crystal Baron, Ian Wagner, Bronwyn Eyre, and Eva Weclaw, who recently won the Gale Moot Cup, which is a prestigious national competition involving 18 law schools from across the country. By winning this competition, it means that these four individuals are the best student advocates in Canada.

The teams competed in a moot, which means that they were divided up into pairs, with one pair arguing for the defence and the other taking the Crown's position.

The issue involved in the moot was one surrounding extreme drunkenness as a defence, which as members will know, actually reached the Supreme Court as an issue recently.

The competition gave the students the opportunity to practise on their feet and answer questions posed by the judges.

The victory is especially satisfying because the Saskatchewan team, which was coached by Saskatoon criminal lawyer Mark Brayford, won in a region of the country where there are six highly competitive law schools.

I'd ask members to join with me in extending congratulations to the Saskatchewan team and their coach for displaying such superior oral advocacy skills at the competition. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Shuttle Craft International Manufactures 100th Boat

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to announce more positive economic news in my riding. Last Friday I had the pleasure of attending an open house at Shuttle Craft International, a business that manufactures fibreglass boats.

This business, located just north-west of Prince Albert, celebrated the manufacturing of its 100th boat. That in itself is good news; but, Mr. Speaker, this business plans on expanding its production to 2,000 boats this year and then in the following year increasing to 5,000 boats.

These boats with their U-shape are unique, as they are powered by jet skis. There is only one other company in the world that manufactures a similar fibreglass boat.

Mr. Speaker, there is enormous potential for this business and that is why the company plans on increasing its hours and eventually will manufacture boats 24 hours a day and additional staff will be hired.

I would like to congratulate manager Wayne Washington, and his business, for making a significant contribution to the

economy of Saskatchewan and for providing jobs for Saskatchewan people. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rafferty-Alameda Update

Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we were informed by the member from Estevan about all the water in the Moose Mountain Creek and Alameda dam. Well we all know that the purpose of the Alameda dam is to provide water for the Americans when they need it.

Not much mention was made of the Rafferty reservoir and all the water that is not there. The water has not yet reached the base of the dam. After eight years of impounding water, the famous Rafferty reservoir is about 15 per cent full. This is in spite of above-average spring run-offs and heavy summer rains in the area in recent years. The great promises about extensive recreation, irrigation of 250,000 acres of farm land, water for industrial purposes, are far from being realized.

On a more positive note though, the renowned Rafferty dam and multimillion dollar Mainprize Regional Park have become popular tourist attractions, with people coming from near and far to see these man-made wonders, including the famous boat ramp and the half-completed parking lots.

One book has been written about the controversial Rafferty-Alameda project which achieved national and international attention. A second book about this project is in the works. The Rafferty-Alameda dam projects stand as a stark reminder of how not to build a project. Hopefully all future governments will have learned from this costly experience that a full evaluation of all economic, social, and environmental concerns must be satisfied before any more major developments are contemplated. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Could I have leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — Only if there are no further members for private members' statements. Does the member have leave?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce three guests from the St. Joan of Arc School here in Regina. We have, Mr. Speaker, in your gallery, Brandon Watson and Lance Sauer, who are grade 4 students. They are in an enrichment program, Mr. Speaker, and they're along with Mrs. Carol Paton, consultant for the program. They are here to learn about our democratic processes in the legislature and ask a few questions, Mr. Speaker, so let's give them a warm welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MLA Pension Plan

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, as is our custom on Tuesday, the opposition would like to again bring forward some questions submitted to us by the general public. We've undertaken to these people that one way or another we will get the government to answer their questions on the record, and preferably in *Hansard*. It's our intention, Mr. Speaker, to see that we accomplish this before the end of the session.

My question today to the Premier comes from Ron Skoropat from Prince Albert. Mr. Premier, I want to know why your government won't eliminate the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and former premier's pension plan retroactively and replace it with the same plan as regular public service employees?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I know that this is an interesting political piece of politics that is being played by the members of the Conservative and the Liberal Party. Failing being able to make an issue of any substantive issues, they pursue this particular topic, which may get them a good news story, but there is a lot of inconsistencies in their pursuit because it is far from them to advise this government about cost controls, about setting examples, when we have ministers here who have taken 5 per cent cuts in their salaries, whereas a certain member opposite has taken a 37 per cent increase in her salary.

So I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, simply, I think members should have pensions. I think public servants should have pensions. I think everyone should have pensions. And we, in order to make those pensions fair, in 1979 changed the pension system in Saskatchewan so that as the independent commission said when it dealt with MLAs' indemnities and other matters, it is the best pension plan anywhere in Canada and should be a model for other provinces to follow as they repair theirs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Referendum on Gaming Expansion

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So says the member who has a \$1.7 million pension at taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Speaker, my question comes from Tim Bella from Regina. Mr. Premier, I want to know why you are so against any public citizen input on the question of casinos and gaming houses, be they on reserves or in the city. Where is our citizens' referendum? In your zeal to buy votes ahead of the expected election, you have trodden over the real backbone of this province, namely the taxpayers.

No wonder legal action committees like CAGE (Committee Against Gambling Expansion) were set up. They represent

voices that you refuse to acknowledge. Where is our referendum?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Rosthern for his question.

I think we've discussed before, and you might agree, that Saskatchewan is not an island. And if the goal of a plebiscite is to solve the problem, you don't solve the problem unless you . . . if your goal is prohibition, you'd have to deal with solving the problem in the gaming areas adjacent to Saskatchewan.

You'd have to talk about having a plebiscite in Alberta, Manitoba, Montana, the Dakotas, perhaps asking the federal government to change the Criminal Code so that we could have a level playing-field in Canada on this subject.

On the issue of on-reserve gaming, in the instance that that would happen, you know well, having received a copy of the agreement, that in order for any gaming to proceed that involves the federation, it has to be approved by the municipality in which the gaming is located, by the band, if in fact it's on reserve, and by the municipality impacted by the activity. And you know that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Secretary Budget

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question for the Premier comes from Barry Anderson from Watrous, Saskatchewan: in the past four years the provincial government has raised taxes by 28 per cent. In the past four years, I've received raises of 2 per cent; some people have not done as well as I have. In light of the above, I want to know what the Provincial Secretary does for the people of Saskatchewan and why it has received an incredible raise in funding of 209 per cent.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — In response to the gentleman from Watrous, I think that's a very legitimate question. I think it deserves an answer which is factual, and the factual answer is this: there has been essentially no increase in the Department of the Provincial Secretary. What has happened is some of the responsibilities that used to exist in other departments, such as Intergovernmental Affairs for example, has been transferred to the Provincial Secretary.

There is no change in the amount of expenditures on that particular responsibility. It simply has moved from one agency to the Provincial Secretary, and therefore there is no net increase in expenditures.

It's simply one of the ways in which this government has reorganized the affairs of government and the administration of government to make it more efficient, more effective, and has resulted, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan, the Government of Saskatchewan, spending \$276 million less in this fiscal year on operating expenses than was spent in

1990-91 under the former administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Size of Premier's Staff

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is as well for the Premier, and it comes from Bill Steckler from Imperial. And his question is as follows. Mr. Premier, I want to know why the Premier of Saskatchewan needs a staff of 88 people at a cost of \$7 per person per year, when the Premier of Alberta only needs a staff of 47 at a cost of \$1 per person per year in Alberta. Is Saskatchewan really seven times larger than Alberta, or just its government? Who are these 88 people and what do they do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I also am pleased to be able to respond to Mr. Steckler and tell him that in Saskatchewan we have a far smaller government than they have in the province of Alberta. For example, in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the government operations that are delivered cost \$4,200 per person. In Alberta they cost \$4,450 per person. Hardly a good comparison to make, Mr. Speaker.

I also think it's important for Mr. Steckler to know that in . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I also think, Mr. Speaker . . . thank you. I also think, Mr. Speaker, it's important for Mr. Steckler to know — and I know he would want to know — that the staff that the member opposite refers to are not the Premier's personal staff. The Premier has in his office a total of four people — two secretaries and two executive assistants. Most of those people are part of the Department of Executive Council. They are part of policy and planning, just like any other department in government, and are not the Premier's personal staff. And it's unfortunate that the members opposite would try to misinterpret this particular case and put a different picture on it than that.

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question comes from Millicent Leppa from Macrorie. Mr. Premier, I want to know why you are kissing up to the labour unions. All government construction should be open to all Saskatchewan people, not just unions. There are many people who are just as qualified to do a job. Some are even more qualified than union workers. These people can get the job done right, and usually for less money. Do not force us to hire unionized labour. It is not fair and in the long run it will hurt the Saskatchewan common, non-unionized people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — We appreciate the question that's been

written in to the official opposition. It does give the government now an opportunity, through answering that question, to indicate quite clearly today in this House that tendering in the province of Saskatchewan is open to all contractors.

The new Crown construction tendering policy does exactly what the person is calling for, and I commend the minister in charge of the Crown Investments Corporation for putting into place a policy that is fair, not to non-union or union contractors, but fair to all contractors in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

VLT Revenues

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another substantive question to ask the government this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of gambling. Madam Minister, your government's helter-skelter gambling policy continues to spin out of control. Now you're taking VLTs (video lottery terminal) out of Regina and Saskatoon Exhibition casinos and moving them to other locations in the province so you can beat even more people out of money. This is all very ad hoc, Madam Minister. So we want to know exactly what your policies are with regard to VLT revenue and placement.

First of all, Madam Minister, the Saskatoon casino is going to lose about 7,000 . . . between 7 and \$8,000 a week because it gets 15 per cent of the VLT revenues, yet the Buffalo Buck Casino doesn't get any VLT revenue.

Why is the policy different in Saskatoon from Regina? What exactly is your policy in VLT revenues in exhibition casinos? Could you tell us?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to let you know that it seems that the member opposite wants to have it both ways. He wants more VLTs, less VLTs.

Now in January we made a commitment to set a cap at 3,600 machines. The exhibition associations have known that the particular VLTs in question were in there on an interim basis pending the construction of the casino. They know that.

And we also made a commitment to them to keep their revenues whole. Now they know that. We made that commitment. We stand by that commitment, and we will be carefully monitoring with them if there are impacts. And if there are, we will honour the commitment we made to them to keep their revenue whole.

In the meantime, with a cap of 3,600, there needs to be a reallocation within the system, to be fair to the site contractors that are eligible to apply for this program. And so this is a

question of fairness in the province in distribution and allocation of a capped level of machines.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, you've also said that you're going to reduce the number of VLTs in the province. But when you take into account the additional slot machines that are going into government and FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) casinos, that number will actually increase. We see that today in the paper here. Now we have learned that slot machines will be replacing some of the VLTs in the Buffalo Buck Casino.

Madam Minister, what exactly is your policy in regard to these new slot machines? Who else will be getting slot machines beside the Buffalo Buck Casino? How many slot machines will there be? Where are you getting these slot machines from? And where exactly will these slot machines be going? Could you tell us that, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now although I wasn't the minister at the time, I do recall the previous minister, only one minister ago, announcing one year ago that the allocation of VLTs was separate and distinct from the allocation of machines for the purposes of the casino.

There always were two separate allocations, and the total for Regina is 500. The total, as you'll recall from reading the agreement, is 500 for all of the possible development by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. And I think if you add that up, it still adds up to the same numbers we announced a year ago.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, I can't follow you. One minister ago, one year ago, what had said what under what kind of circumstances, it's very confusing.

Madam Minister, when you want to be particularly funny . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Will the members please come to order.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, when you want to be particularly funny, you keep telling us that you have a well-developed gambling expansion plan. Well quite frankly, I think you're bluffing. You've been dealing from the bottom of the deck too long, I would suggest to you. And I would say it's about time that you lay all the cards on the table for the people of the province to see.

Madam Minister, will you lay out your entire long-term gambling strategy? How far does the NDP (New Democratic Party) plan to take this gambling expansion? How many VLTs do you plan to have in the final analysis? How many slot

machines do you plan to have? And how much gambling money do you expect to be taking away from Saskatchewan people?

Madam Minister, will you lay out your entire gambling plan? You do have one, don't you? Madam Minister, will you lay out your entire gambling plan and then let voters pass judgement in a province-wide referendum? Will you do that, Madam Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think, Mr. Speaker, at some point I would be honoured with the title of the patient minister because we have sat now through three meetings of estimates and have gone over and over the gaming policy. I don't think my answers have ever changed to any of these questions.

Our goal is to control and regulate; to limit, as much as is possible in today's society, the expansion of gaming; to make sure that treatment services exist; to make sure that there's fair distribution of revenues amongst the various players.

This is really no different than exists in the alcohol industry where over time new products come in, like brew pubs, etc., new players come in. And industry has to adapt. And for you to suggest that it would be frozen at some space in time I think would be something that might go into a museum but does not belong in a modern society.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MLA Pension Plan

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the government tried to duck a motion that would have had a vote on the pension pals in this Assembly, and rolling back their pensions. They tried to manipulate the system to hide behind teachers and many MLAs who retired with very meagre pension incomes, Mr. Speaker. They tried to lump themselves in with innocent workers who negotiated in good faith — as if these pension pals cannot even realize that the pension scheme to which they contribute is seen as privileged and unaffordable for Saskatchewan taxpayers to support.

My question is to the Premier this afternoon. Mr. Premier, will you today support the Bill being introduced which will offer you the opportunity to voluntarily rewrite your pension, to voluntarily reduce the taxpayers' commitment of 24 per cent to your pension plan?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I want to begin my answer by saying that that particular motion which the member from Greystone speaks about is one of those few motions in this Assembly which vote she did not duck when it came before the House.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because it and what she is speaking here today are the continuing saga of inconsistency,

contradiction, flip-flop, from flip-flop to flip-flop, because there is no consistent policy on the part of the Liberal Party.

The other day, and I think it was last Tuesday, the Liberal leader voted for the motion which said: reaffirm the province's commitment to honour its pension obligations to all those who contributed in good faith to the formula-based pension plan. And it went on to itemize some people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 when the Liberal leader was complaining about the changes in the severance packages for people who were going to get in excess of half a million dollars in severance, said: I don't believe this is a question of numbers, this is a question of decency and ethics. She still believes Saskatchewan will have difficulty attracting top candidates for executive positions. She opposed that too, Mr. Speaker.

