The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I again have petitions here regarding SaskPower and I'll just quickly read the prayer for you:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.

I so present those today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present today. The prayer reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility rate process in the province of Saskatchewan.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from the Gull Lake, Pennant area of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker; Punnichy, Southey, Cupar, across the province, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have petitions to present to the Assembly. I'll read the prayer:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates until a three-party utility review committee is in place in order to debate, review, and revise any utility rate increases in the future in order to restore fairness to the utility process in the province of Saskatchewan.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Eston and Kerrobert and along the west side of the province. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I read:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy which awards all government contracts to the lowest qualified bidder, union or non-union, with no union-hiring quotas.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these are signed all from Hudson Bay.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present petitions today on behalf of folks from the Yorkton area and from the city of Regina here; also some from D'Arcy:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy which awards all government contracts to the lowest qualified bidder, union or non-union, with no union-hiring quotas.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I'm happy to present these, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order, the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

> Of citizens of the province humbly praying that the Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the decision to raise SaskPower rates and freeze any further utility rates.
>
> Of citizens of the province praying that the Assembly may be pleased to immediately repeal the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement and replace it with a fair tendering policy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Special Nominating Committee

Clerk: — Ms. Bradley, as Chair of the Special Nominating Committee appointed to prepare lists of members to compose the standing committees of the Assembly, presents the first report of the said committee, which will be printed in today's *Votes and Proceedings.*

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

> That the first report of the Special Nominating Committee be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Wednesday next ask the government the following question:

> To the minister responsible for SaskPower, regarding vice-president and general manager of transmission and distribution, Mr. Roy Yeske: (1) could you confirm that Mr. Roy Yeske used a government plane on August 19, 1995 to fly from Regina to Saskatoon; (2) could you provide details regarding the purpose of this trip; (3) did anyone else accompany Mr. Yeske on this flight; (4) what was the total cost of this flight?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Salvation Army Fire

Mr. Whitmore: — The Salvation Army in Saskatoon needs help after a devastating fire destroyed hundreds of tons of donated clothing at their collection depot.

Donated clothing were sorted, cleaned and recycled at this depot and now all of that is gone along with hundreds of tonnes of clothing for the needy. The clothes which were lost in the fire had an estimated dollar value of $200,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Salvation Army in Saskatoon now has the very difficult task of trying to replenish the huge supply of clothes and get back on track, this worthwhile operation.

True to form, the people of Saskatoon have shown their generosity by coming through with donations of clothing, and slowly but surely the supply is increasing. But there is still a long ways to go, Mr. Speaker. The mall at Lawson Heights, and Market Mall, both in Saskatoon, have set up drop-off depots for people donating clothing.

And I am told that the office at the radio station, Hot 93 FM, has been filled every day with donations of clothing, as they are doing their part to help out. Other media have helped out as well.

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we have a long tradition of helping people in need. And that is why I ask today for the public's support in helping the Salvation Army, which has enriched the lives of the less fortunate throughout our province for so many years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Losses at Saskatchewan Newspapers

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, it is with surprise and sadness that I heard of last Saturday's announcement of job losses in Yorkton, Saskatoon, and Regina at the newspapers recently acquired by Hollinger Inc. Nine employees at *Yorkton This Week & Enterprise,* as well as 84 at the *Star-Phoenix,* and 89 at the *Leader-Post,* will be dismissed as of May 25.

It is especially disheartening that Hollinger's decision was at least in part based upon the business environment here in this province. Many of those affected are long-term employees. A decision such as this must have been an agonizing one to make for management.

I take notice that they are immediately putting in place, through Deloitte & Touche, a comprehensive job placement program. We can only hope that these people are able to find comparable employment opportunities in our province.

I also hope that the employees at Yorkton are extended the same job placement services as those from Saskatoon and Regina. Changing jobs at any point in one's working life, although stressful, can lead to exciting new careers. Many people in this day and age can attest to this, so please remain optimistic.

I wish the employees affected the best of luck in finding rewarding new careers through the program extended by Hollinger, or by any other means, very soon. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kinsmen Telemiracle

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday I was pleased to rise in this Assembly and mention the good work that the Kinsmen and Kinette organizations do in our province regarding Telemiracle. Today on behalf of my colleagues in the Assembly I would like to congratulate all of the organizers of the telethon which was held at the Centre of the Arts/Saskatchewan Centre on Saturday and Sunday.

Congratulations should also go to the participants and volunteers, and a special thank-you to Saskatchewan businesses and residents who donated money to this worthwhile cause. More than $2.3 million was pledged during the 20-hour telethon — no small feat for a province with a population of a million people.

Telemiracle has earned the respect and attention of everyone in the province, and the money raised in Telemiracle 20 will benefit Saskatchewan people who are physically or mentally challenged and those who have special needs.

Mr. Speaker, each year it is a delight to witness the caring, compassion, and generosity of Saskatchewan residents who support Telemiracle. These values reflect the true nature of Saskatchewan people and will ensure the future success of this telethon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Condolences

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the city of Saskatoon, our province, and our nation lost an outstanding citizen. Alice Molloy was an individual of

exemplary character, inspiring determination and a gentle yet remarkable strength. Her work as a caring social worker, devout mother, wife, and friend, enhanced the lives of all who knew her.

She was a national vice-president of the Liberal Party of Canada; a member of the National Council of Welfare; the Family Service Bureau of Canada; the Lieutenant Governor's Committee for the Employment of the Handicapped, and the senate of the University of Regina; Chair of the Volunteer Committee of the Saskatoon Conservatory and Mendel Art Gallery, and a member of the boards of directors of the Mental Health Association, Saskatoon French School, Cosmopolitan Industries, the Idylwyld Community Association, and Bridge City Group Home.

Alice was someone who wanted to make her country better, her community healthier, and a very good home for her husband, Tom, and her four daughters. And she did just that. It is most appropriate for this Assembly to acknowledge the amazing life and work of the young and dynamic Alice Molloy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

First Responder Program

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last session the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood reported on the brave actions of a group of first responders in his constituency. Their quick response to a heart attack victim saved a life. In a sense that was heroism in action and in another it was simply all in a day's work.

The first responders groups which are being established around our province are trained to do just that — be the first care providers on the scene of an emergency. We will hear more stories like this. We might hear them from the village of Edam and the RM (rural municipality) of Britannia, both in my constituency. Both have first responder groups made up of dedicated volunteers from within the community. Both have received the intensive training in emergency first aid and each is now linked by ambulance dispatch to the nearest hospital.

In her speech on Friday, the member from Battleford-Cut Knife talked about people, especially rural people, taking charge of the programs that affect them. This is a perfect example, and I am happy to see that other communities in my constituency are beginning their own first responders programs.

My congratulations to the 15 trained volunteers in Edam, the seven-member group of the Hillmond-Britannia responders, the trainers, ambulance operators, and health districts.

People looking after people is one more way of defining the Saskatchewan way. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Kinsmen Telemiracle

Mr. Krawetz: — I would also like to recognize another tremendously successful year of the Kinsmen Telemiracle. Once again the people of Saskatchewan have come through with exceptional generosity. The 20th edition of the Telemiracle raised over $2.3 million.

Over the past 20 years Telemiracle has raised over $35 million. It set a record in 1988, with two and a half million dollars being raised. The generosity of Saskatchewan people over the past 20 years has earned us a spot in the record books. People in Saskatchewan give more per capita than anywhere in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of the Kinsmen Club of Invermay for the past 24 years and I have played an active role in organizing fund-raising events in the area and volunteered to work at many Telemiracles in the past. So I have witnessed firsthand the caring and giving of the great people of this province.

Even when times are tough, Saskatchewan people continue to amaze. They put their own financial concerns aside and open their wallets for their fellow citizens who have even greater needs. Over the past 20 years we have truly witnessed miracles happen, with all the money staying right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most astounding aspects of Telemiracle is its massive volunteer effort. Thousands of volunteers across Saskatchewan work hard and donate so much time. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all the members of this Assembly join in extending their congratulations for another year of miracles.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Social Work Week

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to bring the members' attention to an important week. March 4 to 10 in Saskatchewan and across this country has been designated Social Work Week. I am pleased that this province is actively recognizing the hard work and dedication of the many committed individuals working in this field.

As a member of the government's health, education, social policy and justice committee, I am well aware that often hard work and sacrifices made in the social work area seem to go unnoticed. Too often the thank-you's are far and few between. By setting aside a week each year to pay tribute to social work and social workers, we publicly acknowledge the valuable role social workers play in today's world.

The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers has focused this year's activities around poverty. A number of activities have been planned right across our province, such as training sessions on poverty and association members serving meals to the poor.

As a member of a government committed to improving the well-being of Saskatchewan children and families, I am pleased to see the association has profiled poverty and its effects on individuals. We know that poverty can be one of the most debilitating factors in the healthy development of children, but no one group can address poverty in isolation. If we are to truly

address poverty, we need to work together — communities, agencies, individuals, and governments — and we've begun that process.

I want to commend the association for its commitment to low income children and families and for its work with government in developing programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in paying tribute to the valuable role social workers play in our communities. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care Reform

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the cracks that have developed in Saskatchewan's health care system since the NDP(New Democratic Party) government came to power.

As a result of this government's so-called restructuring of health care, we now have a system in which economics rate above the personal well-being of our residents. And in fact this government's own polling indicates that the people of Saskatchewan are more concerned about their health care system than any other single issue.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Health. Does the Minister of Health consider our health care system to be safe and reliable?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. And not only do I think that the health care system is safe and reliable, but the survey that the member refers to, which was taken in December, shows that over 90 per cent of the people who use the health care system rate it as excellent to good.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Now in fact, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the fact that the member likes to complain about the health care system at every opportunity, the fact of the matter is that we pioneered in this province one of the best health care systems in the world, and it's the aim of this government to keep that health care system good and excellent, notwithstanding the efforts of the member's party in Ottawa which is cutting back on health care, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly what this government is going to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll let the Minister of Health know that his government, what they've pioneered in health care, they're going to pay for severely.

Mr. Speaker, in the past I have brought to the attention of this House many cases that demonstrate the shortfalls which exist in our rural health care system as a result of this government's so-called restructuring. However these same problems also exist in the urban centres — in the urban centres that the minister lives in, in fact.

One such case is detailed in the February 23 edition of the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, and I'd like to table that now, Mr. Speaker, if I may. And could you send a copy over to the Minister of Health as well?

In this news item, a Shellbrook area woman, Julie Walker, spent three frustrating days waiting to have a broken leg tended to. Will the Minister of Health explain how, under this government's so-called new and improved health care system, that this can happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the health care system in this province is run at the community level by the district health boards.

But I want to say to that member, Mr. Speaker, that we believe in the community. And in fact the Saskatoon Health Board recently had a poll conducted by the Conference Board of Canada. And not only is the health care system in Saskatchewan considered good and excellent by the people that use it, but the Saskatoon Health Board received very high marks, Mr. Speaker, from those using its system. And I want to say to the member that according to the Conference Board, a high percentage of respondents rated services good, very good, or excellent.

Is it perfect, or are there not the occasional problems? Well there are occasional problems, Mr. Speaker, but we have a very excellent health care system, notwithstanding the fact that the party with which that member is associated, namely the Liberals, is cutting back on health care spending across the country. But notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, we're going to maintain the best health care system in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the Minister of Health should have contacted Julie Walker and told her she was doing nothing but complaining, if that's what he feels people are doing. Mr. Speaker, we know there are hundreds of cases such as the one involving Julie Walker that are not brought to the attention of the public. In fact she indicated to me in a telephone conversation, if she had not contacted the media with her concerns — a move that prompted immediate attention — there is no telling how long she would have waited.

Will the Minister of Health tell this House how it is that one must go through the media to receive the health care that they deserve? And will he personally involve himself in this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that this patient doesn't need me to personally involve myself in her medical care. And nor does that patient need the member making politics out of her personal medical condition.

The member raises the media, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that in the *Maclean's* magazine, July 31, 1995, Allen Backman who is a health policy specialist says that our model of health reform is a model that all provinces should move towards if they want the greatest efficiencies in the way they spend their health dollars.

What I would say to that member is, is that we're rapidly approaching the 21st century. And by the time we get there, Mr. Speaker, I hope that we're able to bring this member into the 20th century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is wondering why people get involved with these issues and make politics of them. But when people come forward to our caucus with issue after issue after issue where you people have let them fall, well I think we'll continue to bring them forward.

Mr. Speaker, our health care system is meant to meet the needs of all the people of Saskatchewan. When a case falls through the cracks, the reasons should be investigated and addressed. Unfortunately, these cracks are getting wider, and more people are falling through. Julie Walker was understandably frustrated at the level of service provided at the Royal University Hospital, stating, and I quote:

> You break a leg; you get it fixed. This is Canada. Our health-care system is supposed to be the best in the world.

Miss Walker is right. Can the Minister of Health explain why Saskatchewan's health care system is in such a sad state? And will he take immediate action to correct the problems instead of trying to be the clown in the House today?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, you know I've been sitting here listening to the member, and I'm wondering what it is about his association with the Liberal Party that most impresses the member. Is it the Liberal elimination of the Crow rate for the farmers, or is it the Liberal cuts to post-secondary education, or is it the Liberal cuts to health care?

And I say to the member that if that member is really concerned about health care in this province, what that member should do is join with this government and with all other members in the legislature in saying to Ottawa that we don't agree with their cut-backs to health care.

And if that member will get on side with this government, which is committed to our medicare system, then I say to that member that we'll have a much better chance of retaining the excellent health care system we have than if we let the Liberals in Ottawa get away with the agenda that they're pursuing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Job Creation

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Mr. Premier, we are all very upset to hear of the massive lay-offs at the *Leader-Post*, the *Star-Phoenix*, and the Yorkton *Enterprise* and how these jobs losses will hurt the individuals and families involved.

However I found it remarkably hypocritical to hear the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs condemning these lay-offs when the NDP just finished laying off and firing 214 Crop Insurance employees.

I think we all recognize from time to time that large employers, both in government and in the private sector, are going to be forced to downsize. The responsibility of government, however, is to build a healthy economy so that when jobs are lost there are other jobs that those people can go to. That simply isn't happening in Saskatchewan because of the high tax and regulatory regime of the NDP government.

Mr. Premier, when is your government going to accept some responsibility? When are you going to get some job creation strategies going in this province instead of spending your time trying to blame others?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member because what he's saying bears very, very little resemblance with the fact, especially when you compare it to their last term in government between 1986 and 1991.

I have some StatsCanada information that tell us that in the period when his government was in power from 1986 to 1991 the population of this province went from 1.033 million to 1.004 million, or a reduction of 31,000 people. That's at the same time, at the same time as they were spending us into a debt of $15 billion in the so-called name of job creation. They lost 30,000 jobs.

I'm proud to say that the business people, not government, in our first four years in operation have created 10,000 new jobs and the population has increased from a million four to a million seventeen.

Now you can talk about your record if you want, but I can tell you it's a dismal failure and is the reason why you have five members in opposition after that kind of a job record and will be a long time before people will trust you to create jobs in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, why don't we talk about some recent statistics from StatsCanada. In January of this year, there are 5,000 less jobs than there were a year ago January. That's your record, Mr. Minister. In fact in the last two weeks there have been over 400 people laid off

from two major organizations here in the province, and no new jobs have been created for them.

In today's paper, U of S (University of Saskatchewan) economist Eric Howe says ". . . the NDP government is choking business." "'The pedal is . . . to the metal, but we're only going five miles an hour,'" he said. That's because the NDP has its other foot on the brake, and that's what you have.

And rather than addressing the problem, rather than dealing with the issues of high taxes and over-regulation, the NDP is spending its time trying to blame, first, the previous administration, then the federal government, or anyone else who happens to be available to them at the moment rather than talking about their dismal job record.

When is that going to end, Mr. Minister? When are you going to take your foot off the brake of the economy of Saskatchewan and the job creation strategies here in Saskatchewan, pro-employment policies? Why don't you look at some of those that we introduced on Friday?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, when he talks about the job creation record of his government, fails to talk about the statistics that show that about 30,000 people left the province, or the population went down by about 30,000 in their last term of office while they were ramping up the debt faster than anyone else in Canada.

But I want to respond to your comment about the economist Eric Howe who, some say, was one of the strategists with the Liberals' ill-fated attempt to gain power, and the member from Greystone will remember the name. He's denying as well that he had anything to do with the Liberal campaign. Nobody wants to admit that they had anything to do with it.

But I want to point out one of the inconsistencies in his statement, and I'm quoting from the *Leader-Post*. It may be accurate, it may not, but I'm going to quote it at any rate. It says:

> He maintains the government is still interfering with business when it tries to bolster certain industries the way it did in last year's budget by cutting the aviation fuel tax.

He says his solution is: "But businesses don't have a chance to prosper in Saskatchewan . . . " because the taxes are too high.

Now that kind of an economist advising the Liberals got them what we see over here. I'd advise you, sir, to find someone else to back up your economic strategy because it's no better than in the 1980s.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grant to Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it would almost sound like the Economic Development minister is laying out a challenge and wants to lay some bets. Well maybe he should start; you might be surprised how soon this member from . . . the Leader of the Third Party may move over to the Premier's chair.

However, Mr. Speaker, recently the government gave a grant of $130,000 to the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) to fight what they said was federal offloading. Mr. Minister, or Mr. Premier, whoever would like to answer the question, there are many groups who are being hurt by offloading from both the federal and provincial governments — groups such as hospitals, schools, universities, municipalities. Yet none of these groups received any grants.

We would like to know what were the criteria for this grant and why was the FSIN singled out to receive $130,000 of taxpayers' money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

When the federal government tabled their policy on self-government in the previous year, it was very clear that part of their strategy was to offload as much of their constitutional responsibility as possible for first nations people onto the provinces across Canada. In fact, a recent meeting of representatives of the various governments have gotten together to discuss what we're going to do about this problem. It's clear that it has a more significant impact in this area than probably any other fiscal area of government.

For example, last year when the federal government arbitrarily decided that they were going to disallow the one year off-reserve policy for social service recipients, that one measure alone cost the province $40 million. So if through the expenditure of $130,000 we can save this province millions and millions of dollars in federal offloading, we are going to work with first nations to see that done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, a further question to the minister. Madam Minister, this grant seems to go directly against the findings of your government's recent public consultation program. Mr. Speaker, this government asks Saskatchewan people to tell them what areas they think government should stop funding. Right at the top of the list was grants for things like cultural organizations. Yet this government ignored this advice and went right ahead and gave FSIN $130,000.

Mr. Speaker, no one ever got a grant to fight the NDP every time they offloaded on hospital boards, school boards, and municipalities. Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, why are taxpayers' money being given to the FSIN to wage the NDP's political battle with Ottawa?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member for his second question. I would have to remind you that first nations are not a cultural organization. They are a

group embodied in the Constitution of Canada and that the federal government has a very clear and historical obligation, relationship, and constitutional commitment to this group of people.

In keeping with the way this government approaches all of its dealings, we try to get the best financial arrangement for the people of Saskatchewan and we try to make sure that we do not allow the federal government to escape its responsibilities that have been in place, I might add, for the past hundred years with this particular first nations group in Canada.

The research that needs to be done so that we all have the information we need to walk into this discussion with our eyes open is work that they require financial and other people within their organization to do to assemble this.