Let's really get to the nub of what this is all about. This is about the failure of the Liberal leader and the Liberal Party to be able to come to grips and make an issue of any substantive issue in the province of Saskatchewan, whether it's the Crow rate or transportation or taxation policy, and it's her attempt to try to play simple, simple, oldest style politics in order to try to get some gain . . . gain ground which she has lost in the polls in the last several months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting, the Deputy Premier and his group, they definitely try to run but they cannot hide from the people. This morning, Mr. Speaker, I had hundreds and hundreds of cards from people from one constituency in Regina on this issue, on this issue. And people feel very strongly about the unfairness of this. And I am most interested in the unwillingness of this particular minister to show any leadership whatsoever on this issue.

There is not a person in Saskatchewan who believes that some members of this Assembly deserve to pad their pensions at the expense of taxpayers. And today we are offering the members of this Assembly an opportunity to reflect the wishes of their constituents on this issue, an opportunity to go on the record in support of bringing the pensions of all of the people in this Assembly on par.

Now my question to the Deputy Premier, the consummate person of playing politics: if you are unwilling to voluntarily reduce your pension, will you at the very least allow for a free vote this afternoon from everyone else in this Assembly on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, let me talk about . . . let me respond to the member's comment about setting examples, which she has referred to in the past, and double standards. Because here is the epitome of double standard.

The member from Greystone talks about the changes to the pension plan which in fact happened in 1979. What her real

motive is, Mr. Speaker, is to . . . because she says you have to set an example. Well to set an example for what purpose? It's to set an example so that it then, if there happens to be the Liberal government on this side, will set the example so they deal with what she has called an unfunded pension liability of teachers and public servants and others.

But here is the contradiction, Mr. Speaker. This is the only person in this Legislative Assembly who personally took a 30 per cent . . . 37 per cent increase in her personal salary while cabinet ministers took a 5 per cent cut in their salaries. This is the only person in the legislature who got a 352 per cent increase in her caucus grant and never blinked an eye.

If she was really serious about setting an example, Mr. Speaker, she would have dealt with this. And she can't say, the rules made me do it, because she sits on the Board of Internal Economy and has never once suggested that that massive increase which she personally received should have not been accepted by herself, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Perhaps we should actually deal with some reality, Mr. Speaker. I did voluntarily take pay cuts. I indeed did voluntarily deal with cost of living freezes, just like, Mr. Deputy Premier, every member of this Legislative Assembly. But it is you and the Premier, sir, who are the privileged elite in this particular Assembly.

This government retroactively cancelled contracts, Mr. Speaker, with senior civil servants and they said that severance packages were too rich and that taxpayers simply couldn't afford them. Well it seems a different set of rules apply to themselves when they refuse to budge in what is seen as unaffordable pension plans as well.

In fact referring to the severance packages of the past, the member from Regina Hillsdale said, and I quote: "Many Saskatchewan working families find it unconscionable that such a provision exists." The same unconscionable situation exists now with these members' pensions.

My question to the Deputy Premier: if you had the power to make moral and financial judgements about what other people are worth, what was affordable for taxpayers in those situations, sir, why now do you refuse to see the unfairness in your own pension plan? Why don't you lead by example and reduce these pensions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, we see here in the House today the display of a floundering political leader who is concerned about the fact that within her party, and more importantly within the public mind, there is a disillusionment with the inability of the Liberal Party to come forward with any policy on anything on which the public can have some interest. So the member from Greystone resorts to dealing with this.

Now I say to the member from Greystone, if you really are interested in setting an example, will you today roll back your 37 per cent increase in your personal salary, which you have had an opportunity to do?

You talk about setting an example. You're the only person who has had an increase in your personal pay. Will you do something about your increase in your caucus grant, and will you answer why you only apply your legislation to present members?

Is it because you're trying to protect former Liberal MLAs who are receiving the old pension plan, like the former senator, Davey Steuart, who's also getting the Senate pension plan; Mr. Roy Nelson, who's very active on your executive provincially in the province of Saskatchewan, certainly active in the Liberal Party; Mr. Cliff McIsaac, and the list goes on and on.

You can see, Mr. Speaker, the politics that's being played here, because if the member was really serious she would have included these individuals as well. But because they are good Liberals, she has decided not to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rural Road Conditions

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier or his designate. While the Premier has been flying all over the province, I've spent the last several weeks driving in rural Saskatchewan. And while you have no idea what the grid road situation is like in rural Saskatchewan, I can tell you it isn't very good, Mr. Premier.

Many vehicles, including school buses, have recently been trapped in muddy grid roads. The president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) has said it's the worst — the worst — he's ever seen. Mr. Premier, given that you have an extra \$20 million from last week's budget, which was rescued from union hands, would it not be sensible to allocate some of those funds towards fixing the roads before a serious problem occurs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite like to place the blame for every misfortune in the province on the government, and I think this just shows how far they reach in order to find a topic.

The Government of Saskatchewan is not responsible for the weather, and I want to point out that the weather the last couple of weeks has been very difficult. We had a rain a couple of weeks ago and it was followed by the cold weather and our roads are in terrible shape — we understand that. In fact we have been discussing this situation with the SARM for the last week.

At this point in time, the Department of Highways and our

department and the SARM are . . .

The Speaker: — I think I'll call it quits for today. I want to, I simply want to . . . and I'm not blaming the minister, but the opposition just didn't want to hear your answer and I couldn't hear your answer either . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well she had gone on for 40 seconds already.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Extension of Partnerships '95 Application Date

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the House that the Government of Saskatchewan will extend the application date for employment program for students, called Partnerships '95, to April 25, 1995. Requests for applications are still high. We want to ensure that we realize the full potential of this highly popular program.

We are prepared to consider enhanced funding if the demand warrants it.

An additional consideration was that the federal government was late in announcing its summer program. Employers have told us that they need more time to consider their options. The program helps students earn money to continue their studies and also provides them with work experience and skills training.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment provide a wage subsidy to employers who create a summer job for students. Businesses, farms, municipal governments, and non-profit organizations will have the opportunity to apply. Priority is given to those employers who hire students with a disability or students of aboriginal ancestry.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to providing job opportunities for young people of Saskatchewan. This \$897,000 summer employment program is only part of our 11.2 million commitment towards improving job and training opportunities for youth this year. Together with employers and communities, we are taking steps to ensure these students can make a social and economic contribution to this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer employment program for students is a good program, Mr. Speaker, that has been going on for a number of years. But the last two years there seems to have been some problems developing in the system to allow both students and employers to know that the program is ongoing. I know I've had complaints from my own constituency about it. How do we ever find out if it's still there or not, Mr. Speaker?

What they have asked, and what I have passed on to the government, the Education department, is that they notify the previous businesses that have used this program that it continues to be available, where the forms are at, and what are

the procedures to go through.

The students need to know that this is available, Mr. Speaker, so that they can go perhaps to their local business that has employed them in the past, to again carry on with the same program. And that seems to be a failure, Mr. Speaker, in the government department, in handling this situation and letting people know that it currently is available.

It is a good program. It does provide employment for students to carry on with their education. It provides help for business which may not be providing that kind of assistance to students during the summer months because of the financial constraints. With the assistance through the Education department they can provide that kind of an employment opportunity to those students.

So while I commend the government for carrying on with the program developed by the previous administration, they are missing the boat a bit, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to letting the public know that it's available. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 57 — An Act to amend The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act, 1979

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill, An Act to amend The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act, 1979.

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

(1415)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to question no. 59, I table the response.

The Speaker: — The answer to no. 59 is tabled.

MOTIONS

Referral of *Estimates* to Standing Committee on Estimates

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I would move:

That the *Estimates* subvotes LG01 to LG06, the *Supplementary Estimates* subvotes LG03 and LG04, for the Legislative Assembly being vote 21, and the estimates for the Provincial Auditor being vote 28, be

withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

I so move, seconded by the member for Churchill Downs.

I just add a comment, Mr. Speaker. This is a traditional motion.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

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

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the fact that this is private members' day, by leave, I would move:

That we now go to private members' public Bills and orders, to the Committee of the Whole, item 1, Bill No. 33, An Act respecting the Donation of Food.

Leave not granted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 4 — Plebiscite on Gaming

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly will stand on this one and we'll stand on this one for a long time, Mr. Speaker, the motion that I am proposing today. And I will be reading that into the record at this time, and then making this motion pursuant to my comments.

And I think it quite appropriate, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, that my comments are going to be following another exhibition in this legislature of the latest minister for gambling in this province, and her machination and dippy-doodling in trying to avoid the real issue.

And the motion that I want to discuss is simply this:

That this Assembly, in accordance with Section 6 of The Referendum and Plebiscite Act, approve the following questions to be put to the electorate on a plebiscite: (1) Do you approve of the government's plan to operate casinos in Saskatchewan? (2) Do you approve of government-operated video lottery terminals (VLTs) in Saskatchewan? And further, that this Assembly direct that the plebiscite putting these questions to the electorate be conducted in accordance with The Referendum and Plebiscite Act in conjunction with the next provincial general election.

And, Mr. Speaker, what is prompting us to do this is the scenario of a government that has taken the bit in its mouth and is totally oblivious to the pulling on the reins of the various sectors in our society — the various groups of people in our society who are simply saying this, Mr. Speaker: this government does not have a mandate for what it is doing.

This government, during the last election, never talked about embarking in a new direction in this province where there would be fundamental changes in the fabric, in the social structure, in this province. And yet that is precisely what this government is doing in a helter-skelter, flying-by-the-seats-of-the-pants approach, with no knowledge really of where they have been or where they are going.

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing it on a continual basis from people in society who are saying, if this is what is going to be happening in Saskatchewan then we want to be part of that process: then we want to have a say. And, Mr. Speaker, the logical route for accomplishing that objective is for the government to say, all right, we are listening; we hear you and we will respond. And we will respond in a positive fashion. Because yes, you will get a vote; the people of Saskatchewan will get a vote as to whether or not they agree.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, what the people want is for this government to commit to putting these questions on a plebiscite or a binding referendum perhaps, in the upcoming election, and do it in conjunction with that election.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is only a fair assessment that the people of Saskatchewan are making when they say, because of this fundamental change in direction, we want a say in that direction. And they are speaking to us, Mr. Speaker, in a loud, unequivocal way.

And we find, Mr. Speaker, on a continual basis I guess, that this expanded gambling is a gamble of the highest stakes, a gamble of the highest order that this government is taking in its mad scramble to try to get a hold of the deficit.

And they're gambling on the future of this province. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they are gambling on their own future as a government. Because it looks right now as if people are rejecting it in sound numbers, unequivocally, wherever they have that opportunity. And that's what you folks over there are afraid of — the results of such a plebiscite, or such a referendum if they chose to go that route.

The people want a say. They want a say as you have this mad scramble to be able to achieve your particular goals. Because I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, you, during the 1991 election, said a lot of things. You said that we were going to have a reduction . . . actually not a reduction. You said that there would be the removal of the PST (provincial sales tax). Folks thought that that 7 per cent would be gone. Folks thought that there would be no such tax increases, no such utility increases as they have been experiencing.

Now instead of that we have a host of tax increases unparalleled in the history of Saskatchewan. Instead of 7 per cent PST, we have 9 per cent PST. And we have a whole row and a whole list of fee increases in every imaginable way.

And so the deficit, Mr. Speaker, has been tackled, and it has been largely tackled on the backs of the Saskatchewan

taxpayers. And now, to increase the problem manifold, they are prepared to tax the people in what I consider to be an illegitimate fashion, a tax on the poor — a tax on the poor. Because precisely that is what gambling is, generally speaking, an attempt by the downtrodden, it's an attempt by those who are having trouble paying their bills, to find and to grasp that pot at the end of the rainbow, that sudden riches, that sudden dream of going to the Bahamas and Barbados and having this wonderful life.

Unfortunately it is, generally speaking, those who are not all that well off in our society that are putting a huge proportion of their incomes into that search for that illusive pot at the end of the rainbow, that search for the illusive dream.

And you people over there are building on that. The susceptibility of people is being exploited by this government. You're counting on that. You're counting on the fact that by the proliferation of gambling opportunities in this province, you will be able to reap the benefit.

And you're taking the money out of the pockets of the poor, in general terminology. Because quite frankly, those that have a pretty good roll in their pockets will go to Nevada, they will go to Vegas, they will go to Reno, they will go to the more exotic places to do their gambling. And it's the people here who are going to be using their pay cheques, who are going to be using their family allowance, who are going to be using their milk money, that they will put it into this gambling proliferation of experiences.

Speaking of about experiences, they will get an experience all right. The minister of Gaming has told us that.

Well it's unfortunate that we have such things as addiction, for example, Mr. Speaker, and that addiction . . . Pathological gamblers, they are called. People who are easily susceptible to the lure of that pot at the end of the rainbow.

And you know what research will tell us, Mr. Speaker, research tells us that this pot at the end of the rainbow is most alluring to the young people, teenagers. Now if adults can get hooked on this business of getting quick and sudden riches, what impact is that going to have on teenagers when they get that habit early in life?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can have bingos, we can have charity lotteries, we can buy break-opens; all of these things, Mr. Speaker, are able to absorb a lot of money out of people. But I don't think that we have addicts sitting in bingo halls spending the last amount of money that they have. But when you take a look at how those folks over there are planning to reap the biggest windfall, this megaproject . . . they say they are opposed to megaprojects. This is the biggest megaproject ever undertaken in the province of Saskatchewan. And you're hinging your hopes on nothing less than the VLTs, than the VLTs, video lottery terminals.

And we have spoken to many people who have become

addicted to this process. And it is, by all accounts, one of the most vicious, one of the most insidious kinds of addictions that are possible, because it's got all the elements that are necessary to become addicted: the excitement, the fervour, the flashing lights, the pay-out. All of a sudden there's that win.

And then there's always the potential to hit the big jackpot, Mr. Speaker. That's what makes it so exciting for many people. And the pathological gambler does not have control over his faculties when it comes to this form of gambling.

Now we can argue whether it's 1.7 per cent or .9 per cent of the population that is automatically . . . we know they are going to become addicted like that. So what happens to these? Why would a government, in its right sense, go about advertising, exploiting, proliferising — if there is such a word — increasing the numbers of gambling opportunities in this province, knowing full well that they are going to create a miserable life for many of the people of Saskatchewan; knowing full well that there are going to be people that will need medication, doctors, and counsellors to pull back a resemblance of sanity in their lives because they have been gripped with this gambling bug?