So I think this is money well spent and I look forward to working together with first nations to make sure that Ottawa doesn't dump a whole bunch more of their responsibilities — their constitutional responsibilities, I might add — on the provinces.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Former SaskTel President's Contract

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister in charge of SaskTel. As everyone in the House is aware, this government went to great lengths to try and ensure the details of a contract to the former SaskPower president George Hill and many others were not only made public, but attacked and broken as well.

Can the minister explain why she is now choosing to hide the details of a contract involving former SaskTel president Fred Van Parys?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question. As I understand, the freedom of information request was made to SaskTel last week. And on the basis of section 19(1) of the freedom of information Act which addresses the interests of a third party, which in this case it is a contract with a third party, that the consent of the third party has not been given. For the time being the terms of the contract have not been released, but I will be continuing to consult with officials and legal counsel, and in the spirit of open and honest government, we will release any details that are pertinent to the public interest.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of SaskTel is refusing to provide the taxpayers of Saskatchewan with the details of a one-year consulting contract to Fred Van Parys because of a confidentiality clause in his separation agreement.

Can the minister confirm that Mr. Van Parys was actually fired over the SaskTel re-engineering fiasco and that Mr. Don Ching is now in line to become president of SaskTel?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the member opposite should know better. First of all, there is not a separation agreement with Mr. Van Parys. Mr. Van Parys resigned, and the contract that exists between SaskTel and Mr. Van Parys is a continuing service contract for consulting services.

This is the difference between the newspaper reports which drew a parallel between the situation of a former president of SaskEnergy and the CEO (chief executive officer) for SaskTel. The one in SaskEnergy was a severance contract with a continuing clause for consulting services. This one is a resignation and pursuant to the . . . or after the resignation, a separate consulting contract is entered into. The two situations cannot be compared.

Then I want to quote, in terms of the re-engineering, a letter from Symmetrix that was printed in the *Leader-Post*, which says, and I quote:

> Mr. Bjornerud's characterizations of re-engineering have gone beyond wrongly defaming my company. He has deeply . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, many people will suggest that the one-year consulting fee provided for Mr. Van Parys was nothing more than a way of avoiding a messy courtroom battle after Mr. Van Parys was removed as a head of SaskTel. Can the minister confirm that this consulting contract was simply a way of avoiding a wrongful dismissal suit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as minister I can confirm no such thing. The barnacles on the ship of state . . . and members opposite can say whatever they like, can think whatever they like. Mr. Van Parys resigned. He served SaskTel for three years as the CEO. In that position he had continuing relationships with Stentor, which is the CEOs' association of telecommunications companies in Canada. That is a very valuable role to play in the highly competitive environment that SaskTel finds itself into and that all telecommunications companies are in in 1996.

So this is a contract to continue to use that expertise to the advantage of SaskTel. That's what it is.

Social Worker Case-loads

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services has designated this week, March 4 to March 10, as Social Work Week in Saskatchewan. And I'd like to commend the hon. minister for doing so.

In the news release which makes the announcement the hon. member states that he wants, and I quote:

> . . . to officially recognize all the very important and difficult work being done by social workers across this province,"

The minister further states that those who work in the human services field, and again I quote: ". . . are under a lot of pressure to make changes."

Mr. Speaker, I too commend the social workers of this province for their efforts to work under this government. They are under increased pressure with increased welfare rolls, decreased resources, and a high level of uncertainty concerning defined roles and procedures.

I ask the minister today, do you have a plan in place to alleviate the stress and pressure social workers feel due to increased case-loads?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and for raising the important issue of the work of social workers in our province. And as the member from Weyburn earlier today recognized in this House, this is Social Work Week and I think all members would want to join in congratulating these public servants.

Now the member, Mr. Speaker, mentions the case-load on the social workers. She mentions the challenges that we are all facing. She should readily admit in this House that if it were not for her Liberal cousins in Ottawa downloading on the provinces, if it were not for a Liberal government in Ottawa withdrawing massively from social service support across Canada in such a way that would threaten the national fabric of our nation, then her question may be a little more credible in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, in 1991 the Premier pledged to eliminate child poverty within its first term of office. Here we are of course, four years later, and only now the Minister of Social Services claims that the very important first step in eliminating child poverty is to, and I quote: raise public awareness.

Let me reassure the minister that the public is acutely aware of poverty in this province. One in five children feels the sting of poverty every minute of every day. It appears, Mr. Minister, that this government is out of step. So let me help you, Mr. Minister. If your first step is to raise public awareness what, Mr. Minister, is your plan for step no. 2?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, and I hope all members of our caucus would well know, we have advanced a redesign of Social Services paper across this province. That member, Mr. Speaker, in her own local paper says it's a very good idea — says it's a very good idea and she supports us, Mr. Speaker.

I ask her: will she support us further, and will her caucus support us further instead of the deafening silence that we've heard from the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party in this province in regard to the offloads by Ottawa? Instead of that deafening silence, Mr. Speaker, will that caucus today, will that member, will her temporary leader, will they today write Ottawa? Join with us in fighting the download on the provinces of Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Student Summer Employment Program

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, it pleases me to inform the House that Partnerships, our student summer employment program, will be continued in 1996.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — This is good news for employers and for students. Even though our province faces great challenges as a result of the federal cuts, support for employer, student, and government partnerships that enhance jobs or job creation continues to be a priority.

Through a wage subsidy, Partnerships '96 will assist employers such as businesses, farms, municipal governments, and non-profit organizations needing extra summer help. The subsidy will help them hire students needing income to continue their studies.

The program is expected to create 2,000 jobs between May 1 and September 30 for students who want to gain work experience while earning money to finance their continuing post-secondary education. Employers should apply now so they can finalize their hiring plans in time for May 1 when most students are available for summer employment. Employers must apply by April 15 to qualify. I encourage all interested employers, both urban and rural, to consider the program. I especially urge them to consider the opportunities they may provide to students who are of aboriginal ancestry or who have a disability.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the value education, training, and economic development have to this province. Through the collaboration of students, employers, and governments, Partnerships '96 will continue to provide job opportunities which benefit all partners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Hear, hear, Mr. Speaker. On this particular statement that we have, we understand that there's definitely a need for students to have all the money they possibly can so

they can end up continuing their education. And I suggest that on some of these issues that those people that were notified and were involved in this program in previous years would also receive a notice, that they are aware this program is in place, so that they'll be able to make use of the program to the best of their ability and for the benefit of those students.

The other question that I have and I would like to know is how many dollars are actually available to this? Is there enough money there to make it significant? When we're looking at the job opportunities and job creation, are these particular jobs that are going to be taken away from other individuals, or are these new jobs that are only for students, or will other people be unemployed because these students have had a special priority given to them because of this program? We need to know some of that information, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the announcement by the minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. But what we're looking for in terms of informing students and making sure that the availability of jobs is there is quite essential.

Students have been under a lot of pressure in terms of being able to finance education. We are hearing that the loading of tuition fees, the possible increases might occur, and the fear of course is that the jobs availability will take away from the facts that the tuition fees will also go up.

So I look forward to discussing this further with the minister responsible for Post-Secondary. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment to the ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I received the minister's statement today. I wish to thank him for gracing me with a copy of his ministerial statement and to congratulate both him and the government for choosing to focus on something that has been of great concern to people across the country.

As you know, in Saskatchewan we have faced a particular problem with out-migration of young people and that one of the things we have to do is to do anything that will focus on curbing a problem of people not having opportunities for employment, and in particular people who we want to continue with their post-secondary education and training.

So I'd just like to congratulate once again the government for recognizing this issue and it's one small step toward perhaps making a dent in a very serious problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I'd like to make a further statement regarding the point of order raised by the hon. member for Moosomin.

On Friday, March 1, 1996, the hon. member for Moosomin raised a point of order with respect to the method under rule 88(3) by which this Legislative Assembly elects its Deputy Chair of Committees.

In response to the member, I did point out that it has been the long-standing tradition of this Assembly to elect its presiding officers by motion which, of course, differs considerably from the secret ballot process more recently instituted with respect to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Because of those differences, for the benefit of all members, I would like to take a moment to elaborate about what is meant by the term "election" in rule 88(3).

Before 1991, the three presiding officers of this Assembly were all elected by the same process of candidates being identified and proposed for the respective positions — Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and Deputy Chair of Committees — by way of substantive motions. This followed the custom of the House of Commons in Ottawa which in turn adapted it from the British practice at Westminster.

In the case of competition for a presiding officer position, the name of another candidate could be proposed, not as amendment to the motion but as a separate motion. The question on the initial motion would then be put. And if the majority decided in favour of that motion, the candidate identified in the motion would be declared elected, and the other motions dropped. Consequently, the term "election" was defined to mean the majority will of the Assembly as expressed by voting in favour or against the motion.

I also point out that the tradition was that the Premier would propose these types of motions. The traditional process of course was superseded by the secret ballot procedure which was devised initially for the Speaker and then extended to the Deputy Speaker. As members are aware, the secret ballot process is not applicable to the Deputy Chair of Committees. Therefore the Deputy Chair of Committees continues to be elected upon motion and not secret ballot.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Murrell, seconded by Mr. Thomson.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My remarks are going to be somewhat brief this afternoon because I don't want to, in any way, upstage the throne speech. And we know the importance of these things, Mr. Speaker, having sat in and listened to four, five, six of them now and knowing really what comes of them, you know, and I can only think back to the thrust of the throne speech a few sessions ago where in fact co-generation was going to revive rural Saskatchewan and then in fact the president of SaskPower, Mr. Messer, phoned up the Premier and said: listen, you run these things by me before you get up and say anything in the throne speech because I may just have to shut you down. And he did that. And I think the Premier can avoid a lot of embarrassment in the future in fact if he'd just run them by Jack initially, Mr. Speaker.

As I had said the other day, there's a mount of choices that this government is making, and it claims to be preparing to make for today and tomorrow, it says. And I touched on a few things about the choices they made in the past and that's what's going to in fact get them in a lot of trouble with the people, Mr. Speaker.

In fact I notice on page 2 of the throne speech, they talk about a lot of consultations. Actually all throughout the throne speech I see the words consultation and partnership. It shows up quite often. And to me that would, you know . . . I assume that the government's talking to people and really and truly going out there and getting their opinions on issues of the day. But the problem is when I see where they're consulting with business, on page 2, I would have to ask the question: what has business been telling them about the Crown tendering? Has business out there been saying we really do appreciate unionized preference policies in the province? I don't think so. I don't think that's what they're hearing.

The member from Regina South, the other day, he was talking about consultations. He was saying what they hear, what he's been hearing at these, I guess it's the budget meetings, pre-budget meetings, was in fact people asking for tax relief, lower taxes. And, Mr. Speaker, just around the dull roar of the members opposite, if I could draw your attention to that.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member is finding it somewhat disruptive, the noise in the House. And I will ask the members to cooperate, to allow him to present his debate in a non-interrupted fashion.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I know how difficult it is to bring them to order.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member is not a new member and does know that it's not proper to comment on the Speaker's rulings. Now let him proceed and get to his important debate.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The businesses, I'm sure, that they're out consulting are actually telling them yes, we do want lower taxes. I think the member from Regina South was absolutely correct. And they do want labour laws that don't hamper them. They don't want Crown tendering. And we don't really have to go out and consult much more in groups, because I know that the government opposite is receiving the same kind of calls and meeting with the same groups — or at least I hope they are — that we are. And it's a daily message we're getting, Mr. Speaker, about what the people of this province really and truly want. But in fact if all you're ever going to do as a government is say, well we're out there consulting, but never do anything more than that, well that's where the problem comes in. And it shows itself in so many ways.

I recall when the first Health minister, the lawyer that . . . the first lawyer that they had as a Health minister, Mr. Speaker, in fact she had a consultation process. But it happened after they closed 52 hospitals and kept downsizing. And one of the members opposite were talking about first responders today. Well that's what you get instead of hospitals and front-line health care workers in rural Saskatchewan — first responders, people with less than 40 hours training. And you're proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Well that was quite a consultation process because that lawyer, that minister of Health, closed the hospitals and then made a trip around the province to see what the people thought of it. Let's go out and consult.

Well I was at some of those meetings. I know what they told the minister of Health, the lawyer of the day, was that in fact that was not the appropriate process that should have been put into place. But what do we see today? Today we are having crop insurance meetings, starting today. And that's after the Minister of Agriculture announced that they are going to be closing. Is there a chance that the people of the province could get you to go out and consult them before you shut them down? Could you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Reading on — and, Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, I don't want to give this throne speech more than it deserves — but reading on, I see that this government opposite is bringing forward a four-year financial plan to ensure balanced budgets, further reduction in public debt over the life of this legislature, prudent management of public finances. Well that sounds great; it sounds like they have a plan in place. And yet what we find out though is in fact time and time again the investments that they are making are coming back to haunt them.

And I want to know, I would like them to stand in their place today and tell us, if some of the actions that they have taken, some of the actions that the member from Thunder Creek has raised on several occasions, in fact some of the monies that they have put at risk, public monies that they have put at risk in deals such as HARO Financial and some of the court cases that eventually come from that, Mr. Speaker, is that part of the plan?

Well I don't know but I think that perhaps should have been right in the throne speech. They should have had to answer to that. That's a major amount of money. You can't hardly have a

plan if in fact you're putting hundreds of millions of dollars at risk with the other hand, Mr. Speaker.

I notice also on the bottom of page 2 they're talking about exports. You know I don't know, Mr. Speaker, where we're having an increase in exports because jobs are still the problem. The only thing that I do know as far as exporting is the fact that we're losing our youth, and this was raised only a few days ago in the House. We're losing our young families, the ones that keep the schools going out in rural Saskatchewan. Those young professional families that, in fact, if the jobs are here, they'll be here, they'll raise their families here. And that's how we'll get the taxes paid.

We also see the professionals, the doctors and the nurses that are leaving this province because of actions . . . because of the policies of the government. That's all we're exporting, Mr. Speaker, are the young and the professional . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you know the member from Lloydminster — I think that's where that member is from — she can heckle from her seat. But why didn't she stand up, instead of giving a first responder statement today about how great it was to shut down hospitals in her constituency and train somebody for 20, 30, 40 hours to replace them, you know why doesn't she address the fact that I'm sure there's people in her constituency having to move out of province because they can't get jobs either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Mr. McPherson: — I see another . . . you know, and here's really a theme that I see emerging from the government opposite, Mr. Speaker. On page 3 they talk about community-based organizations. Everything's community-based — community-based health — but yet nobody's getting health.

We see the Deputy Premier today with a cast on his arm. He said it took him one hour to get his cast, and yet in question period I raised the case of Julie Walker who waited three days and only after went to the media did she get any health care. That's what community-based health is. So I can only wonder what community-based organizations would be.

Obviously bigger is better. That's the theme; that's the one they want to go with. And that's why of course they would want to start REDAs (regional economic development authority). Huge, huge masses of towns and RMs. We had a system in place with the rural development cooperatives. In most cases I think it took in, you know, 10 to 15 towns and RMs, and it was of a size where if projects come up you could have it managed somewhat. You know, people would get involved more from a community level.

Well in a REDA I don't know if we're going to have this Mr. Speaker. I've got concerns if we're going to work on a, say, a tourist project. Are the people in Leader going to feel as strongly about a tourist project in Ponteix, hours away? Because that's where it's going. Bigger is not always better, Mr. Speaker.

On page 4, I find it interesting. We have a small blurb about agriculture. Now I find that . . . you know, being that it's well into the speech already — and not much of a speech it is, Mr. Speaker, — that agriculture would finally surface here. Let me quote some stuff from there, what they're saying about agriculture: ". . . only a step towards a long-term national package."

Well you know, I remember them talking about national packages, and you will recall it also, Mr. Speaker — what? — five years ago. I know I'm getting on the line there, Mr. Speaker; I won't bother you. But five, six years ago they were talking about a national package. Well since then they've — what? — changed the program, changed the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) three times. They've made crop insurance unaffordable for people. They've got the coverage so that really I don't think . . . Well I know in the south-west very few people are belonging to crop insurance any longer. It's not worth it. It's not worth it.

But yet they have enough nerve to talk about the fact that it's going ahead, I guess. But do you know what the people see? They see headlines like the ones . . . well was it January 17, I guess: NDP breaks promise over the GRIP program. That's what people recall, Mr. Speaker — the fact that they're breaking promises while in fact that they're letting on that they're doing something for the farmers. We'll get into this many times throughout the next 70-80 days, and I won't hold it up any longer than necessary here today, Mr. Speaker.

Another point that I found interesting on page 6 of the throne speech . . . and the member from Humboldt raised this today, and I'm glad our member did raise it because I'm not so sure that they would have gotten back into it, Mr. Speaker.

The fact that it was — what? — four or five years ago we heard how the government was going to address child poverty, child hunger, poverty as a whole in the first session of their government's mandate, you know. Where's it at today? The food bank lines are longer. There's more hungry kids. There's more people in poverty. There's more people moving out so that they don't have to join those lines. That's what you should have been putting in the speech.

The fact of the matter is how much you're failing at what you should be doing for the people of this province. The government should be ashamed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Page 7 of the speech talks about a little more coverage. There's more coverage for families and supplementary health care coverage for children; that sounds good. But I can only think back to what they've done. It's one thing to say something, that they're going to provide something or do something different, but the fact of the matter is they took a drug plan, they took our drug plan with a dispensing fee and turned it into a $1,700-a-year plan. That's what reality is. It's one thing to say that we're providing more, but you're

providing people with more debt, with more bills, with more heartache. That's what you're providing them with.

And what about the senior care? You know how many seniors that I have, on a daily basis that get a hold of me, saying we have no idea what to do? The government is shutting down nursing homes, they're shutting down the services that we need as elderly out in rural Saskatchewan, and these people have no answers. That's a shame. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

Midway down page 7 it talks about a few things that the government intends to do in the justice . . . And I don't want to sound just, you know, completely negative. I think that some of the things they have here, the changes to the justice system, I'll give them some credit. And you see, whenever you do something that I . . . (inaudible) . . . people, or the people of Saskatchewan, and our caucus feels you deserve credit for, we'll give it to you. But on the other hand, when you keep messing up the way you do, then you're going to have to accept the heartache that's going to be placed upon your shoulders for doing it.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on about changes to the health system. And I don't think it even warrants comment after the Minister of Health today standing up in this House and talking about, you know, people raising health care issues solely for political reasons. I think that's disgusting, and I hope that the Minister of Health will phone up Julie Walker from Shellbrook and apologize. You don't have to apologize to me because I've seen your behaviour before. But I do think that Julie Walker deserves an apology for being accused of playing . . . being played politically for someone's game. This is a first . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — This is a person that only wished to have a broken leg fixed. Laid for three days. Had the fears of becoming, perhaps, addicted to morphine. Or gangrene. Who knows? A lot of fear. And I think the Minister should place that call today. I will let her know that she could expect it, in fact.

It says at the top of — where am I at? — 8 that the government is placing control of health in local hands. Well we've heard that song and dance for some time. But you know what controls . . .

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

Mr. Toth: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just noticed an entrepreneurial couple from my constituency have just arrived in the east gallery — Tony and Pat Birchall. Some members may recognize Pat Birchall's name from the little company that they've established called Re-Wear Clothing and they've joined us in the Assembly today. I trust they're finding this educational.

I think they're also looking for the fact that while FSIN received $130,000 in money, they're trying to get their little company up and running too and so they're looking to the Economic Development minister. I'd like the members to join me in welcoming the two individuals.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'd just like to remind all members of the House that when introducing guests it is improper to engage in debate and I'll ask all members to cooperate with that.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY (continued)

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Page 8 talks about placing control of health in local hands. And we've heard this song and dance for a while but still what we see is the government making decisions and handing those decisions down to the people, especially in rural Saskatchewan, with no options.