And you know that because originally you thought that it was only going to be \$500,000. That would cover enough of the expense necessary to do this addiction counselling. I've been told that when you have one person coming for addiction counselling, to do a proper job with follow-up is going to cost \$50,000 a shot. Well you thought — to show again that the seat-of-the-pants approach that you folks are taking — you thought \$500,000 should be enough. But you've already admitted in this budget that we have before us right now that you've already allocated \$1.5 million for addiction counselling. So the problems are greater than you thought they would be.

And yet what are you doing? Again in question period today, Mr. Speaker, I raised the question of: well you said you would only have so-and-so many VLTs in this province. And you're taking some of them out of the Buffalo Buck days in Regina here, some of the machines. You removed them; scattered them around the province. And now when we talk to the manager of the Regina Exhibition here, he says . . . this is what he said and I just happened to find it; I didn't think I was going to find this piece of paper.

(1430)

But I can quote directly now, Mr. Speaker, instead of just summarizing on his behalf:

"In . . . peak periods (he says), we clearly won't have enough machines to satisfy the demand."

Now that the so-called extra machines have been removed. But:

That may not be very long, since Buffalo Buck will replace its VLTs with slot machines when the new casino planed for Union . . .

And the members opposite say, right on. Mr. Speaker, that is what we're concerned about. Is a slot machine a VLT? Well a slot machine in my estimation and what I know about them is even more insidious. And probably would even be more addictiveness . . . create more addictiveness and readiness to be addicted than the VLTs. You have the clamour of the coins coming out; you have the pulling of that big, one-armed bandit arm that it has.

So besides that, so now we have a definitive number, and I don't know what that definitive number is any more, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly I lost track whether it's 3,600 now plus a 1,000 to be added, 500 in the native-run ones, and 500 in Regina — or what it is.

But if that is the cap that they are planning to maintain, where do the slot machines fit in? Is this a new gamut that they've come up with? And quite candidly, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that the slot machines were mentioned in that FSIN agreement; they're in there.

But for whatever reason, and I guess I'm not a legalistic type of an individual, I did not pick that out until recently — that there's another avenue for them to expand even further, and that is to add slot machines to the other opportunities that these folks are planning for people.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very obvious to the people of Saskatchewan that this is not a well-thought-out approach by the government. I think, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, that it was a knee-jerk reaction, a knee-jerk reaction by this government when they realized what we had been saying all along: that this Government of Saskatchewan in the '80s, late '80s and early '90s, didn't have enough money to do what was supposed to be done.

And when they finally took the reins of power and realized that what we had been saying all along was true, they said well, let's cook the books and see what we can do with a huge deficit which we can rectify over a relatively short period of time, enough to be re-elected, enough to take the minds of the people of Saskatchewan off of the promise that they had made in '91. And perhaps we can regain the confidence for the upcoming election.

Mr. Speaker, that I believe is rather the darker side of their motivation. And the darker side of their motivation was to get in as much money out of the people of Saskatchewan as possible.

And the way to do that is through video machines, expanded gambling, and now we recognize the potential of slot machines being added to this whole scenario. It's the greedy eyes of government; that's the fundamental motivator, where principles, where the social fabric of this province are willing to be . . . they are willing to sacrifice them in the name of the almighty buck.

And whoever happens to fall by the wayside in the agenda that

this government has set up, well so be it. We'll set up a little bit of fun. We'll hire a few counsellors, and that should take care of that problem, as long as the dollar signs reflecting from the greedy eyes of this government . . . that is the justification. That is the justification because the end is the deficit, and whatever means have to be accomplished, at whatever cost it may happen to be, that is not significant.

So members across the way, I think . . . and I think that's why the minister is so sensitive. I think that's why the Premier is so sensitive. I think that that's why we've had five ministers of gambling, trying to get a hold on this, because I think you people are beginning to realize that the gambling adventure that you embarked upon is your Achilles' heel. It's your Achilles' heel.

You've done a lot of mean things to the people of this province. And I don't want to get into the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) and the farmers and the judges and the breaking of contracts and all that kind of stuff.

But I do think that you have broken another contract with the people of this province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to go so far as to say, you've never had a contract with the people of this province when it comes to gambling.

You never talked about it. And you're ashamed of it. I can see that in your eyes as I'm talking to you. Many of you are not looking me in the eye; you're looking at my belt. Because you are ashamed — you are ashamed, sir — of this process. I know that you are. You are ashamed of what you are doing, and you are not wholeheartedly supporting this process.

Why am I so confident? Well let's take a look at the throne speech. We spent seven days debating the throne speech. Right? We spent seven days debating the throne speech. And here you are, embarked on a major new direction for this province. You didn't have the nerve to tell the people about this in the '91 election. You didn't have the nerve to mention it. Not one mention of it.

The seven days that we talked in this latest throne speech didn't make one mention of gambling — even now, Mr. Speaker. Even now, currently, this session, not a mention. Not a word. You're hoping it would go away. You're hoping that we won't talk about it.

In Public Accounts this morning, Mr. Speaker . . . I'm not a member of Public Accounts, but I am the Gaming critic, and our members in Public Accounts asked me to come into that committee to question the officials of the Gaming Commission so that we could get some idea of the direction — where have you been, where are we, and where are we going? And the government members on that committee tried their best to prevent me from being able to speak today.

Those members did. That member over there — I will resist; I don't want to embarrass him — made the comment that I really didn't have any right to be the first speaker in that committee

because I was not a regular member. I was not a regular member.

And I object to that because I do not like being muzzled. I do not like being intimidated. Because we have a message, Mr. Speaker, and the message is to that government, that your policy that you're embarked upon is your Achilles' heel. It's going to pull you down.

Because people object to being used. People object to being used. And that's exactly what you're doing. And people are telling us in no uncertain terms, try to talk some sense into this government so that they will listen and give us a say. You know we could . . . if I got a commitment from the minister that yes, we believe that people should have a say, if she would say that I'd sit down and this would be the end of the road.

Give that commitment that you'll have that plebiscite question or that referendum question in conjunction with the next election, and people would be satisfied. And then, democracy having taken its course, that would be the end of it. Democracy rules.

If people told you folks, yes, we want that, then you'll have it. No more arguments from me. I'm not doing this from a moralistic point of view or whatever. I'm just objecting in the manner in which it is being presented to the people of this province and their inability to have their voice heard.

And that's what I'm trying to do during this debate this afternoon, is to make my voice heard or the people's voices heard through me. And maybe some of you members, maybe some of you back-benchers that I know for a fact do not agree with this process, will have the courage as the member from Rosemont, for example, has done in this Assembly. He said, these are my standards. You are not fulfilling those and so therefore I cannot support you. And that's the proper thing to do. I still don't agree with him, but he stood up and said no, I can't go along with this government. And that's to be commended, Mr. Speaker.

You folks are out of touch; the minister is out of touch; the Premier is out of touch. He's out of touch because he says, if I had my druthers, if I could have the scenario that I would want, I wouldn't have gambling. The minister herself, the fifth minister of gambling now, Mr. Speaker, has gotten up in this House and essentially said and expressed the same emotions.

Well if you don't believe in something, then don't do it. What's forcing you to do it? She says, well we can't be an economic island unto ourselves. If the rest of the province have it, I guess we'll have to have it. The Premier says, well boy, we've got to do it because if we don't the FSIN is going to be down on our back and we can't have that.

And so they succumb, they succumb to the threats that are in direct . . . the antithesis of what their principles are all about, Mr. Speaker. And that does not speak well for this government, or for any government for that matter.

And so what do you do? Well then you light up your blame thrower and say, well don't blame us; don't blame us. We wouldn't really want to do this if we didn't have to. But we have to because the Indians made us do it. The Indians made us do it. That was the first excuse that was given.

Then we're given the excuse . . . well which one do you want next? Then we were given the excuse, well the businessmen want us to do it. And we've talked to businessmen. We've had some good meetings with businessmen in this place, in Regina. And they give some powerful arguments on a business side, why it should be done. But is business right when they say that the economic spin-offs are good enough, are large enough, to make up for the downsides on this experiment?

Well I'll give you my idea on that. I don't think it is. And this is a personal philosophy that I have. I do not think that the business community in Saskatchewan in the long run is going to gain by a proliferation of gambling opportunities.

Why? Because the jobs that are created, Mr. Speaker, are not real jobs. And I hasten to add that for the people who are going to be working in the casinos, for the people who are going to be given a pay cheque, for them it will be meaningful. Absolutely no doubt about it. For some of them it will be the first pay cheque that they have received in a long, long time — perhaps the first one in their life other than perhaps hand-outs from the Department of Social Services.

But these are not meaningful jobs in the sense that no wealth is being created, nothing new is being made. There's nothing that you can put your hand on and say, look, Mr. Speaker, this is what I got for this effort; this is what I got for this money. There is no wealth being created, and we all know that. You members across the way know that the only thing that is happening is that you're shifting from one pocket into another pocket.

And do you know what I object to? Is that it's coming out of the pocket of the poor, those people who are least able to afford it, and it's going into the pocket of the government.

That's your motivation, ladies and gentlemen. That's your motivation. There's no wealth created by this.

Well when I say no, I tended, Mr. Speaker, to exaggerate it sometimes. And I know my mom used to tell me that I've told you a million times not to exaggerate. And then I still go ahead and do it, I guess. Because there may be the slight income, and I have to give recognition to the fact that there may be travellers passing through who will leave a few bucks at this place and at that place as they're travelling through. And of course that's money that is being brought into the province. That may be wealth creation. Or the few people that are not going to go to Vegas because we have the opportunity here.

(1445)

But the amount, the proportion, of that type of influx of money

is very minimal when you compare it to the negative impact that this gaming is going to have throughout the province.

So that was point number one under the heading that I'm using here as the blame thrower. Because the Premier, the minister of gambling, have said that if we had our druthers we wouldn't do gambling. But we have to do it. We're being forced to do it against our will. And we're being forced to do that by the FSIN, we're being forced to do that by the business community, and we're being forced to do that by the churches, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess I could roll the next one into that same category — the churches and the charities. They are the ones that are to blame, said the minister of gambling, because they are the ones that started it. They are the ones that created this mental image in pictures, minds, that buying tickets, buying raffle tickets, and playing bingo is okay, that that is a good form of entertainment. And they were causing so much hassle about it that we were just forced to expand the gaming possibilities.

Mr. Speaker, that type of an assessment and that type of blame-throwing is a cop-out — that's all it is.

Mr. Speaker, we have had people that have felt the pain, the human cost, the human toll, where we have — and I have the articles here somewhere — where we have at least three individuals — maybe four, maybe more by now, I may not be aware of all of these individuals — who have stolen money, large sums of money, Mr. Speaker, in the teens of thousands of dollars from churches, from charitable organizations like SARCAN where they worked. They stole money.

Why did they steal money? Because they were so caught up, they were so caught up in the addiction to this gambling, that they were prepared to take the risk of stealing money, and they put it into the machines.

Mr. Speaker, who got 85 per cent of that money that was stolen? Who got 85 per cent of that money? This government . . .

An Hon. Member: — People did.

Mr. Neudorf: — And the member says ironically, people did. The people did.

These folks who are addicted to their addiction stole money — thousands, tens of thousands of dollars — and stuck it into those slot machines, and the Premier stuck it into his government's pocket. That's the scenario that is being played out in this province, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I tend to become just a little bit miffed when I see what is really happening here.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the epitome of this whole exercise and the government's responsibility and how the people of this province are viewing this government came out in the *Star-Phoenix* on Saturday, April 1. Mr. Speaker, Saturday, April 1 was rather a memorial day to me because that was the

day in the Rosthern constituency when the good folks of Rosthern decided who their next MLA was going to be. As you know, I've already announced that I won't be here to harangue members opposite in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — From the thunderous applause given so boisterously and so on, I must be making my point here today.

But during that period of time, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night when they chose the new MLA for the constituency of Rosthern that will be representing Rosthern after the next election, some of the people — and that's no April Fool's statement either — some of the people came up to me, Mr. Speaker, and said, have you read the *Star-Phoenix* today? Have you read the *Star-Phoenix*?

Well I said, I seldom read it to begin with and I certainly don't read it on Saturdays. But anyway what's the problem? And this individual came up and other people came up and said, well on the a.m. update in the *Star-Phoenix*, there's an article in there. You've got to do something about it.

I said, well what's this? Well the government is involved in the gambling industry now and they're taking our dollars and they're gambling on the gambling and then they're losing. And yet . . . You've got to do something about it.

So I said, oh sure. This sounds terrible. We got to look into that. So we drove home. About 45 minutes later, we got home. And then on my answering machine, the lady apologized, and the other people said, tell him that we're sorry that we brought this to his attention.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is what they were concerned about. And they said, on the local update it says: "Ten thousand quick picks, please." This is out of the *Star-Phoenix*, headline, front page.

The provincial government thinks taxpayers are willing to gamble to reduce the accumulated \$14-billion accumulated debt . . . (the Gaming minister said, and I'm leaving out a couple of words,) . . . announced Friday the province has taken out a \$10,000 weekly subscription to Lotto 6-49 in the hope of hitting the jackpot. "We see it as a good tradeoff . . . (the minister said.) If we win, the province wins big-time, and if we don't, the money — or much of it anyway — (85 per cent) still comes back to Saskatchewan in support for sports and cultural organizations. So we really can't lose. And what's a lousy \$10,000 a week?

Front page, *Star-Phoenix*. Well were people some upset, Mr. Speaker. And these folks were particularly upset when they found out later on that when it tells you to go to D15, there is no D15 because obviously this was an April Fool's Day joke that the *Star-Phoenix* ran.

Mr. Speaker, that's funny in a sense, but I didn't laugh at it. Not too many people have laughed at it because I think maybe even the *Star-Phoenix* fails to appreciate the depth to which this government has sunk in the eyes of many people in Saskatchewan. I think that's what this tells me. That's what this tells me.

You know it was an implication of you folks in the eyes of many. People are willing to believe . . . and this is nonsense, I'm glad to say. This was nonsense, but the interesting thing is and the telling thing and what should be imprinted on your minds, people, is that the folks of Saskatchewan are willing to believe something like that. They are actually willing to believe that you would stoop to something like that. And that's the scary thing.

And I think that is the thing that you folks should be very, very aware of. You haven't got the mandate. The people didn't know that you were going to embark the province on this new direction in gambling, and they are simply saying before you do that we want to say we have a grave misgiving about the direction that you are taking this government.