And this is really starting to show itself more and more each day when in fact the government controls the funding and they're controlling the projects. It's coming out in a project-funded basis. So they can say we're going to give you all the control you want. In fact they can say, you know, here's the decision; you can either build this facility or not. Because if you don't, we might close down the one you have now. That's what they did in Plains health care.

If that's handing control to the local people, I'd hate to see what they'd do if they said, no, we're taking control.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Further down I see that they . . . and of course, this is going to be the theme of the government opposite, Mr. Speaker. We all know that they would like to blame everything on the federal government. All the problems of Saskatchewan are to do with the federal government.

And I think some of the back-benchers actually believed it. You talk about the front-benchers selling something that the back ones believe. And that wasn't always the case, as we know, Mr. Speaker, but it sure is now. Because I'm sure we'll hear this in just about every speech.

But they're talking about the federal government creating a two-tiered health system. I'm amazed that they would say that. Because what we have had, what we have seen in this province in the last few years, is the creation of a two-tiered health system.

If you think there isn't a difference between having health care in the rural areas versus urban, or even Regina versus Saskatoon . . . well, maybe there isn't health care in Saskatoon

because the lady I talked of this morning, Julie Walker, was from the Minister of Health's home town and he didn't seem concerned about that.

Now obviously the Minister of Economic Development had a cast in an hour so maybe this is the town with health care. I don't know. I guess that'll come clear.

At the bottom we see frugal and effective government, a subtitle. And I for one, but maybe I'm just cynical, I for one don't think that they're after a frugal and effective government.

Because if they were, if they were, would then we have had headlines such as in the *Leader-Post*, Tuesday, January 23, where deputy ministers and staff, there's 42 new staff, 42 political staff, right here, cost of $62,000 each. And I'm sure that the new member from Regina South knows exactly what I'm talking about because I think he used to be one of those. And you know, does that sound like somebody that's going to be frugal and effective? To me it doesn't, but perhaps I'm just not fully appreciative and aware of what some of these political hacks do in those offices. I'm to be proven wrong, so please do so.

More ministers in charge. We have now a minister in charge of Post-Secondary Education. I think there's a minister in charge of what? Just SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation)? Not to say that it's not important; it's just that I've yet to see opposition caucuses actually say well, you're in charge of only, you know, this, SPMC or Post-Secondary Education. So I don't know why the government would put the importance to it that in fact others wouldn't.

In conclusion, I guess I can only say that this is perhaps one of the weakest throne speeches I've ever seen. But then as I said in my opening remarks, I didn't expect a lot because I've seen other speeches where I thought were actually fairly good and in the end they didn't have to live up to it anyways.

So I don't support the thrust of the government. You know really, if you really and truly were able to canvass the back-benchers over there, I'm not so sure they do either. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start my speech this time first off with some congratulations to you on your election as Speaker. I and I know the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood are very much looking forward to working with you and will be seeking your advice from time to time. I just want to tell all members that if I ever err while I'm in the Chair there, it's because Mr. Speaker may have provided ill advice. And I think that's probably the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Now the hon. member is a veteran member of the House and knows that he should ought not to be involving the Speaker in the debate, and I'll ask him to avoid doing that.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I ask for leave to . . . We had a miscue and in fact I shouldn't be on my feet at this stage. The Leader of the Third Party should be. I ask if there's . . . I ask for leave of the House to be able to sit down and rise again.

The Speaker: — Order. Members will know that it has been a long-established principle of the House that once a member has taken his place in debate and gives up his place in debate, that he gives it up and cannot return.

However, having said that, because it is early in the session I would be willing to make an exception if the House grants leave, but clearly on the understanding that this is not the establishment of a precedent. So with that understanding, I'll put to the House the question.

Leave granted.

(1445)

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate that from the member, as well as your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and we trust that as you have said that that won't set any future precedent in the Assembly here.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I wanted to take the opportunity to congratulate you once again on your election as the Speaker in this Assembly, a very historic, as you know, occasion where members have now had the opportunity to, in a democratic fashion, make a decision about who they would like to see in the Speaker's chair as well as the Deputy Speaker's chair. We would also congratulate the member for . . . in regard to his election as Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate all new members to the Assembly. I certainly recall the first opportunities I had to speak in the Assembly. As you pull up out front here — I'm sure you all felt the same way I did the first time — it's a fairly imposing and formidable building and nevertheless I'm sure everyone will, over time, will begin to gain some . . . a feeling of welcome at the Assembly here and my heartiest congratulations to all who were elected for the first time and indeed re-elected, as many, many members were.

Mr. Speaker, I as well would like to congratulate and thank, pardon me, thank the people of the Kindersley constituency for placing the trust in myself in electing me once again in the Kindersley constituency.

I like to think of it as the best constituency in the entire province of Saskatchewan. It's certainly a constituency that has helped in the economy of Saskatchewan a great deal over the years, Mr. Speaker. It is a constituency that I'm very proud to represent. It's a constituency that the Progressive Conservative Party has held for six consecutive elections now, and we're very proud to be able to continue that tradition.

Mr. Speaker, getting down to the business at hand here today, it's a pleasure finally to have the opportunity to stand in the Assembly and discuss decisions and actions regarding the government and what the government has done in the last nine

months since the election. It's an awful long time to have some of your questions go unanswered, Mr. Speaker, and I hope we don't have to wait too much longer into the future to have a number of concerns that the people have addressed to us brought up.

There are many questions that members opposite haven't given Saskatchewan people answers for. Why this government promised tax relief during the election and immediately raised SaskPower rates by 12 per cent on households around Saskatchewan is one question. Why Don Ching has received an undisclosed severance package for work he didn't do and without any kind of a signed contract. Why this government has gone all out expanding gambling in the province without listening to the wishes of families, even though the government's own polls show that the people don't like the direction the government is taking on this issue.

Oh, they say they listen to the people of Saskatchewan. They say they are caring for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker. But the members know full well that this is not the case. What they have been taking care of, Mr. Speaker, is their political agenda, and that's it.

A list of the government's broken promises, of questionable decisions, is a very, very long one. And so we are going to take several . . . it'll take several months, I'm sure, to bring up all of the issues that the public has addressed to us. That's why it is necessary, Mr. Speaker, that I will be moving an amendment at the end of my address here this afternoon, an amendment to the motion. At the end of my remarks I'll be doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, throne speeches are supposed to lay out the future direction of the government, to give a clear idea on the direction the government is taking a province. It's supposed to provide a concise plan, a tangible plan with deadlines and goals and targets for the future. And that's why we all thought the Premier was going to provide us with that when he had his $30,000 televised infomercial.

Unfortunately, instead of providing a clear direction, the Premier used his half-hour infomercial to bash the federal government and a hint to top government cuts like his cutting his cabinet, and little else.

That $30,000 could have been much better spent than providing the NDP with a medium for spreading their political propaganda. In fact the half-hour should not have been paid for by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan; it should have been paid for by the NDP themselves. Either that, Mr. Speaker, either that or change the way the throne speech is delivered.

In contrast to the way it was done here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in Alberta Ralph Klein went on television and before the session outlined specifically to Albertans what they can expect from his government in the upcoming months. Very specific. And yes, in that case the taxpayers of Alberta paid for it.

However there is a big difference, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta, Premier Klein's address replaces the throne speech. So when the elected members reach the Legislative Assembly in Alberta, they get right down to work. That's the way they did it in Alberta this time around.

Here we spent $30,000 on the Premier's infomercial, in addition to spending about $35,000 a day that this Assembly spends as it responds for six days to the throne speech — a significant difference. Way, way better done in Alberta than it is here in Saskatchewan, without question. There needs to be reforms in this area, Mr. Speaker, and I urge members opposite to consider how much money we could save the taxpayers of this province by changing things right here in Saskatchewan.

We were prepared, Mr. Speaker, to get down to work on the very first day of this Assembly. That's one of the reasons we presented that emergency motion on the very first day of the Assembly — to clearly demonstrate to the people of Saskatchewan that we were prepared to get down to work immediately the way they did in Alberta after Mr. Klein's government went back in their latest session. I could bring up, and I will bring up, a number of examples of how this government can learn from other governments today and later dates as well, Mr. Speaker.

I must congratulate, however, the members opposite on one thing. They are good at getting their message out. They're good at telling the people exactly what they want them to hear. They've always been good in that regard. Unfortunately for all of us, that's about where it ends, Mr. Speaker, because while the members are good at telling people what they want them to hear, they are not good at fulfilling their promises and being up front about their dealings.

And there are a number of examples of this, Mr. Speaker. For instance, the NDP promised tax relief to Saskatchewan families while they were sitting in the opposition benches. And what have we seen from these same individuals? Mr. Speaker, any government can restrain taxpayers by hiking every tax and fee and utility rate in sight. But it takes a responsible government to restrain itself — something that the members opposite have not done.

According to the 1995 summary financial statements, total government revenues increased by 9 per cent — over $700 million during 1995 alone. Revenues have climbed a total of 18 per cent over the past four years to the government coffers.

What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that as a result of the members opposite raising every tax and fee available to them, last year alone the government took in over $1.3 billion above what they brought in just four years ago — 1.3. That's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker; that's about 20 per cent of the entire cost of running this government.

The additional tax grab from the members opposite in the last year alone means that the families of Saskatchewan now shell out 5,300 additional income tax dollars that are being taken away from them on a family of four. That's what this government considers as tax relief. That's the kind of tax relief we've had from them. So when the members opposite speak of

tax relief for families, their promises ring very, very hollow.

In another example, it's with jobs. Since the very first throne speech delivered by this government, there's been the promise of jobs, jobs, jobs, thousands and thousands of jobs. On one occasion, one of the speeches from the throne, it was 30,000 jobs would be created. Sixteen thousand another time. Several thousand here, several thousand more, what difference does it make?

All together, Mr. Speaker, over 50,000 new jobs have been promised by this government since the beginning of 1992. That's your record in job creation — 50,000 jobs have been promised. Between 1995, January of '95 and January of '96, Saskatchewan, in the latest StatsCan's information, says that 5,000 fewer people are working here today. We've lost, we've actually lost ground, Mr. Speaker — 5,000 less jobs in that year-over-year statistics.

Now if you compare that, for example, to our neighbouring provinces, our closest provinces to the west of us and to the east of us, I think there's some interesting comparisons. In Alberta there's been 13,900 jobs created in that same time frame. In Manitoba they've increased by about 11,500 in that same time frame, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite have the most dismal job creation record in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. And they can look directly at themselves as one of the reasons why.

Mr. Speaker, this government promises jobs to people. The members raise the hopes of families who desperately need jobs. But just look at their record. They passed a policy that forces contractors to hire 75 per cent unionized employees, the Crown construction policy, increasing cost to taxpayers. In the last session it was clear that that was the case.

And it was demonstrated many, many times, example after example. They passed legislation tying the hands of business and squelching job creation through The Labour Standards Act, The Occupational Health and Safety Act, The Workers' Compensation Act, and The Trade Union Act. And at the same time, in the latest throne speech, Mr. Speaker, the government is talking about reducing bureaucracy by 25 per cent by the year 2005.

Your record is anything but a good example of what you plan to do in that regard because you have added layer after layer after layer to the bureaucracy of this government, and while the members opposite refuse to accept responsibility for their sorry job creation strategy.

Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite are truly concerned about fulfilling job promises, they had better start looking at other provinces and our caucus's agenda for some help, because they certainly need it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Another promise broken by the members opposite was health care reform. The throne speech promises more of the same. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that's the case, Saskatchewan people better brace themselves for the worst.

The Premier promised his government's reforms would improve health care services to rural Saskatchewan, rural people. Improve it, is what they said. Instead we have rural areas with no health care services at all.

They promised local autonomy on health boards. They forced communities into the districts, and then appointed every single health board member, Mr. Speaker. That's their record. That's what this government likes to call local autonomy.

You can bet the same kind of thing will happen with amalgamations of school divisions and local governments in this province. And we'll, I'm sure, be seeing more of that in the very near future. The heavy-handed NDP will say, well I guess the local communities can't decide for themselves so we'll have to show them the way. That's been the example in health care and I expect that will be the example again. That's how this government works, and we all know that that is the case.

Another example, Mr. Speaker, is this government's promise to cut government spending. That's what you promised in opposition. Time after time after time they made that commitment. I remember the Premier, when he was the leader of the opposition, saying $4.5 billion each year is enough money to run this province. He said that anybody who couldn't run the province of Saskatchewan on $4.5 billion couldn't and shouldn't be in government. Well, Mr. Speaker, by his own admission he must certainly need some help in that area as well because his government took in over $5.7 billion — closer in fact to $5.8 billion — in direct taxes, fees, transfers, natural resource revenues in the '94-95 fiscal year, according to the *Public Accounts*. That's a far cry from $4.5 billion, Mr. Speaker.

(1500)

And there's no end in sight. Taxes continue to escalate. Families all over the province of Saskatchewan continue to feel the tax bite of this government. So when the NDP in their throne speech mentions cutting government spending from the top down, Saskatchewan people have to be a little bit cynical, to say the least, and they have every right to be.

When the NDP was the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, they promised to eliminate poverty in their first term. Imagine that. That was the lofty goal that they put before the people of Saskatchewan in 1991. They were going to eliminate poverty. There would be no need for food banks, and every child in Saskatchewan would have a full stomach.

And one of the members talked about poverty here today in question period, and all we got from the Minister of Social Services was some vague commitment to look at it once again.

Well the deadline has come and gone, so let's take a look at the facts. Welfare numbers have hit record heights in Saskatchewan. Numbers of people relying on food banks have hit all-time records, and child poverty is still with us. That's

your shameful record with respect to ending poverty, which was what your promise was in the '91 election campaign.

The most recent promises of the Premier are also, one, to cut the size of his cabinet, Mr. Speaker. At least he alluded to that in his televised infomercial. But when questioned about it later, the Premier had no time frame. He threw out possibly 18 months, 24 months. I suspect it will be a lot later than sooner with that regard, Mr. Speaker — perhaps just in time for the next election campaign. Try and gain a few votes, a favour, back from the people of Saskatchewan.

I recall seeing an editorial here recently where they're even speculating that the Premier may consider taking a jump to the federal scene in terms of a political change in his approach to governing. That would be an interesting change for the people of Saskatchewan, to say the least, Mr. Speaker, to see the Premier take a shot at federal politics in Jean Chrétien's national unity cabinet that's being bandied around these days. We'll be watching that with great interest to see whether that happens or not.

And I suspect he probably has a few more political favours that he has to take care of, like the Minister for Advanced Education, good old buddy that he is of the Premier. You can't kick him out of cabinet; we all know that. Long association with the Premier; been in business with him; all of those kinds of things. And you don't want to do something like that in the last days of an administration, or especially when you're thinking about jumping to the federal scene. Take care of Bob; take care of the minister. That's for sure what you would want to do in that regard.

A cabinet that the Premier said he was going to reduce, we're hopeful that would be the case. And I would suggest he could maybe start with the Minister of Agriculture because he hasn't done much of a job for farmers, and we all know that.

They probably know that they have broken their promises in a whole host of regards. The Crown corporation review is one that they broke their promise in as well. But at least they're doing it now. At least they're suggesting that they're going to have this Crown corporation review.

And we understand, Mr. Speaker, that the dreaded P-word is even considered now, something that they might look at — privatization. I never thought I'd hear it roll off the lips of one of the NDP cabinet ministers, but we finally have, Mr. Speaker. It hurt; it certainly did. And particularly when Barb Byers said that they had gained assurances from CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) officials that that was not on the table. And now we find that it is on the table, and we congratulate the government for looking at privatization as an option.

The envelope is moving constantly, Mr. Speaker. Before long the Premier will be out-Conservating the people that are over on this side of the bench . . . on this side of the House.

It seems incredible. In fact I had one gentleman tell me the other day that he heard . . . that he thought Grant Devine had slipped into the Premier's skin somewhere along the summer. But I don't think that that's the case because he's still got the union tendering policy; he's still got the Crown tendering policy; he's still got the trade union labour standards Act; he's still got a whole host of things, Mr. Speaker, that he needs to address before he could call himself a Conservative, even though it appears that he desperately wants to.

However there are conflicting reports about the Crown review. Barb Byers says that she's gained assurances that that won't include privatization. Well excuse me, Mr. Speaker, but somebody has to be straightforward with the people of Saskatchewan. Somebody has to, in the front benches of that government, stand up and say whether or not everything is on the table in this Crown corporation review, including privatization.

What's the point in spending a bunch of money on a pretend study to review Crowns if indeed privatization isn't an option? Maybe it's just so the members opposite can run around and say, well we talked to people about it, and we don't want to do it, and they assume that that's the case.

They will neglect to mention that privatization wasn't a topic considered or even discussed in any way, shape, or form during the election campaign. Nowhere was there a mention of privatization during the '95 election campaign.

And it's too bad because I think a lot of people of Saskatchewan are looking at it. They realize in this age of deregulation that that is an option that you people are going to have to look at. Whether the back-benchers like it or not, I think the Premier is going to do some privatization initiatives.

And we'll be watching with great interest to see when something . . . one of the Crowns, like SaskTel, is put on the privatization chopping block . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well they only come in Saskatchewan in terms of another one being formed in the throne speech or setting up another one. And the member knows full well that that's the case.

In Saskatchewan we never talk about reducing the number of Crown corporations; we only add to the list. And at the same time this government is the one that says they're going to cut down the amount of bureaucracy, and at the same time they set up another Crown corporation. Where is the savings for the people of Saskatchewan with regard to that?

You don't seem to have any regard for what you've said during the election campaign or any time in the past. And the members opposite know that that's the case. Even though, as another example, you promised the people of Saskatchewan that you'd be consultative during the gambling expansion, we have seen anything but that. Anything but that. Another broken promise along the way.

Another promise that they made, Mr. Speaker, in the last election campaign was that the schools and universities here in Saskatchewan could and would receive a 2 per cent increase in funding, promised by you, the government opposite. And now all bets are off. Once you get elected it doesn't matter what we

said during the election campaign; doesn't matter what we committed to; doesn't matter what we promised to; we're going to do whatever we want now because we're back in government. That seems to be the direction that you've taken.

It wasn't so long ago that the Premier, when he was the leader of the opposition, said education would be the top priority of the NDP government. That was what he said then. He didn't stop there either, Mr. Speaker. He said to the people of Saskatchewan, don't let anyone tell you there isn't money there because it is, because there is. He said it was just a matter of priorities. That's what he said.

Well in this case it's a matter of priorities, Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite have their priorities very twisted with respect to this. And they think it's fine to say that you can make a promise and then weeks later say all bets are off. They think it's okay to blame the federal government for their actions, and we all know that that just seems to be the latest excuse that they have.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite across the way like to think that it's fine that they took $188 million out of the GRIP program last year to balance the budget, even though for years they promised better coverage, more security, lower premiums, and better pay-outs to Saskatchewan farmers. The truth is, what this government has done to Saskatchewan farm families is unforgivable. They got elected in 1991; they passed retroactive legislation which broke 60,000 contracts with Saskatchewan producers.

That in itself is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately it hasn't stopped there. They went on to drop coverage, to change the program so that farmers in Alberta and Manitoba received the benefits of GRIP while Saskatchewan farmers were on the short end of the stick once again.