And I say to members opposite, you are going to be, you are going to be responsible for your own downfall. The Roman Empire . . . and I don't want to get into that because that's a favourite topic of mine, as a history teacher, but the Roman Empire did not fall from without. The Roman Empire was not overrun by barbarians insomuch as the Roman Empire fell because of a weakness from within. The decay from within is what caused the fall of the Roman Empire. And I'm just now reminding you of that in a very gentle way, members opposite, that what you are doing now is eroding, pardon me, eroding the base of your support.

The people out there are looking at you and saying, well if they're capable of that, then what else are they capable of? And the trust factor is eroded. And I'm saying that to you in a most sincere way, in a most sincere way, members opposite.

The motion that I was making, Mr. Speaker, or going to make . . . In the flurry of activity over the last half hour, Mr. Speaker, I have found it here. This is the motion that I would like all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of. And it states thus, Mr. Speaker.

That this Assembly, in accordance with section 6 of The Referendum and Plebiscite Act, approve the following questions to be put to the electorate on a plebiscite: (1) Do you approve of the government's plan to operate casinos in Saskatchewan? (2) Do you approve of government-operated video lottery terminals in Saskatchewan? And further, that this Assembly direct that the plebiscite putting these questions to the electorate be conducted in accordance with The Referendum and Plebiscite Act in conjunction with the next provincial general election.

Mr. Speaker, I so move, seconded by my colleague from

Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments and to present a few arguments in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague, the member from Rosthern — a motion that I think, when most people across this province have an opportunity to review it and they review the facts, I think you will find that in general people in Saskatchewan would say, yes we would like to have a vote.

In fact just the example of Saskatoon is a good example to follow and to take the lead on. The fact that Saskatoon did give their electorate a chance last fall during civic elections to decide whether or not they should have, or allow, a casino in their city, and it was an overwhelming vote against.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by reading from an article from *Canadian Living* of 1993. The headline is:

Wanna bet we've gone too far? Gambling creates jobs, tax revenue, and tourism. It also ruins lives. Marcia Kay explores the pros and cons of video lottery terminals in Atlantic Canada, Ontario's casino projects, and bingo on native reserves.

And I'd like to read a few comments out of this article, and I have a few other articles I would like to lay out before the Assembly on some of the arguments. Certainly the government will appreciate arguments for, but I believe there are more arguments against the expansion, or even the enhancement of gambling in our province.

The article begins in this manner:

Step right up, ladies and gentlemen. Place your bets. Here at this great gambling emporium that we call Canada, we've got games of chance for everyone. Bingo, Monte Carlo nights, horse racing, casinos, raffles, lotteries — how about a Lotto 6/49 ticket? As the ads say, imagine the freedom.

And that's one of the things that we are all bombarded with as we happen to be viewing our TVs — every once in a while these ads come on and that comment about imagine the freedom, although it doesn't indicate that the odds of winning are probably 14 million:1 for the jackpot. And you'll need a heck of an imagination to imagine that freedom. You'd better have a good imagination.

Or try your luck on our special regional games. Over by the Eastern wall we've got the latest Atlantic-style video lottery terminals, considered one of the most addictive forms of gambling. It can take less than 10 seconds to play a whole game — want to bet you can stop after just one?

At the center table, get ready to check out Ontario's first government-run casino, opening soon in Windsor. Lay

your wagers on Windsor's chances of avoiding the crime, poverty, and violence that Atlantic City couldn't.

And be sure to visit the Western section, where natives are battling the provinces for the right to run casinos on reserves. Will casinos represent the return of the buffalo for natives, or a cash cow for governments? Roll the dice and see.

If you're like an estimated 95 per cent of adult Canadians, you've gambled at least once. And governments are finding out what organized crime has known for a long time: there's big money in gambling. In 1991, Canadians spent more than \$10 billion in this country on legal bets and wagers and up to four times that amount on illegal ones. As governments fall over themselves in their haste to get a piece of the action, they attempt to come across as wise, cautious regulators, but sometimes sound more like cheap carnival hucksters.

(1500)

There's no question that legalized gambling is on a roll in Canada. But to what end? It's like a roulette wheel: round she goes; where she stops, nobody knows.

BANDITS ON THE COAST?

"I feel like taking an axe to them," says a Halifax single mother who stole from her boss to finance her addiction to electronic slot machines, also called video lottery terminals or VLTs. Another pathological gambler, Michael Slaunwhite, an unemployed cook in Halifax, lost \$40,000 and was close to suicide when he quit playing VLTs last December. He warns, "Stay away from them, or you'll end up like me. Three years ago, a few months after VLTs came on the scene, there were only three members in the Halifax chapter of Gamblers Anonymous. Now as many as 300 people have attended at least one of the group's meetings.

Since December 1990, thousands of VLTs have appeared throughout the entire Atlantic region. Similar to the traditional one-arm bandits, you simply touch the screen to try for three cherries or lemons in a row, or to play poker or blackjack against the machine. If you win, you get a credit for up to \$500 cash. The illusion is that you have choice and control; the reality is that a randomly programmed microchip decides when you win or lose.

VLTs represent a transition in Canada from what's called the softcore, passive gambling of lotteries and bingo to a more hard-core, interactive process. But unlike casino table games which draw an audience, VLTs allow players to be alone and anonymous, which appeals to new gamblers, especially women. And their high-tech, colourful appearance and instant gratification attract the young. "There's no question VLTs will

increase the number of pathological gamblers," says Tibor Barsony, executive director of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling.

But here's the flip side: VLTs generate huge profits. In the tiny province of Prince Edward Island, total VLT revenues after prize payouts for the year ending March 1993 rang in at more than \$12.7 million, or almost \$100 per person. The provincial government's take rose in June from 35 to 50 per cent. (It's as high as 65 per cent in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, where there's no private-sector involvement.)

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague's motion reads, many people across this province I'm sure have seen articles such as this one, and many people are quite well aware of the problems that have already been associated, some of the problems that have already come so close to home because of possibly a close friend or a loved one who's become addicted to this form of gambling.

And due to that addiction, as we've seen across this province, a number of people have already been charged with fraud for having stolen from employers, stolen from SARCAN, stolen from their place of business to enhance or feed the addiction and this gambling habit that has already got them caught.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to note . . . And I've personally gone into hotels where you go past the bar and you used to go into the coffee shop area and you'd see a number of people sitting around having coffee. And what I found very interesting one day, shortly after the VLTs moved into this particular community, and I'm sure it's no different in any other community, walking into the coffee shop at about the same hour to find how many fewer people were sitting in the coffee shop having a cup of coffee; that having sat in a position and not intentionally doing it but I happened to be looking out the doorway and noticing the traffic that was flowing into the bar section.

I went around the corner just to see what the attraction was. And the individuals that I used to go and sit and have coffee with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were not in the coffee shop having coffee; they were now sitting in front of a VLT terminal.

And one would wonder how much money was wagered in that time period where they may have taken 15 or 20 minutes for coffee, spent 75 cents or 85 cents for a cup of coffee, had a good visit. They were now sitting in front of a VLT machine, and one can only guess what may have gone into that machine.

To enhance, if you will, it just was a proof positive to myself and I'm sure to many others, that this is a very addictive form of gambling and people can get caught up in it. And as the article said, if you want to bet that you can play one game and walk away from the machine, I don't know of anyone has.

I'm sure if we took a survey around this province of people who have begun to, and gone and made use of the VLT machines and played their hand at trying to take on these VLT one-arm

bandits or the VLT bandits across this province, we'd find that many people thought, well I'm going in and I'll play one game; that's all I'll play.

But you know, one game goes by so fast, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that next thing you know, well it's only a loonie; I'll put in another loonie. Next thing you know they've gone through five or a dozen loonies. Or people may go into the bar with, say, 10 loonies in their pocket, and they're going to stop after they put 10 loonies in the machine, whether they've won or not. But the reality is it seems to me, just having observed some of the individuals as they've played the machine, there's an allurements to those machines such that you've come so close, one more loonie, and next time I'm going to win. And so another loonie goes in.

And it's unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people become swallowed up with the machines. And rather than the \$10 that they had originally intended of wagering, they've moved into 20, 25, and \$50, to the point, as I indicated earlier, we have sums of money where people have actually been charged with fraud, of stealing from their employers in the neighbourhood of from 9 to 25 to \$50,000, and that's a substantial sum of money.

In fact in some cases homes are being literally torn apart because of one member's addiction to these machines. Or an individual has run their line of credit to the limit or taken all the money out of the general account or else run the charge cards to the limit so that the collectors are at the door, and the other partner is wondering what's going to happen. How are they going to meet the needs of the home because the money's been depleted, and there's no credit available because they've lost this money?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I see, and I think what most people across this province see, we see that we've got a government running with a gaming policy that as one headline reads: lacks direction and lacks leadership. We've got a gaming policy . . . In an article in October 22, 1994, the headline was "Gambling bomb ready to explode." And I quote: "The Roy Romanow government is sitting on a bombshell and desperately trying to figure how to defuse it."

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure if they're looking at how to really try and defuse it as much as they're looking at the fact that the greed for the money and the injection, cash injection into the treasury of this province, is more important than the well-being, the social well-being of this province. Here's the next headline, reading: gambling, greed and government.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to hear the comments from members opposite, and we trust that these members will indeed take the time to stand and address some of these concerns, their concerns vocally and address the public in this Assembly as they have an opportunity later in the afternoon to address the motion that's in front of us because certainly the motion that is laid out before us is a motion that is available for everyone to take part in.

I'm sure there are members in this Assembly that have differing views and differing opinions. Maybe many members are caught up with the idea that we need the revenue that will be generated. And to think that the revenue that casinos will generate is going to be additional revenue in this province, and to the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a fallacy. You talk to any jurisdiction, any jurisdiction that has expanded or introduced gambling, or expanded gambling into their communities or into their province or into their jurisdiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what do you find?

They will indicate to you that they did not indeed see the expansion in revenue. Yes, the casino or the VLTs was a new form of revenue. The unfortunate part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that it may have been a new form of revenue but it took revenue out of other forms that used to come into the province or into that jurisdiction or into the city. It took revenue out of businesses that would have been spent in local businesses. And so the reality was, it wasn't new money, it just came in a different avenue.

And I guess if there's one thing a person could look at and governments will be looking at, the fact is there's probably fewer complaints about revenue generated through gambling than revenue generated through taxation. And yet I think most people at the end of the day would prefer to see that the revenue they are putting into government coffers for expenditure comes directly from them, where they know where it is; it's an upfront . . . an upfront form of revenue such as taxation.

Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and the member from Moose Jaw just wondering what tax increases. I don't think we have to go too far to talk about tax increases. We've had all kinds of tax increases. And I'm not sure if it's the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow or the other riding in Moose Jaw, but I would indicate that we have . . .

An Hon. Member: — Palliser.

Mr. Toth: — Moose Jaw Palliser, I believe.

The fact is that we have, in this province, we have seen other forms of taxation. Well the members opposite would suggest we haven't increased taxes. I don't know if you can go to anyone on the street and suggest they haven't had tax increases when they pull their power bill out and they see the increases they've seen in their power rates, the increases they've seen in their telephone rates, the increases in their natural gas rates. And while the government did give a reduction a couple of weeks ago in natural gas, I understand Alberta has reduced it even further.

So I'm wondering if the government today is willing to stimulate industry in this province and stimulate the economy of this province by even reducing the natural gas rates in this province a further 2 or 3 or 4 per cent, following the lead of Alberta.

And what I also find interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is how

the government has the types . . . or the forms the government has chosen to try and calm people and to try and lead people to believe that expanded gambling and casinos are the answer to this province.

And I'd like to read from an article that came out of one of our local papers, and it was actually in the *Carlyle Observer*, and I'd like to read this article to you. This article was printed prior to the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention. And it reads this way, "Gambling with our future" is the headline:

This week, mayors and aldermen from Saskatchewan villages, towns, and cities will meet at SUMA. They will hear from many speakers and discuss things that pertain to running the province's urban governments. Resolutions will be presented and delegates will vote. Recommendations will be made. Others will be rejected.

Always high on the list of discussion is the subject of how much money the communities will receive from the provincial government. This has a big effect on the local government's budget and therefore on its people and how it will affect the mill rate.

It goes on to say:

It is interesting that just prior to the SUMA convention, the government announced that communities will be getting some VLT cash. This is interesting, first, because the discussion is still hot and heavy on the use of these machines. There are both pro and con sides on the debate and both sides are being more and more vocal.

The amount of money a community gets from the VLT option will depend on how much is spent in that community. In other words, the government is encouraging people to use the machines to gamble to put more money into the community.

On one hand, the people are asked to gamble away their hard-earned cash, so the community will have more money. Money spent in a VLT does not go into the community as much as it would if it was spent in the purchase of goods at a community business. It is not supporting as many families or creating as many jobs. By encouraging the use of VLT machines, the government is on very dangerous ground with people's spending habits and the welfare of the community as a whole.

What will be the reaction of the government if they implement a scheme that will put gambling money into the community? They're talking about 10 per cent right now. When they implement this resolution, will they cut the government funding by 10 per cent? Ten per cent of VLT revenue would probably not match 10 per cent of government funding.

It is a huge gamble for communities, or more like a huge risk. It will look good on the provincial government side of the ledger but would more than likely set the communities up for tax increases for the locals. The locals' option is then pay higher taxes or gamble more.

The whole situation is one big gamble, and as usual the house will be the big winner.

As you can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this article basically lays out many of the questions and the arguments that are taking place across this province.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, when the government in the House made their announcement of their willingness to share 10 per cent of the revenues from VLTs, I'm sure a lot of communities thought that sounds good. And a lot of communities looked at this revenue as being an additional source of revenue, revenue that would be needed in view of the fact that the government has offloaded, as far as provincial funding to local governments, for the past number of years.

But as the editorial also pointed out, does that mean if the government gives you 10 per cent of the VLT revenue, that they won't, on the other hand, turn around and take 10 per cent from the upfront, matching contributions, government funding?

(1515)

And as the article again stated, if they do that, then it's a substantial reduction to local government expenditures. Plus, as we saw earlier in the article, putting money into VLTs really doesn't do a lot for a community. But I find it interesting that the government would attempt to buy off local government employees by offering them 10 per cent.