If that isn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, this government's blatant disregard for our province's number one industry and the people who make it work, but once again it didn't stop there. Now after all of this, the NDP slapped farmers in the face once more and they're doing it once more again. Forcing producers to repay funds to the GRIP program as a result of the provincial government's retroactively changing 60,000 contracts is both unacceptable and unethical, and every member opposite knows that that's the case.

The Premier and his cabinet colleagues promised on several occasions, farmers would not have to repay the money. Everybody fully expects if there's an overpayment you have to pay it back except, Mr. Speaker, when there's a promise from the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier of this province that that wouldn't be the case. In fact last year in this Assembly, the Ag minister said no, we will not be collecting that $115 million overpayment from farmers; if we collect it, then we'd be legally obligated to mail it back out to them — *Hansard,* March 31, 1995.

Mr. Speaker, on June 3 of '95, the *Leader-Post* quotes the Agriculture minister as saying: farmers will never be asked to pay back the GRIP overpayments — never. That's what he said.

And during the election campaign, if you recall, Mr. Speaker, when people were all out across the province of Saskatchewan campaigning, we said that at that time, that the government would be at some point saying to the farmers of Saskatchewan, you're going to have to pay this back. We're going to send you a big, fat bill. And I recall, and it was recorded by CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) TV, June 2, 1995, in the height of the election campaign. The Premier went on to say that my prediction was "totally false." That's what he said.

Mr. Speaker, the surplus from the federal contributions to GRIP in 19 . . . pardon me, through the years, has been $356 million. Some of this is being used to fund the new safety net programs, but $200 million of it has gone back into government coffers. In addition, Saskatchewan's government surplus of $188 million was used to balance last year's budget, not to fund GRIP as was originally intended.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, even though the government has transferred hundreds of millions of dollars away from the GRIP program, farmers are on the hook to repay overpayments they don't rightfully owe because the government promised that they wouldn't have to pay it. The Agriculture minister said last week on this issue that it's a done deal and there's nothing more to discuss.

Well he knows better than that, Mr. Speaker. He stood in his place when he was opposition critic to Agriculture and promised farmers more money, better safety nets, better programs for farmers, and the NDP would come through for rural Saskatchewan.

Well I recall after the election in 1991, the Premier loaded up a plane of people, said he was going to go down to Ottawa and he was going to grab some money away from them and bring it back and distribute it to farmers. And what did we get, Mr. Speaker? We got a $100,000 bill for the plane fare. That's what we got from this government for Saskatchewan farmers.

We didn't get one dime from you people that you promised in '91 after the election campaign. We didn't get one dime from you people for farmers in 1995 after the election campaign, even though you promised it at every occasion. We got nothing but $12,000 . . . 12,000 farmers with bills. And the member right there knows that that is exactly the case.

And they sit in this Assembly day after day, and the member, Minister of Agriculture, all the time he was in opposition, was going to get more for farmers across this province. And what was his very first act? The very first act that he did, in any meaningful fashion for the farmers of Saskatchewan, was send out 12,000 bills. That's what he did.

I spoke to one farmer awhile ago. I spoke to one farmer here just the other day and he was talking about the GRIP program. He had received a bill of $73,000 from this government. That was one example of a bill that was sent out by you people — 73,000, just under $73,000 was what it was . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the member opposite says, was it his

money? If he was a farmer in Alberta or a farmer in Manitoba, yes, it would have been his money. Yes, he knows that that's the case exactly. Exactly. The farmers in those provinces benefited from the program, and in Saskatchewan we got a bill. That is the kind of thing that this government is famous for, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Speaker is pleased to see great enthusiasm for the debate in the response to Speech from the Throne, and all members will have their time. It's getting a little difficult to hear the Leader of the Third Party, and I'll ask you to allow him to proceed.

(1515)

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, interest is already accruing on those bills to the Saskatchewan farm families; it started March 1. Interest now is accruing as we speak in this Assembly.

Well we think, Mr. Speaker, that what should happen with those bills is, first of all, the NDP government and the Minister of Agriculture should be paying the principal, and the Liberals should be paying the interest.

It is because of their irresponsible actions of the member from Arm River, who suggested that the farmers send them the bills in the mail and they would take care of it. Well what have you done to take care of it to date, sir, I would ask you. You haven't presented one of them yet. You haven't done anything with them yet. Interest is piling up daily on the bills to the farmers of Saskatchewan. And at the same time, at the same time, those members irresponsibly suggest that people send them their bills. What are you going to do with them when you get them?

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I will ask the hon. member to direct his debate through the Chair and proceed.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you what the NDP is planning on doing with regard to this program and what the Liberals are planning on doing with regard to the interest charges that are accruing on farmers these days after their irresponsible actions. And every one of us knows that that is irresponsible to suggest that they don't pay.

Mr. Speaker, it's time the NDP started treating Saskatchewan farmers with the respect that they deserve. It's time the NDP started really listening and acting on what people have to say.

Mr. Speaker, GRIP Bills aren't a done deal. And neither is rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because our caucus will continue to stand up for rural Saskatchewan and all other people across this province; will continue to fight for our rural communities. We will continue to bring forward viable, common sense solutions to what the members opposite have done to this province.

Mr. Speaker, I've just stated on numerous occasions that the role of opposition, the role of opposition is to stand up in question period and criticize the government — yes.

But another role of opposition is to present alternatives. It's to present different ways of doing things. It's to say to the people of Saskatchewan, here's a better way. It's not to . . . as in the *Leader-Post* the other day, when the House Leader says his responsibility is only to criticize. I would say to that member and all members in this Assembly, your responsibility is for the protection of tax dollars in this province. That's what it's for — not just simply to criticize but to present alternatives as we did in 15 Bills on Friday last, Mr. Speaker; 15 Bills that we brought before this Assembly that we think can make a difference for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Right here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. That is the role of opposition. And I would ask the members . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members of the Liberal Party that it's time that they stood up for the people of Saskatchewan rather than just standing up and saying I want to be the Leader of the Opposition in their upcoming election. That's what it's time for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, it is the part of government. It is the role of government in job creation as we've talked about many, many times. We think that they are failing in that regard. It's just important, Mr. Speaker, in these last few pages I have here to talk about what I think is the proper course for the province of Saskatchewan.

We think that there is some changes that need to be done. We think that the 15 pages of legislation that we introduced . . . the Crown tendering, repealing of that; allowing farmers the opportunity to have more marketing choices; a plebiscite. We think that the right to work in Saskatchewan should be the right of every individual whether they belong to a union or don't belong to a union. We think that there's things that need to be done in terms of health care reform. There's a whole host of things that this government needs to be looking at, Mr. Speaker.

Over the course of the next few months, our caucus's agenda for the people of Saskatchewan will be clear. It will be a vision based on our plans to build a better Saskatchewan for the people of this province. We'll be discussing these initiatives at every occasion that we have.

Mr. Speaker, because of the broken promises and the dismal record of the members opposite, the government, and for the failure of the federal throne speech to . . . or of the throne speech to truly outline anything more than political fluff from the NDP, I move the following amendment, seconded by the member from the Rosthern constituency, that the following be added after the word session and in the last line it read:

> But regrets that the provincial government has betrayed Saskatchewan families through its failure to create jobs, its attacks on the business community, its destruction of the health care system, its unfair tax policies, its expansion of gambling against the will of the people of Saskatchewan, its massive increases in utility rates, and particularly, its

betrayal of 12,000 farm families through the breaking of its solemn vow not to send out GRIP bills.

So moved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I start my speech to the throne, if we could have leave of the Assembly to introduce a guest, please.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud and happy, and we're privileged today to have the president of the Saskatchewan health care auxiliaries with us today. She also doubles as the mother of my two children and my wife, Mrs. Beverley McLane.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With leave, I'd like to also introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, along with the member from Arm River, I'd like to welcome also his spouse, who is the president of the hospital auxiliary association, and commend her and her colleagues for the very good work they do in partnership with other health care organizations for health care in our province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to introduce students from Preeceville School and from Forestville School in Quebec. They're exchange students.

Leave granted.

Mr. Heppner: — I'd like to introduce the students that are here from Preeceville School and also exchange students from Forestville, Quebec school. A special welcome to them and to our province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY (continued)

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you would permit me, sir, to add my voice of congratulations to you, and from those of the constituents of Arm River, upon your election as Speaker of this Assembly, the twenty-third Assembly of Saskatchewan. Our sincere congratulations.

Your election is yet another example of the democratic freedom we enjoy in this great country and attribute to the service that you have rendered over many years to your community and to the province of Saskatchewan.

The task before you is an enormous one, but I, along with my colleagues, have every confidence that you will exercise your responsibilities in a manner that will bring credit both to the office and to you, sir. It is my profound hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will preside over a House that will demonstrate a great measure of civility, a civility that can be achieved even in the height of philosophical debate if each of us, while diligent in our efforts, seeks to preserve the dignity that the magnificence of this Chamber commands.

To this end, sir, I commit my efforts with the hope that we, by example, will help to restore the public confidence in elected representatives in this institution of democracy with its inherent rights and freedoms.

I would also like to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the Deputy Speaker as well on his election to the post. And being that the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood is married to my first cousin, I'm certain that he will be more than fair when he's sitting in the chair.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — The people of Arm River are anxious, as am I, that we all do within our power to reduce the level of cynicism that the general public currently has for politicians in general. In my quest for elected office, the message I received was: continue to be yourself.

Each one of us, as we serve in this great institution, are on a journey towards our dreams. As I prepared for this time, I could not help but think of the words of Robert Louis Stevenson when he wrote: be what you are and become what you are capable of becoming. Each and every one of us has the ability to reach out, to grow, to change for the better, to set our goals, and to begin travelling in the direction of our dreams. All we have to do is believe in ourselves and begin.

I would be less than honest if I did not confess a feeling of great awe as I stand today in this forum. I cannot help but feel a sense of gratitude to those who have gone before us, those who, in their own way in this Assembly and in their communities, have contributed to the growth and the greatness of Saskatchewan.