However it's interesting to note the Liberal leader is no different. Happened to attend SARM — and I must take a moment to mention this — listening to the Liberal leader. And she wasn't to be outdone by the Premier in his announcement. She suggested to SARM that she'd be willing to share 50 per cent of the revenue from VLT machines — 50 per cent of the VLT revenue. And yet while she stood in this House, she argued against gambling.

One has to wonder where the Liberals are on this question. On one hand they argue against it; on the other hand they're ready to share more money. The flip-flop of the Liberals is certainly coming into play again. They're doing very well. And the member from Shaunavon would like to respond, and he'll have the same opportunity as any other member in this Assembly. And we'll certainly give him that opportunity when I have finished my comments regarding this issue and regarding this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a number of articles, and I have one here from the *Reader's Digest*, and again it brings out a number of the concerns that I raised a little earlier, that *Canadian Living*

had raised regarding VLTs and gambling expansion in our country.

And it brings out the fact that when you look at it, the amount of revenue by population, it looks fairly high per individual. But the reality is, how many people actually spend their time in front of these VLT machines? So what does it really boil down to? Rather than a hundred dollars, in most cases it's 2,000 to \$2,500 or more — or even higher, depending on the jurisdiction. So what it's saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this becomes a real annoyance in our society. It raises havoc in homes.

I'd like to just read an article from or make a few comments from an article that appeared in the *Calgary Herald* in February 1995 about a small community that did a study: "Bonnyville study offers interesting gambling facts."

Bonnyville has 5,000 residents, with another 10,000 in the surrounding area, yet the folks in this rural blip managed to gamble \$4.1 million in one year.

. . . (or) \$275 for every man, woman, and child — but it's still only a tiny part of the story.

Nine per cent of the population — fewer than 1,500 people — gambled away 69 per cent of that total, or about \$2.8 million. To unload so much money, the hard-core gamblers had to throw away nearly \$2,000 (in cash) each.

As I indicated, it sounds good when you use the total population, but how many people actually spend time gambling or spend time in casinos or in front of these VLT machines? The fortunate part is that number is still relatively low.

But the realization, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated earlier from the earlier article I read from *Canadian Living*, the fact is that VLTs create a greater opportunity, or enhanced opportunity if you will, for individuals who may feel they're not gamblers in part. But because they are individual machines, you're really not out in the public. It's much easier to start playing and start gambling through the use of VLT machines. The next thing you know, the person who said they would never gamble finds themselves in an addictive position.

This study also indicated:

The study identified over four per cent of the population as either "pathological" or "problem" gamblers, but also found an equal number who were on the edge of becoming problem bettors.

So rather than 4, it was basically looking at 8 per cent. And suggesting that "the hooked population can (easily) rise to 10 per cent."

And the article also indicated that:

More than 90 per cent wanted either less gambling or no more. Only 4.3 per cent, almost exactly the total of addicted gamblers, wanted more (gambling).

So while the government would argue that the reason they must go ahead and proceed with gambling casinos in this province, the reason they must proceed with the delivery of VLT machines around this province and making them available is that people are asking for it.

Yet the only people who are really asking for it are the individuals who are tied up — the problem, the addictive gamblers, those individuals who would spend time in front of the machines which at this time are a low number in view of the average population. But one has to wonder what it would grow to in the future as the access to gambling becomes more accessible.

There's one other point I want to bring out of this article as well, but other . . . What we're talking about . . . and the government has talked about revenues, and governments right across this country have talked about additional revenues. This article mentions that. It says:

The casinos bring in plenty of money. But other businesses suffer, and experts agree that no new wealth is created unless 50 per cent of the bets come from outside the region.

So one would have to ask, what real revenue generation are we going to see in this province? Can we expect more than 50 per cent of the individuals who would go into the bars around this province to place their bets at a VLT machine or that would go to the Buffalo Buck Casino downtown or to the new casino planned? Can we expect that more than 50 per cent of the patrons will come from outside of the province?

I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, or, Deputy Speaker, if people are willing to come up from the southern states to gamble in Saskatchewan when they can go to Las Vegas. There's more of the glitter of Las Vegas I think has been a long-time attraction. So I'm not exactly sure that we will have people coming from the South to the North. We may have the odd person travelling through in the summertime. And I trust, Mr. Speaker, that we can portray our province as a beautiful province to come and spend some time and some of your tourist dollars and tour through because we do have a lot of beautiful sights in this province outside of the bars and the VLT machines.

But on the other hand maybe if we're looking at gambling in this province, maybe the government is looking at trying to draw people from the North. Now I'm not sure where they're going to draw people from the North. Certainly residents of the southern part of the province of Saskatchewan might think you want to, you would go to Las Vegas because it's a little nicer in the wintertime, so someone coming — say — in the northern parts of the province or might want to come to the southern part to enjoy the beautiful weather. I don't know what the government's looking at.

But the reality is, if we're going to see any substantial increase, we need to receive it from people outside the jurisdiction. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, no matter where you go, every other jurisdiction has enhanced gambling, so we will not have a large influx of people to gamble here because they're already gambling in their own jurisdictions. And I guess that's one of the reasons the government is suggesting we need gambling machines because we want to keep people at home; we want them to gamble at home, not away from home.

I think, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, basically what Saskatchewan people are saying, let's be different. Do we always have to follow everyone else? The Premier has argued that he's against gambling. Well someone would say and people have said to me, if the Premier's against gambling, then why doesn't he give some real leadership? How many other members have said one thing outside of this Assembly that they're against this policy or they're against that policy, but when it comes to voting on an issue or when it comes to standing up for what the electorate thinks, in this Assembly they may be against on the outside, but they tend to stand and support the government on the inside.

Mr. Speaker, the government has argued that by expanding gambling, by bringing in VLTs, it will not create a social problem in this province. Well I think the facts, the figures are now starting to point to the reality that gambling does create a major problem. More people with gambling problems are looking for help, say the people involved in helping services. Business is also growing for the operators of Saskatchewan's gambling hotline, as one article says. Gamblers Anonymous is booming.

That tells me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people themselves thought they could try the game just once, thought they'd just spend \$10 at the machines, but before long they found themselves hooked. And as we've been trying to warn the government for the last eight months to a year that if you enhance gambling in this province, you will find that you will need more money to help with the addiction services.

And the government has certainly indicated that they realize now that there's more money needed than they originally had targeted. I believe they had originally thrown out something like \$500 million. Now they've got \$1.5 million targeted to Gamblers Anonymous. It's an indication, Mr. Speaker, that it is becoming . . . or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is becoming a major problem.

There again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at that funding, there are many people across this province would suggest to you that that money could be more properly . . . and become more beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan if it were targeted to the areas like health and education, rather than having to put it into a health program that helps gamblers to overcome their addiction.

Mr. Speaker, the government as well has indicated that communities really do not have a choice whether they get VLT

machines or not. And we've had two communities in the last month or so that have been in the news, where they wanted to outlaw VLTs or the expansion of VLTs in their communities.

Punnichy was one of the communities that asked for and wanted to opt out of a program that would expand the VLTs to their community. And what they were saying:

"We are after the right of our citizens to be able to vote within our village to accept or reject VLTs," says Punnichy's mayor, Brian Nagy, following a meeting between . . . Punnichy's Council and Lynda Haverstock.

Punnichy has been trying to get the same option that has allowed northern towns — for the people of the community to decide whether or not to opt out of VLTs.

Now it's interesting to note the government on one hand is saying, the community of Punnichy doesn't really have that opportunity. The community of Punnichy really doesn't have that ability. It's the businesses determine whether or not they want the VLTs.

Well I can guarantee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if you're going to receive some revenue from these machines, I don't know of any business that would refuse them, especially the businesses where the VLTs are being placed and they're being placed in local bars. And many of these businesses, in some communities, are very run-down facilities that have had a hard time trying to exist and were looking for another avenue of generating revenue, and so of course, of course they would like the VLTs in their community. They would like the VLTs in their places of business.

I'd like to read a letter from a citizen of Punnichy speaking out and her letter is entitled, Gambling: socially responsible?

Dear Editor:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I sent to Eldon Lautermilch today. Congratulations to Brian Nagy and the Punnichy Council to Rev. Beaudoin and the pastoral group for standing up for what is right and just.

Eldon Lautermilch, Minister Sask. Liquor and Gaming

Mr. Lautermilch, I do not agree with the policy your government has taken in regard to the introduction of V.L.T.'s across the province. I am particularly alarmed that a town like Punnichy of which I am a former resident, has no choice about accepting V.L.T.'s into their community. A democratic country should allow its people to have a choice. I know several individuals who have gambling addictions and fear that the cost to society and to these people and their families will far outweigh the financial benefits the government hopes to achieve. I do not believe that gaming can ever be a "socially responsible" industry as you state in your letter to Punnichy. I agree whole heartedly with the local

pastoral group who assert that gambling will "victimize the most economically vulnerable". It is my strong feeling that if the people of Saskatchewan . . . (were) polled on this topic, the vast majority would say no to the introduction of VLT's. Please wake up and realize that you can't push these destructive things down our throats. You must find other ways to raise revenue for government services that will not destroy the social fabric of this province.

And that's one resident of the town of Punnichy, one resident of the province of Saskatchewan.

And we have another community, the community of La Ronge. When Mayor Morris Gabrush searches for a symbol of what he sees as the provincial government's greed and arrogance, he doesn't look further than the video lottery terminal. Mr. Gabrush said:

If we had a plebiscite, I'm 99 per cent sure they would never have been allowed. These machines bring down the standard of living of those who can least afford it."

Gabrush and several other businesses and political leaders in this community are fuming over the government's gambling policy. They claim the 36 VLTs operating in three different establishments are victimizing the poor, draining thousands of dollars out of the local economy and contributing to a sharp increase in crime (there were 493 property crimes reported in the town last year, an increase of more than 50 per cent from the year before).

What's more, they claim the government doesn't care.

"We've gone to the government and told them our concerns," said Gabrush.

"They've told us it's none of our business."

Gaming Minister Joanne Crofford, a La Ronge resident for 14 years, said VLT operators in the town would have to agree if the machines were to be removed.

She said the social and business impact of the slot machines probably is being "hyped" by La Ronge community leaders.

"I can't believe there is a totally major new problem having lived in La Ronge and knowing the people also spend money on liquor and bingo," said Crofford.

"At the end of the day, when you have a limited income, if you spend it in one day or four days, it still doesn't last forever."

(1530)

I think that's very unfortunate that a minister would speak so

flippantly at the problems that many people have run into because of the VLTs.

And the interesting point is, I believe, another argument the minister has indicated was that the people in La Ronge are arguing that they need the VLT machines and they indeed asked for it. Well yes, who asked for the machines?

As I indicated earlier, and the same case with Punnichy and many other communities, the individuals who argued for it and will continue to argue for it are the hoteliers across this province who do have the machines in their business. Why would they argue for them? Because they are a means of drawing people into their establishment and causing people to spend money in that establishment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many reasons why this government should rethink its position on gambling. And if this government is not willing to rethink, maybe they should indeed adhere to the principle that they continually argue about.

They call themselves New Democrats, or New Democratic Party, because they're supposedly a democratic form of government or a democratic party operating on the basis of democracy. It would seem to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if that were the truth, that the members opposite would indeed apply a form of democracy that would allow the residents of this province the opportunity to indeed give them a voice . . . or give a voice to speak to this government through a plebiscite or through a public vote.

And I would encourage the minister of Gaming in this province and her colleagues and the Premier to indeed take the time to put forward this question that has been raised through this motion. To put forward these two questions: do you approve of the government's plan to operate casinos in Saskatchewan; and number two, do you approve of the government-operated VLT, video lottery terminals, in Saskatchewan? And that, I would believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the members would indeed put these questions to the people, the people would respond.

And I believe people would speak out as overwhelmingly as they did in the three plebiscite questions placed in the last provincial election. And I believe the government would then have the mandate that they have basically been looking for to operate under whereby they would have the approval of the people.

The unfortunate part is I'm not exactly sure the government would want a mandate that the population of this province basically would give them, and that mandate would be to dismantle VLT terminals and not allow any more casinos or expanded gambling in the province of Saskatchewan.

So therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we sit down and we'll review the facts. We take the time to look at this question of gambling in this province somewhat more seriously; that we sit down and rationalize whether or not in the long run it is socially, morally acceptable;

whether the people of this province are really going to benefit; or whether we sit back and deal with a number of the issues and raise some of the revenue needed, as people have indicated to me, in the area of health — health care and health reform, the possibly of a premium.

One could argue, well that's a tax. Yes it is a tax, but everyone is contributing to their well-being rather than just trying to draw it from a few. You will find many people, Mr. Speaker, who would suggest, well if some people are silly enough to go and gamble and pay for my health reform or pay for my education, fine. I can accept that.

But I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we do give people a real opportunity, an open opportunity, an honest opportunity, to speak out, to voice their concerns and not just . . . I'm sure the members opposite have received many letters but I don't know if they've really been listening.

I'm sure they've received many letters against enhanced gambling, as well as they possibly have received some letters in favour of gambling, but I'm almost positive they've received more based on what we've received. And if the members opposite are willing to really allow the people an opportunity to vote, I would challenge the Premier and his colleagues to indeed pan the people of Saskatchewan, give them the opportunity to vote in a plebiscite, place these questions, and seek the guidance of the people in this province who have worked so diligently and so hard to build this province into what it is today.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks, I will be moving an amendment to the motion along the following lines:

That the Assembly endorse the government's plan to operate gaming in the province with a well-thought-out plan for controlled expansion which includes the support of hoteliers, exhibition associations, chambers of commerce, the FSIN, its tribal councils and 74 bands, and the tourism industry; commend the government for ensuring that new forms of gaming are introduced in a reasonable manner so they are sustainable; endorse the first program in the history of the province to address the social impacts of gaming; and ensure that all participants in the gaming industry and the general public will continue to be treated fairly and will benefit through consistent regulation and consumer protection.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, as we all do sometimes, that there were simple solutions to all of life's complicated problems. But most of us know that that's not the case.

The opposition says that they don't like gambling very much, to which I say, well who does? The fact is we have alcohol abuse in our society. We have abuse of tobacco products in our

society. Sometimes we have abuse of the proclivity to gamble. These are problems that we have.

But I think we know from experience that gambling has been around for a long time, as has alcohol, as has tobacco. And I think we know from experience that we can't snap our fingers and prohibit certain activities and expect that our problems will disappear. We can't wish our problems away.

I think it's easy for people in opposition to wish problems away and to be all things to all people and to say that if only they were the government, we wouldn't have these problems that we have, and we wouldn't have to deal with them. But in government you have to deal with these problems. And I think that that's what the government is trying to do.

I was a bit amused, Mr. Speaker, to hear the member from Rosthern talk about how when he was trying to ask questions about gambling this morning in the Public Accounts Committee, there was an attempt to stifle him. I think we all know, Mr. Speaker — and I can reassure the voters of Rosthern — that the member from Rosthern isn't easily stifled. I don't think the member from Rosthern has ever been stifled, and certainly he's not stifled when he tries to raise questions about the gaming policy of government.

I want to comment, Mr. Speaker, on the idea that every time you have a difficult problem to deal with, that as politicians and legislators it's okay just to duck the problem by saying, well we'll have a plebiscite. We'll have a vote of the people. And it sounds very democratic. The member from Moosomin said this was consistent with democracy.

It sounds fine, but I would say, Mr. Speaker, that when people take that approach, when they take the approach that you should have a vote province-wide on a difficult question rather than deal with that question here, as we are elected to do, it actually is a very cowardly approach to me because what it says to me is that instead of making decisions and accepting responsibility for those decisions and grappling with tough issues, that we just defer those questions to the public. That even though we're elected by the public and we're sent here to sit in this Chamber for weeks at a time and look at issues, that if we come up with a difficult problem, we're not going to deal with it, we're just going to have a province-wide vote in the next election.

And I have to say, with due respect to those who believe that that is how a democracy ought to work, that that simply is not my view of how a democracy should work. I think that it's the responsibility of the government of the day to make decisions on difficult issues, including gaming policy, and to accept responsibility for those decisions. And that is something that I'm prepared to do, and I think every member of the legislature should be prepared to do.

Now the members opposite, of course, talk about the evils of gambling, and any reasonable person would agree that gambling is not the most positive thing in society. But most

reasonable people would also agree that gambling is an activity that should be regulated by government, that that is one of government's jobs.

Now the members opposite were, as we all know, the government of this province from 1981 . . . or 1982, I'm sorry, to 1991, for nine years. And throughout those years, despite the fact that the members opposite say they don't like casinos and somehow if they were in charge we wouldn't have casinos, the fact of the matter is, as needs to be pointed out to the opposition from time to time, that throughout the time they were in government we had two major casinos in Saskatchewan, namely one in Regina at the exhibition and one in Saskatoon. And as well of course there are part-time casinos that operate from time to time.

Now the Government of Saskatchewan made a decision a few years ago, after the matter was examined by people who are knowledgeable about the gaming industry, to limit casino development in Saskatchewan to two locations.

Now the opposition has treated that decision somehow as a decision to introduce casino gaming into the province of Saskatchewan, to which I say that casino gaming originated in the province of Saskatchewan in the 1960s under a Liberal government, continued in the 1970s under a New Democratic government, continued in the 1980s under the government with which the member from Rosthern was associated and the member from Moosomin was associated.

And the Government of Saskatchewan currently has decided that, in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and in an effort to properly regulate the industry, we should have two casino locations in Saskatchewan — Regina and Saskatoon.

Now that policy has changed somewhat out of respect for the voters of Saskatoon who have indicated in a civic referendum, which is their right, that they're not enthusiastic about the policy of having a casino. The government has responded to that, as the government properly should, and has revisited the question with the FSIN.

But what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to inject a note of reality into this debate, is that if the members opposite were in government, the members opposite would not be able to snap their fingers and make this problem go away as they pretend they could.

The members opposite were in power in this province until 1991 and they did not abolish casino gambling in Saskatchewan, and nor, if the members opposite replaced this government, would they abolish VLTs in the province of Saskatchewan. And no one ought to think that if any of the . . . or if either of the opposition parties were in power, that casinos would somehow disappear from our lives forever or that VLTs would. That is not what would happen.

Because any government of Saskatchewan has to deal with

certain realities, Mr. Speaker. One of the realities is that the casinos we have, which have been operating for close to 30 years, employ hundreds of people in our province. Their revenues support the exhibition associations and other worthwhile activities. I know in Saskatoon, 4-H is supported by the casino there.

(1545)

And the casinos appeal to people who wish to go to casinos and engage in gaming activities. And I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that people sticking their heads in the sand and making self-righteous speeches about the evils of gaming are going to be successful in wishing gambling away. I just don't think it's going to be wished away. It's been in our society and part of our society for a long time and it will be with us for a long time.

And you may wish it were not so, but that doesn't do you much good. And to me therefore the question really is: if there's going to be any gambling in our society, who should regulate it? And I believe that it should be regulated and controlled, and expansion controlled, by the province.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, this seems to be the one area where the opposition doesn't point to the province of Alberta as having all the answers. Usually we're told that anything that goes on in Alberta we should emulate in Saskatchewan. But when it comes to gambling, it's okay for Alberta and Manitoba and the United States but not okay for Saskatchewan.

But what I do want to say about what is different in Saskatchewan is this. That the province of Saskatchewan is making a much bigger effort to deal with the problem of problem gambling than the other provinces. We are spending more money per capita than the other western provinces.

For example, in the province of Alberta, the government spends 55 cents per capita on problem gambling; in Saskatchewan the government spends \$2.04 per capita, which is close to four times as much. And yet the rate of problem gambling in Saskatchewan is not higher than in the other provinces, but the efforts of the provincial government to fund programs to deal with problem gamblers are much more significant.

There are, Mr. Speaker, 21 communities across Saskatchewan that have gambling counsellors available to the public at no charge, and trained by Saskatchewan Health. The approach of the government has been a proactive one, to try to deal with any problems that may arise from gambling.

I said a few minutes ago that this area was not a completely new area, Mr. Speaker. In the '60s, the province legalized full-time *pari-mutuel* betting on horse-racing. Casinos were licensed. By 1972 Sask Sport was established. In 1974, lotteries were licensed. In 1983 commercial bingo was licensed by members of the then Conservative government.

And of course bingo was expanded in a big way in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, under the government of the members opposite,

who now get up and say that gambling is a terrible problem; and elect us and we'll do away with it.

With respect to the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that their approach has been somewhat interesting from this point of view — that when I was first elected to this House in 1991, and for the first few years thereafter, the Leader of the Liberal Party would say to the government, hurry up and get going. You're not going fast enough and you're losing money. Because she wanted rapid expansion of the VLTs, which the hotel industry was calling for, and expansion of the casino industry at that time.

Then as she discovered that not everyone agrees with that approach, she changed her tune somewhat and started questioning whether we should have VLTs and casinos. Although as recently as last month, she wondered why the government wasn't putting more VLTs in restaurants. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that you can't have it both ways.

You can't on the one hand call for expansion of VLTs to assist the hotels and expansion of casino development, and on the other hand criticize the government when that's what happens. The policy of the government, Mr. Speaker, is not without its supporters; it's not without its detractors, either.

But as I said before, there are groups like the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, its tribal councils and 74 bands; the Regina Exhibition Association; the Regina Chamber of Commerce; the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce; the Regina Economic Development Authority; the tourism industry of Saskatchewan; Tourism Regina; Regina Restaurant Association; Regina Hotels Association; Regina Hospital Foundation; Saskatchewan Architectural Heritage Society; Regina Market Square; Re/Max Crown Real Estate; Mind's Eye Pictures; Saskatchewan Provincial Pipe Trades Association; RWDSU (Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union), who support the policy of the provincial government. And not to mention, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Liberal Party, which recently said to the Government of Alberta that they should look to Saskatchewan for a realistic and controlled approach to the regulation of gaming in that province.

On February 8 of this year, as the member from Moosomin said, the Health minister announced that 1.5 million would be provided in 1995 and 1996 for programs and services to help prevent gambling addiction and to help problem gamblers. And there are a range of services, Mr. Speaker, from public education to actual prevention and treatment about the impacts of gaming.

And it's true, as the member from Moosomin said, that the budget to deal with problem gambling was actually tripled this year. But as I said before, the rate of problem gambling in Saskatchewan is not higher than elsewhere. What is different in Saskatchewan is simply that the government has made a commitment to dealing with the problem. And as I said before, I think dealing with the problem, and having the courage to have a policy that regulates gambling, is more responsible than

trying to run away from the problem and pretending that if you have a plebiscite on the issue that all of society's problems will disappear.

There is a gambling help line that can be reached — toll-free number — open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It provides referrals to counsellors and general information. It will provide literature to anyone needing literature on problem gambling. There are community-development projects, 250 community workshops and seminars throughout the province; lots of public education activities; treatment services; prevention programs — that's probably key — and counsellor training and professional development programs.

And I think that's the way to approach the matter, Mr. Speaker — to try to deal with the matter in a responsible way. And I think that that's what the government is doing. The approach being taken is community based. It has the cooperation of the Palliser Alcohol & Drug Abuse Council of Swift Current, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Moose Jaw Family Life Education Centre, the Saul Cohen Centre in Melville, Parkland Alcohol & Drug Abuse Society, and the Metis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan. All of those organizations are receiving funding to help deliver community-based treatment.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that although the opposition members in speaking refer to the fact that VLTs had been expanding in the province, they didn't make reference to the fact that as of January 27 of this year the number of VLTs approved for installation in the province was actually reduced, from 4,000 to 3,600, which of course is a 10 per cent reduction.

And effective April 1, 10 per cent of the government's net VLT revenues will be designated for local communities. And of course effective that date, programs to prevent problem gambling were greatly expanded in our province and we've become a leader in that area, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say too that I believe that the government's policy in trying to work with the Indian people in our province through the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations is the most responsible policy that one can have to regulate gaming, and in particular, casinos, in a responsible manner.

And I think that it's well-known that the FSIN has wanted to . . . has seen casinos as a potential economic development strategy for their people, who most people know are facing high unemployment and unacceptable levels of poverty.

And we had the White Bear situation which is familiar to the members and to the public, and the government's approach is that we should work in partnership with the Indian community rather than at odds with the Indian community.

And I support that. I think that that is a good thing. I don't believe that it's an answer to all of the problems faced by Indian people in our province, or a panacea for their economic development, but I think it's an area where the government

should work in partnership with the Indian bands rather than in opposition to them.

I find it sometimes a bit strange, Mr. Speaker, that people will get up in this legislature and in a very self-righteous manner express moral outrage about casinos and VLTs, even though the FSIN wishes to embark on some employment initiatives for their people through casinos.

And they get up and express great outrage at the unacceptability of casinos in our society and gambling in our society. But what I didn't hear anybody say today was this: I didn't hear anybody express any moral outrage at the level of poverty and unemployment on Indian reservations, or some Indian reservations, in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1600)

And when the FSIN and the chiefs and the bands want to work in partnership with government to . . . not to solve all their problems but to get some jobs for their people, and there's an expression of outrage about that, I wish that people would as often express some moral outrage at the poverty and hopelessness that exists disproportionately for Indian people. Because as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that is a far bigger outrage than the fact that we have a few casinos in the province of Saskatchewan.

And that is a far bigger outrage than the fact that we have video lottery terminals in the province of Saskatchewan. And if I'm outraged about anything as I take part in this debate, I'm outraged about the position of many Indian people living in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now the government, as people know, entered into a new agreement with the FSIN this spring which is a revenue-sharing agreement which would see 25 per cent of casino profits go to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 25 per cent to Metis and exhibition boards, and 50 per cent to the government — which, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is the people. The government is the people.

When the members opposite get up and say that the Premier and Minister of Finance is taking money and putting it in their own pocket or the pocket of the government, it's not true.

When a properly honest and accountable and open government takes revenue from gaming or taxation or any other source, that money is used for health and education and roads and hospitals and schools in the province of Saskatchewan, not to mention servicing the debt run up by the Progressive Conservative Party when they were in office.

I want to refer to an article in the *Leader-Post* by Doug Cuthand which appeared on March 13, 1995 where he says — and I agree with him — that the agreement with the Indian people will not solve all the problems of the Indian people, and there are many, many more things that should be done. But he says:

The results are with us to the present day. We have been excluded from the economy and are blamed for our own misfortune. We have been accused of unfair competition and our opportunity to compete has been taken away.

We are now too large a population to ignore or place on the sidelines. Our future lies in the mainstream economy. The gaming industry is only one step toward that goal.

I think that's true, Mr. Speaker. And like I said before, it's not some kind of panacea, but it's one step, and just like every journey consists of several steps, improving the situation of Indian people in the province of Saskatchewan will consist of many, many steps, and I believe that this is one of them.

I want to say too, Mr. Speaker, that government is not an exercise where one snaps one's fingers and solves problems or pretends problems don't exist or hides behind them by calling for a plebiscite. Government is an exercise where there are competing interests in society, and voices are heard calling for various measures.

And I remember that before there were VLTs, the opposition and others screaming that VLTs should be placed in Saskatchewan hotels because people were going across the border to Manitoba and Alberta and the United States to play VLTs.

There was an article, June 21, 1994 in the *Leader-Post* by Dale Eisler, which deals with the Melville Hotel. And it outlines that for 13 years, the owners Brian and Helen Hicke fought a losing battle. They worked very hard, like most small-business people do, 16-hour days, 7 days a week, trying to make a go of it in the Waverley Hotel. But no matter how hard they worked or what ideas they tried in a bid to attract customers, it never seemed to be enough. And — listen to this, Mr. Speaker — they brought in bands, stand-up comics, female impersonators, staged dinner theatre, and one night even offered patrons a chance to bowl with frozen chickens.

Likely the most desperate effort was the goose dump. A pen was set up in the middle of the bar with the floor divided into 100 squares, numbered 1 to 100. People bet on a square and two geese were put into the pen. When one of the geese dumped on a square, the person with that number would win. And Helen says, you wouldn't believe how excited people got when the goose's hind end was over their square. Now that is desperation, Mr. Speaker.

But the article goes on to say that after 13 years in business, the one bright light that saved them was the VLT program. Brian Hicke is quoted as saying: the VLT program has saved our livelihood — he is a past president of the Hotels Association of Sask — not just the hotel and our business, but us. We were on the verge of personal bankruptcy.

Well I said a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, that I don't think gambling or casinos are the panacea for the problems of

society. Nor do I think they're the cause of all the problems in society. We have to be realistic. And they're not a complete answer for the problems faced by Indian people in our province either.

I also don't think that VLTs are a solution to everybody's problems, but nevertheless it's generally agreed that they have been beneficial for hotel owners in the province of Saskatchewan. And there are many, many hotel owners that will testify to that; and certainly the Hotels Association of Sask will testify to that. It doesn't mean that there aren't problems with gambling, but there are things about VLTs and casinos that can have a positive impact in society.

Terry Verbeke of Saskatoon, who is president of the Hotels Association of Saskatchewan, has said that his organization fought long and hard for VLTs because people were leaving Saskatchewan to gamble and shop in adjacent provinces and states.

I think that's true. I think that when people go across the border just because they want to play VLTs, as happens close to the borders, that they also shop elsewhere and take other business there.

I want to say also, Mr. Speaker, that casino revenues have supported exhibition associations for a long time. I'm looking at an article from the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald* of December 9 of last year which says that profits from video lottery terminals bailed out the Moose Jaw Exhibition Co. this year. And it goes on to say that revenues from the VLTs accounted for two-thirds of the exhibition company's \$278,000 profit for the fiscal year that ended October 31, 1994.

I see also in the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* an article that says that the Prince Albert exhibition casino has turned the corner because the casino they operated ran a profit.

Well I think, Mr. Speaker, that when people say that casinos are bad, VLTs are bad, we should just somehow prohibit them or maybe instead of making a decision have a plebiscite, they have to also address the questions of the hotel owners who say no, no, we need the VLTs to do a bit of business in Saskatchewan; and they have to answer the questions of the exhibition associations that rely on casino profits, and other charitable and worthwhile activities that are supported by gaming revenue in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a motion, which will be seconded by the member from Yorkton, and it is to:

Delete all the words after "That this Assembly" and replace them with the following:

endorse the government's plan to operate gaming in the province with a well-thought-out plan for controlled expansion which includes the support of hoteliers, exhibition associations, chambers of commerce, the FSIN, its tribal councils and 74 bands, and the tourism

industry; commend the government for ensuring that new forms of gaming are introduced in a reasonable manner so they are sustainable; endorse the first program in the history of the province to address the social impacts of gaming; and ensure that all participants in the gaming industry and the general public will continue to be treated fairly and will benefit through consistent regulation and consumer protection.

I so move.

(1615)

The Speaker: — I respect the patience that the members have had with me on considering this amendment, but I will have to rule the amendment out of order for several reasons.

Number one, if members look at the motion that is before the Assembly, the motion before the Assembly is on a plebiscite to be held. It's a very narrow motion, and the amendment goes much beyond what the main motion deals with. In fact the amendment doesn't deal with the motion at all, and that is that a plebiscite should be held.

And I think Beauchesne's is ... not Beauchesne's ... Yes, Beauchesne's is very clear. If you go to page 176 on the 6th Edition of Beauchesne's, he states very clearly:

An amendment setting forth a proposition dealing with a matter which is foreign to the proposition involved in the main motion is not relevant and cannot be moved.

And the member's motion from Saskatoon Idylwyld deals with everything but what is contained in the main motion. So I have to rule the amendment out of order and the debate will continue on the main motion.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue before us today of a plebiscite is an important one to consider. And when we take a look at some of the facts that have happened in the past here, the New Democrats have brought forward the most convoluted, ill-planned, and constantly changing policy with respect to gaming that anyone could have ever imagined.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — It is difficult to imagine, Mr. Speaker, that they could have done a worse job of this had they tried. There is an example after example of how the people of Saskatchewan have been shut out of the process, Mr. Speaker. Changes have been made to bingo, to Nevada ticket sales, to the casino market-place, to horse-racing, and there have been arbitrary decisions which ignored the minimal consultation that was done.

There have been financial and economic and social impacts imposed upon Saskatchewan with little thought for the future consequences. This government has been unthinking and

certainly unfeeling in its approach.

The concept of going to the people for a plebiscite is certainly a simple sounding solution. The difficulty with plebiscites and referendums is that they force a basic yes or no to a decision. That may have been acceptable before all these changes had been introduced, but now what faces the Saskatchewan people with their changes of policies, it's simply unacceptable to say we can backtrack and pretend that some of these positions are answered with a simple yes or no, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier tried the simplistic approach to the question at the NDP convention when he said, and I quote: if it is no to casinos, then it must be no to lotteries and no to bingos and no to the Children's Wish foundation. End of quote.

Now that's a ridiculous statement, certainly not worthy of a Premier in a province which relies so heavily on the benefits of the volunteer organizations which rely on these gaming revenues.

So the all or nothing approach, Mr. Speaker, that the Tories advocate, is not uncharacteristic of them — very much a solution for the past. Gambling is here and it is no doubt here to stay in some form or another.

The question that needs to be answered, and answered I think through open public dialogue and process, the question needing an answer is one of how the Saskatchewan people want to shape their communities.

The difficulty with the plebiscite is that the question being proposed has not emerged from public discussion. It is not a question that reflects all the concerns that are wrapped up in the gaming debate. We cannot simply ask people to pass judgement in a vacuum. The people do deserve a right to have input into the future direction of gaming policies, but they do not deserve to be backed into a corner on a yes or no question which only the party deals with this issue.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that a plebiscite would be more useful to the government if it included questions on a much broader range of issues. While we support the plebiscite proposal, we caution that it is by no means a substitute for a carefully thought out gaming policy based on careful research and consultation, which should be put before the people of Saskatchewan.

And I listen, Mr. Speaker, as the member from I think it's Saskatoon Idylwyld, made some statements about the government shouldn't be hiding behind plebiscites. Well when we take a look at this government and what they've been hiding behind, I'll tell you this is a government that I say and the people say shouldn't have proceeded with a lot of the things that they've gotten into — gaming policy being one. But they've got so many poorly thought out ideas and not knowing where they are going.

And I say he's right; the government should be honest with the

people up front, and in fact campaign on it. If you want to do something, campaign on it.

I'll tell you, when this government got into the radical changes they brought about in health care, why didn't they hold some sort of plebiscite? Why didn't you go out to the people and tell them what you had in mind as far as radically changing health care, the direction of health care in this province, the delivery of it? Now there's a question that you should have asked the people before the 1991 election.

If you really thought that you were doing things rights for the people, as in the gaming policy, why didn't you campaign on it? You didn't have the nerve because you knew then it wasn't right. You knew it wasn't right. You know the gaming policies that you're . . . you don't have a policy. You know the gaming decisions, the hotchpotch of decisions that you're coming forward with, aren't correct and the people wouldn't have accepted them.

Same as your changing the farming programs, farm programs in the province, the radical changes you made — once again you should have went to the people. You should have asked the people what they thought.

You should have went around rural Saskatchewan and said, listen, here's what our plans are. We're going to actually take away your farm programs, or take away your hospitals; or in fact we're going to take some of your paved roads, revert them to gravel; or we're going to close down your highway depots — just some of the issues that you have put before the people of this province.

Why didn't you go around the province and ask people, if we campaign on this, are you with us? If you really think it's better for the province, are you with us? You know very well the people aren't with you, and they're not with you on the gaming, especially on gaming.

When we take a look at some of the harmful effects, Mr. Speaker, of what's happened — and it's in just about every paper you open up all across the province. You go through and you start to get a real clear indication of the devastation that's being caused by some of the policies, but especially in gaming. This has destroyed families, Mr. Speaker.

So I mean that's why I think it's appropriate, maybe not to go exactly the route that the Conservatives are suggesting, but there should be a mechanism where you could have went to the people and says, well here's what we believe in or here's what we want to do. What do you think? Are you with us? You know, let the people decide.

And I'll tell you, at the end of the day you would have been better for it because the people wouldn't be rallying on the steps of the legislature like they were for the first two or three years of your administration.

When I see the reasons, I guess, and the people are seeing this

also, why are you getting into some of the things you do, such as gaming? You know, I think there were some \$5 million that came from gaming, a pre-decision that your government made to really expand it. And now you're into, I don't know, some \$150 million?

Well the very reason you're doing it is to try and satisfy this lust for revenues that you have. But I tell you, you're never going to satisfy that lust for revenues until you can get a little bit of a handle on the . . . control the spending.

So, I mean, here you've put the Saskatchewan people in a terrible situation. You're imposing upon them something that, truthfully, you know in your heart of hearts they don't want. And you're doing it because you want to have a lot of bucks at election time, is really where it's going. Balance the books on the farmers' money from GRIP, on the closing of hospitals and on gaming. Now that doesn't sound like a real good government policy, something that's clear it's going to take us well into and past the year 2000.

Well this is of course going to come around to haunt. I listened a while ago, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Moosomin was talking about the government's policies, and in fact tried to draw some comparisons between the Liberals and the New Democrats as far as . . . in some sort of a bidding war. I just want to make it very clear to the member from Moosomin what a bidding war would look like when you're talking about political parties.

And he would think perhaps back to the 1986 election, when the Conservative government of the day were giving out interest-free loans and low interest loans in an effort to get people to upgrade their basements or do up their dens, etc., build hot tubs. Well a real, true bidding war was when the New Democrats came out with their program to try and outbid them, and that was the 7-7-7 program where you had, I think it was \$7,000 at 7 per cent interest over 7 years. And I think they were probably prepared to make it . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'm very interested in what the member has to say, but maybe on another day. But today I think he should stay on the motion that is before us.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact I thought I was on the motion because we were talking about putting some of these concerns to the people, and not being involved in a bidding war that the member from Moosomin was referring to earlier. That's all I was doing.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at some of the other provinces and what they're doing on this same issue as far as the gaming, it was even as early as this morning that the New Democrat Party boss in Manitoba made some statements that in fact they would . . . if he were given the reins of power in Manitoba, he would expand casinos out of Winnipeg and whatever major centres they are considering or have casinos in. And he too would want casinos out in rural Manitoba.

But, you know, before you start making those kind of statements or doing the kind of actions that the government of the day is into, why on earth wouldn't he, you know, go to the people? At least he's made this statement during an election and people can . . . you know, if they've heard this through the news, they can I guess read between the lines of what they can expect of Gary Doer if he is elected.

But the government here in Saskatchewan, they didn't even make any mention of this to the people in this province before an election.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I think that's why it was so important for the Liberal Party last November 30, last fall, when we decided, you know, we've got to go to the people and find out exactly what's in their hearts and minds. What do the people want on this gaming issue?

Because of course the Conservatives weren't out there asking the people nor would they, I think, get a fair answer because the people don't . . . well they pretty much ruled out the Conservative Party. I don't think they trust them.

But the government of the day, I mean the government of the day should have been out there with all those members. They've only got half the members in here at any given time; why wouldn't they be out there asking the people exactly what are the harmful effects and what could we do to make this thing a little bit better?

Well as I said, last November 30, the Liberal caucus released the Liberal gaming policy, Mr. Speaker, and this was done after our leader was out and consulted with the people all throughout the province. Day after day after day we were in different communities, Mr. Speaker, talking with organizations and groups and town councils and the RMs (rural municipalities) and finding out exactly what it was they wanted from government in gaming policy, number one, but actually in a lot of other fields as well.

(1630)

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk just a moment on what some of these people had to say.

In meeting and speaking with various groups and individuals over the past several months — I'm quoting from our Liberal gaming policy, Mr. Speaker — we have heard many criticisms of how the NDP is handling gaming in this province. Groups and individuals have told us . . . and then there's several points here.

They want to know how much the government is taking in from their communities through VLTs. They had to have some idea, Mr. Speaker, they had to have some idea . . . Mr. Speaker, it's hard to carry on with the heckling. They wanted to have some idea, Mr. Speaker, with how much money was leaving their communities and get some appreciation of how serious this is when they are watching their own businesses and families

going into bankruptcy in their communities.

They wanted to know how serious the problem was, Mr. Speaker, so that if they were to take action or if they were to try and find out how much revenue they could expect or would need from gaming revenues to perhaps correct some of these problems.

Secondly, they stated the government should only be involved in gaming as a regulator. And that's a very good point, I mean, because this government has went far beyond being just a regulator in gaming. As you could see in the last couple days, they've really been regulating.

You watch the newscasts of yesterday and probably today where they've got semi-trailer units backed up to some of our now operating casinos and loading up what? . . . I think was a hundred machines out of the . . . I think it was the Buffalo Buck Casino here in Regina because they want to . . .

An Hon. Member: — In Saskatoon too.

Mr. McPherson: — And Saskatoon also. Because they want to disperse them throughout the province. I guess they probably have other establishments or perhaps friends of theirs have opened up establishments where they would like to get some of these casinos installed . . . or VLT machines installed.

Third point. The government has failed in its responsibility to provide adequate services for problem gamblers. And isn't that the truth, Mr. Speaker. If you think back to the hot lines that were put in, and in fact I guess it was the Conservative Party that had to phone up the gambling hot line, and it hadn't even been hooked up. I mean there was nobody sitting there at a telephone. And yet they're already making ministerial statements trying to let on they're doing something good. It didn't even have a phone number yet, up and going, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — They had a number.

Mr. McPherson: — Oh they had a number; they just didn't have anyone to answer the phone.

Fourth point, Mr. Speaker. Fairness and consistency are lacking in the current enforcement of gaming regulations. And we have seen that day after day, in fact especially in question period, because it's been up so many times.

And it doesn't matter whether you're in the Crown Corps or Public Accounts or in question period, I don't know if I've ever heard the same answer twice from the government as far as why they're doing some of the things . . .

An Hon. Member: — They haven't had the same minister twice.

Mr. McPherson: — Well that's a very good point. They haven't had the same minister long enough to make the same

answer more than twice.

The fifth point, Mr. Speaker, gaming stakeholders have no idea what to expect since the government constantly initiates policy on a retroactive basis. Well, and in fact if you travel around rural Saskatchewan you'll know that this government is known as the party of retroactivity. I mean they've taken on farmers and judges and civil servants. They do everything in a retroactive basis. That one really shouldn't have surprised anybody.

The next point, Mr. Speaker, some gaming stakeholders feared that the government would penalize or punish their organization if they discussed a problem and concerns openly. And I guess this is really coming to light in the last few days. I think there was a concern up in the Lac La Ronge area where I think it was the mayor was afraid. I know that they've put some of these concerns to their own people. They would just as soon have gambling out of their community because they've seen the harmful effects of gaming on the citizens that they represent. But in fact they have these concerns, Mr. Speaker, that in fact the government would make them pay, so to speak, for not being part of their policy.

The next point, constant changes to policy and regulation in gaming have convinced people that the government has no strategic plan and has only responded to concerns for political reasons. And these are, what, seven or eight points here that I've made. And you know every day after day after day, these same points — even though these were the points that we were hearing prior to November 30 when we released our gaming policy — but these same points are coming up. I mean it's, you know, fill in a different community name and different people but it's the same points that are coming up continuously.

So the people, the people recognized this months ago, that a lot of these problems were coming up. And the government, well they didn't go out and ask the people at that time, when they should have been, like we did, to find out what some of the concerns they could expect were going to come up or what were coming up. They didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. So why does one wonder why they are in so much trouble today? We really shouldn't.

But in fact after our leader attended several meetings throughout the province, all corners of the province, thousands of miles, Mr. Speaker, to find out exactly what is on the minds of the people, and we ended up coming up with some response. And I'm just going to quote some of this right out of our document, Mr. Speaker:

The Liberal policy would ensure that local residents would have a choice as to what level of gaming activity would be allowed in their communities.

Well the mayor from La Ronge would certainly fit well into that, wouldn't he?

The Liberal policy would ensure that the government

would not control the purse-strings in doling out gaming revenue.

A Liberal policy would share the control in the decision-making process with local communities.

A Liberal government would use its share of revenues to assume its responsibilities for the social consequences of gambling activity.

I'll tell you, a lot of things that the government of the day should have been doing, had no intention. Just not fulfilling that for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

I'll go on, and I quote:

Under (and this is a quote, Mr. Speaker) under a Haverstock Liberal government the following policy would be implemented: we would first of all restrict the government role to regulation; secondly, the government to earmark revenue to administer adequate programs for problem gambling, meaning a percentage of VLT revenue proportionate to the addiction rate; third point, a minimum of 50 per cent of VLT revenue would remain in the local community.

And, Mr. Speaker, this was an important one to the people, because as I stated earlier, these people, they're the ones that are suffering from the effects of gaming when you take a look at some of these communities where I think it's a thousand dollars per machine per week that are coming out into the government coffers from some of these communities, Mr. Speaker. And I know that some of these communities, like the community of Assiniboia in my riding, I think it's three-quarters of a million dollars coming out of the community of Assiniboia alone.

So in fact why shouldn't they, why shouldn't . . . They're the ones that are going to suffer with a lot of the problems because of that government not having a clear direction on their gaming policy, Mr. Speaker. So why shouldn't they enjoy the revenues from the VLTs? Of course they should. They're the ones that have to put up with the problems.

The fourth point, Mr. Speaker, a minimum of 20 per cent of VLT revenue would remain with the site owner. And this would be to I guess reflect the added costs of staffing and accounting and a reduction in sales experienced by some operators.

Because I guess they're either going to sell the product they were selling or . . . People only have so much money to spend. If you go into an establishment with a \$20 bill or two \$20 bills, you're still only going to spend that amount of money, or most people will only spend that amount of money. So they have to be compensated for some of the losses they're going to take on other products.

The fifth point, Mr. Speaker, an annual VLT income would be made public on a community-by-community basis. And we have asked for this time and time again, Mr. Speaker, as far as

trying to get some understanding as to how much revenue is coming out of some of these communities so that these people can make decisions.

You know perhaps if they could see in one community that they have an excessively high amount of money being taken out of their community and going into the government coffers, then that would be a good indicator as to whether or not there really is addiction problems and people are spending inheritances and in fact all their hard-earned monies, which probably should be going, in many cases, to pay for things that are needed right in their own home.

But I mean if you had it by a community-by-community basis, and you're looking at it in a population sense, you would know that there are problems in a specific community where in fact perhaps special attention would have to be paid to that particular community.

What is it? — I think it is the sixth point here. Strict licence approval process would require extensive economic and social impact studies to be undertaken at the expense of the advocate, but conducted according to government criteria by an approved research firm.

The seventh point is that: no new casinos would be built without a public hearing process and local approval.

And this is so important. And it doesn't matter, Mr. Speaker, whether we're talking about health care or we're talking about so many of the things that are affecting people, especially out in the rural communities. We've got to get some of the control down to the local people. We've got to get it out of the hands of those who are obviously, obviously always in trouble. Why are you always in trouble? It's because you're not in touch with those local people.

I'll tell you, local people, and it doesn't matter whether they're talking about ingenious ways of delivering and providing health care services or ingenious ways of raising funds to help things throughout the community — I'll tell you, they'll go a long ways. They're the people . . . it's the local people that are out in those communities that built this province. And I'll tell you, they don't need some 50 members to tell them what's best for them. Put the control back into their hands, Mr. Speaker.

And this is really what this motion is all about — letting the people have the say once again in fact in what's so important in their own lives.

Point number . . . I think it's point number eight, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation would be disbanded. Any casino operations would be subject to strict licensing and control by the Gaming Commission.

Next point is regulatory framework for all charitable licences would be reviewed to ensure fairness; next point is stiff penalties would be imposed for contravention of rules and regulations.

And the last point, licensing criteria would be revised after consultation with charities and non-profit groups to better define the charitable purposes for which gaming revenue could be used.

And I won't go into it much more than that, Mr. Speaker, because I know some other members want to speak and, in fact, should speak on this issue. They're the ones that should actually be owning up or 'fessing up to all of the problems that they have created. So of course the people would like to hear from them now. They should have heard from them about a year ago.

But in fact now . . . And why is it that one of the opposition parties of three members can come up with a very clear and defined and comprehensive plan on gaming? Go around the province, find out what's important to the people, and actually respond to that.

And yet a government of 50-some members, cabinet ministers — you've got airplanes, you've got government vehicles at your fingertips — and you couldn't go out and find out from the people. Everything you were doing was for political reasons. You were in touch with groups. You were trying to buy people off. That's the name of the game for you people.

And I'll tell you it's not going to work well — it's not going to work well because there are people out there that are suffering because of the consequences of your policies, and it doesn't matter in which field we talked about.

So yes, I'm going to take my chair, Mr. Speaker, because I, like others here, want to hear why it is, why it is that the government members have sat back and done nothing for so long. It's about time they were heard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with pleasure today that I rise to enter into the debate. And upon the conclusion of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will be making the following motion:

Deleting after the words, "That this Assembly" and replace them with:

endorse the government's plan to operate gaming in the province with a well-thought-out plan for controlled expansion which includes the support of hoteliers, exhibition associations, chambers of commerce, the FSIN, its tribal councils and 74 bands, and the tourism industry; and in lieu of a plebiscite, endorse the government's current program of monitoring public opinion and addressing the social impacts of gaming where they occur.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, in the past couple of years I have been very much involved in this process of looking at how we establish a gaming policy in Saskatchewan, and of course, along with all of my colleagues, have agonized around the decisions that we're

currently proposing and making.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that gaming is not new in Saskatchewan. And of course when you look at the history of the expansion of gaming in this province, it takes us through several decades. And I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the year 1969, we see first sort of the legitimization of full-time *pari-mutuel* betting and horse-racing in Saskatchewan, the beginning of gambling.

And as we proceed through the years, Mr. Speaker, we see 1971, the licensing of casinos; and in 1972, Sask Sport established, representative of interests in provincial sporting governing bodies; in 1974, licensing of lotteries. And then of course we get to the 1980s, and we see in 1983 the licensing of commercial bingos, and proceed on of course into the '90s where we are today, Mr. Speaker.

And as you and I debate the issue, we ask ourselves, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis, many questions. And we hear in this Assembly and across the communities of Saskatchewan questions such as: is there good gambling or is there bad gambling in this province? And I've heard it many times over.

And when we take a look at something that we've had a good deal of experience with — which is the bingo industry — or have been around it in all of our communities, we know that church organizations and service clubs and charities all over Saskatchewan fund-raise through this particular event.

And on many fronts bingos are viewed, in my opinion, as being a way of investing money back into the community. And we see it from the point of view of enriched minor sports programs, equipment or supplies that we see in many of our medical health centres in Saskatchewan, and we see support for individuals or groups on an individual basis.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, we also see on the other side, a number of issues that come as social problems around the bingo issue. And I heard, as I listened to the member from Rosthern speak today, who in the 1980s of course was responsible for the portfolio of Social Services, and he said that people who sit in bingo halls, Mr. Speaker, are there and there aren't any incidents to addiction. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that is hardly the case.

On many occasions I've heard, as other members in this Assembly have heard and people in communities have heard, that children are left alone while parents are busy playing in the bingo halls. Now the member from Rosthern would know that because as he was the minister of Social Services of course, those reports would have come to him in 1984, and he would have been responsible, I expect, Mr. Speaker, to address some of those issues.

How many times has he heard that children go hungry because there may be family members who in fact have spent their food money at a bingo establishment? So for the member from Rosthern, Mr. Speaker, to suggest for a moment that aren't any

incidents around the social issues around bingos is hardly true.

But we can legitimize, Mr. Speaker. Then the other side of that, bingo provides a great many benefits to communities. And I support that . . . provides a great many supports.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the debate here today is about whether or not we have gambling in Saskatchewan or we don't have gambling in Saskatchewan. The truth of the matter is, is that we have gambling in Saskatchewan. We've had gambling in Saskatchewan, as I've suggested to you, since 1969, in legislation, but far before that in many other venues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the government's involvement in how we address the issue of gambling is we ask ourselves the question . . . and difficult questions they were, gut-wrenching questions because this government believes that we were elected to make decisions that we believe are in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

Not like our Liberal friends who would be on this side of the issue today and be on this side of the issue tomorrow. And they would want to leave that, Mr. Speaker. They would want to leave that, Mr. Speaker, to the decision . . . without decision. They would leave that without decision. They call it the old flip-flop . . . is the one that they speak about . . . deal, Mr. Speaker.

But our government has said something somewhat different than that. We've said, how do we manage and regulate gambling in Saskatchewan? That's the question that we asked, Mr. Speaker, being one, so that it's responsible in a coordinated fashion across the province.

We asked the question of how can gambling or gaming provide some economic benefits to the people of Saskatchewan? And so we established some policies that would address those particular issues. And we also said, Mr. Speaker, how do we mitigate . . . as best we can, how do we mitigate the problems that are associated with addiction? Those are the three issues.

And I hear the members opposite speak for the last couple of hours about the fact that we don't have a plan around gambling, and we don't have a plan around gaming. And we say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a coordinated plan around gaming. And we've witnessed and you've witnessed it across the province.

And let me tell you that in the fall of 1993 my community said . . . the community of south-east central Saskatchewan said we're interested in having VLTs as a pilot project in our part of the world — in the same region that the member from Moosomin comes from. And they said, would you please pilot, in our area, VLTs?

And who said that? And who promoted it, Mr. Speaker? The hoteliers of Saskatchewan promoted that. And the person who is responsible for the transportation system in my community said that. They came forward and said on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, what happens is that people are getting in my bus,

and we're transporting them across the border to the south, to the United States, to Minot. And we're taking them to Roblin, and we're taking them to Brandon, where they are in fact spending Saskatchewan money. And they say it's important for us to keep our jobs here in Saskatchewan. It's important for us that they spend their money in our community.

And that's what happened, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the first initiative, in terms of developing VLTs in Saskatchewan. In a planned way, we have a pilot project. And the pilot project demonstrates in Saskatchewan, in east-central Saskatchewan, that we should have VLTs across the province because they're well accepted, and people are promoting it.

As the individual, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, states in a newspaper article: the VLT program has saved our livelihood . . . Mr. Bryant points out, who is the president at that time of the hotel associations. And that's true, Mr. Speaker. Our communities where VLTs are currently in have flourished to some degree in terms of providing better opportunities for employment and certainly have provided better opportunities in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, a second example that I want to point out in terms of how the government has planned to develop the gaming policy in Saskatchewan . . . not more than two years ago members from my community came forward — which was the local tribal council, the chamber of commerce, the exhibition board association — and they said, we want to have a casino in Yorkton, or we want to have a casino in the region.

And so they petitioned the minister at that point, making the point that they want to have a casino in our community. And what did we do? We had a public meeting, Mr. Speaker. We had a public meeting in our community . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Because the member from Rosthern wants to know what the people are saying. That's a good question. And what did we do? We have a meeting in our community, and we say to the people that we're interested in having a casino in Yorkton, in spite of the fact that Regina's interested and Saskatoon is interested and Prince Albert is interested and North Battleford has submitted a report.

And what we say, Mr. Speaker, is that we're interested; we're interested in having a casino in our community. And as a result of that, we've now moved to a new level, Mr. Speaker, where we have today in Saskatchewan one recognized casino, Regina's, and we have the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians now developing three others or four others in Saskatchewan. And they've come back to our community again, only this time, Mr. Speaker, in a broader partnership . . . Because that's how this government makes decisions. They make decisions in partnership and in cooperation with their communities, with their friends and their neighbours. That's what we do.

And the chief of the Saskatchewan Federation of Indians said to us a couple of days ago when he was in our community . . . is that what this is about. This is about ensuring that we have opportunities for our people. And we want to have a casino in

Yorkton, Saskatchewan and work with our friends, which are the chamber of commerces, which are, Mr. Speaker, the economic development commissions, which are the local politicians, the local government, the municipal governments. That's the kind of work that our government has done in promoting casinos in Saskatchewan. That's the kind of work that our government has done in promoting gaming in Saskatchewan as a comprehensive policy — as a comprehensive policy, Mr. Speaker, that includes everyone. It includes everyone.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by moving this amendment, Mr. Speaker:

That we endorse the government's plan to operate gaming in the province with a well-thought out plan for controlled expansion which includes the support of hoteliers, exhibition associations, chambers of commerce, the FSIN, its tribal councils and 74 bands, and the tourism industry; and, in lieu of a plebiscite, endorse the government's current program of monitoring public opinion and addressing the social impacts of gaming where they occur.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the debate this afternoon, and I can just say one or two things about the debate that I've listened to, and what I've heard is a complete flip-flop — flip-flop after flip-flop mentioned by members of the opposition.

And I think it can be summed up in one sentence. About a year and a half ago, they were urging the government to move into all sorts of gambling when there wasn't any, and they just couldn't urge the government to get into it fast enough. And now once it's been implemented slowly and carefully and thoughtfully and monitored continually, they are taking the position, oh you're going too fast and you shouldn't do this. And they're finding themselves contradicted on this to the extent that now they don't know which way to go, and they're asking for a plebiscite; they want to put it to the people.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that's not a responsible position. We will continue with our position. I think we could talk on end with this, but I do move that the debate on this motion now adjourn.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:59 p.m.