I think of the service of premiers from Charles Dunning to Jimmy Gardiner, from James Anderson to Billy Patterson, from Tommy Douglas to Ross Thatcher and Allan Blakeney, to name but a few, and feel how fortunate we have been to have them. I also call to mind, with a feeling of gratitude, the great numbers of men and women of all political persuasions who, over the course of our history of 90 years, have sat in this Chamber and who have made their contribution to the people of

Saskatchewan and who have served their constituents to the best of their ability.

The good people of Arm River over the years have sent representatives to the seat of government who have served with great distinction. The Hon. George Scott, a Liberal, was the first MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) elected to represent the Arm River constituency. He was first elected in 1908 and went on to be successful in the subsequent elections of 1912, 1917, and 1921 for a total of four terms, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott's able work as a legislator received merited recognition from other legislators when, on November 27, 1919, Mr. Scott was chosen to fill the chair that you now occupy, Mr. Speaker, as Speaker of the House. In the publication "Saskatchewan and its people", it is written: Mr. Scott's thorough knowledge of parliamentary law and long experience in political life has enabled him to preside over the deliberations of that body efficiently and with becoming dignity so that the business is conducted in an orderly thoroughgoing fashion and at the same time with the least amount of delay and unnecessary friction.

Mr. Speaker, again I have confidence that you will emulate the example set by the Hon. George Scott.

The Liberty-Imperial district is the area of my constituency from which I come. Imperial, which has long been noted for many things including its determination to ensure excellent, safe health care to the residents of the district and who were successful in achieving the first hospital accreditation for a hospital of its size in Canada, sent another Liberal to the House in 1928 in the person of its local doctor, Dr. Thomas Frederick Waugh.

Duncan Selby, a Conservative, followed Dr. Waugh, but it wasn't long before another Liberal, the late Herman Danielson, was elected. Mr. Danielson was elected in 1934 and went on to be elected not only in 1938 but in 1944, 1948, 1952, 1956, and 1960. Mr. Danielson served a total of 30 continuous years, from July 24, 1934 until dissolution on March 16, 1964 — the longest membership in a Saskatchewan legislature of any person, I believe.

He served long and well and won recognition as an effective representative of the constituents of Arm River. With all humility, Mr. Speaker, it my intention to emulate the electoral success of this great Saskatchewan man.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — In 1964 our people elected Martin Pederson of the Conservatives, and he served one term until — well you guessed it — another Liberal in the person of Wilbert McIvor was given the responsibilities of representing us in this Assembly.

In 1971 our constituency elected a New Democrat, the Reverend Don Faris.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Who served until the election in 1978 of Mr. Gerald Muirhead, a Conservative . . . at that point in time reflected by many of the people in Arm River . . . will not do that again for awhile.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Mr. McLane: — And Mr. Muirhead was subsequently re-elected in the general elections of 1982, 1986, and 1991. Mr. Speaker, I want at this time to extend a word of appreciation on behalf of the people of Arm River to Mr. Muirhead. Regardless of political persuasion, the residents could approach Mr. Muirhead with their concerns, their problems, and their ideas. And in Mr. Muirhead you would find a representative who would go to bat for his people.

In June of last year, the new constituency of Arm River returned to its roots of liberalism with the election of another Liberal. And today I want to extend my appreciation to all the residents of Arm River for the confidence that they have shown me in electing me to serve as their member of the Legislative Assembly. Hopefully they elected me as most of your constituents have elected each of you — because they felt we had honesty and integrity.

Our task is to ensure that each of us live up to their expectations. Mr. Speaker, I was humbled to see the support that I received from people of every persuasion, from every corner of my constituency. Today I want to say that this new member of the Legislative Assembly from the constituency of Arm River has dedicated himself to be the representative of all the citizens of Arm River. And in the greater context of the expectations of the people of Saskatchewan, I hope that I will be able to demonstrate an ability to serve and to debate in a manner that serves the greater good of our province.

Let me for a few minutes speak about my constituency. Arm River is a sprawling constituency encompassing a broad expanse of rural Saskatchewan, running from just west of Lumsden to an area south of Central Butte, following along the beautiful South Saskatchewan River on the west to Haultain road on the north. It then winds south-easterly to the community of Imperial and follows the western shores of Last Mountain Lake to its point of origin, past my farm, and then down just east of the beautiful resort community of Regina Beach.

No other constituency in this province provides a broader picture of Saskatchewan life than does the constituency of Arm River. Our landscape and geography depicts agriculture at the cutting edge. Grain farming, mixed farming, irrigation, specialty crops — they all flourish. Small industry including manufacturing and tourism is dominant.

The location of Arm River provides my constituents with a deep insight into the amenities of rural life, and we have learned to enjoy those benefits. Over the years I have volunteered at the community level to enhance the quality of rural life, and if I have only one promise to make and that one I

plan to keep, it is to continue that struggle on behalf of rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — To introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the group of students that you see in your gallery is about to leave, and I would like to also introduce them, Mr. Speaker, to all the members of the House.

A fairly large contingent of students are now seated in the gallery, and I would like to introduce 20 grade 10, 11, and 12 students from Forestville, Quebec. These students arrived in Saskatchewan, I believe, on Friday. And as part of a student exchange, they will be spending a lot of time in Saskatchewan, most of that of course in east-central Saskatchewan. They are accompanied by Yvonne Beaudoin, I believe. And I would ask the students to rise, from Forestville, Quebec, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Also, Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is a group of students from the Canora-Pelly constituency. They are from the Preeceville School, and they are from grades 10, 11, and 12. They are accompanied by their teacher, Sheila Ivanochko, and bus driver Pat Paterson. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to recognize this fine group of young Canadians and their teachers.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY (continued)

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To continue, I make no apology to anyone in stating unequivocally that my purpose in this Assembly will be to speak for rural Saskatchewan within the context of what is important to the hopes and aspirations of Saskatchewan's people.

Governments in this province have for too long paid lip-service to rural Saskatchewan during election campaigns, then have proceeded to stand idly by while community after community suffer neglect. Rural Saskatchewan must be more than dying towns with just enough VLTs (video lottery terminal) to feed the general revenue pot.

I feel it fortunate that the people of Arm River have the opportunity to examine rural values while being completely aware of urban challenges. All my life I have chosen to support rural initiatives because I understand that our urban centres flourish when rural Saskatchewan thrives. Regina and Saskatoon are great cities because their strength and enterprise is directly related to the motivation derived from a rural personality.

So it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone, particularly those who know me well, if you hear me loud and clear, speaking for the farmers of Saskatchewan and other enterprises represented in rural Saskatchewan. Please understand, Mr. Speaker, that my prejudice to rural Saskatchewan is based on my certain knowledge that the cities of this province only do well if the farm constituency prospers.

While I have acknowledged, Mr. Speaker, that my responsibility as a member of this Assembly is to all my constituents and indeed to all the citizens of this province, it is important to clearly establish the personal agenda I plan to follow during the years that I will be privileged to serve.

My reasons for seeking office were based on the aspirations of the people I sought to serve, which should not, Mr. Speaker, be much different than those of other people of the province. The people of Arm River want less government; they want less government interference in their lives. They, with thousands of others, have long realized that government and elected officials come and go, and all too often with this reality unfortunately has developed an attitude of we know best.

We need only look at the coming of the GRIP program and the going of GRIP. Who in the final analysis suffers? The agriculture producer. It matters not how well intentioned the motives might be. When programs are designed with the I know best philosophy, those who have been targeted for protection become the victims who are hamstrung by regulation upon regulation and left damaged by resultant fall-out for which government seems unwilling to accept responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, farmers are at the mercy of government. Farmers cannot function as effectively as they could because of all the regulations that have been imposed upon them. Look, if you will, at the analogy of a freely flowing river, a river that moves unimpeded briskly and effectively until a beaver constructs a dam and all goes haywire. Has that not been the case with agriculture?

People have told me that agriculture programs have to meet the needs of people and have to be free from political interference. The farm community does not want to be subsidized, Mr. Speaker; the farm community does not want hand-outs.

The farm community expects only to be able to market its product for a fair market price. And it becomes imperative that each of us in this Assembly work to foster a greater understanding with all our people that grain payments from the Canadian Wheat Board are not hand-outs, but those very payments are payments from the sale of the producer's grain. We must quit leaving the impression that initial payments, interim payments, and final payments are nothing but what they really are — money paid to the farmers for the sale of his or her

grain, pure and simple.

The plea of my people, Mr. Speaker, is leave us alone with the least of regulatory influences. When agriculture issues are front and centre, it will be the member for Arm River who will be speaking for rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Arm River want assurances that their tax money is being spent effectively. They and I want to be sure that our money is being spent on programs that we need, and I make special reference to health and to education. Wherever people are, whenever they get sick, they want to know that the resources will be available to look after them.

Nowhere is this more important than in rural Saskatchewan where we have a greater proportion of senior citizens. Seniors in the years that they have lived have ensured through their diligence, their money and voluntary effort, a health care system that has met their needs and given them a great sense of security.

When it comes to protecting the health care interests of rural Saskatchewan in this province, Mr. Speaker, the member for Arm River and his counterparts in the official opposition will be speaking loud and clear for rural Saskatchewan and ensuring that further loss of quality health services to rural Saskatchewan will not happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — The people of Arm River want assurances that an education system will be such that our children and our grandchildren in rural Saskatchewan will have the same opportunity that all children throughout the province must have, and that is access to a first class instructional and learning environment that will equip them to take their place in our society.

The people of Arm River and I want to see jobs for our children and grandchildren that will enable them to use their talents and the education that they have received. We are tired of the rhetoric and the broken promises of more jobs. If government continues to tax and to spend, there will never be incentives and means for business and industry to create meaningful employment opportunities.

I had hoped to see in the throne speech, evidence of a plan to encourage private individuals to make an investment in our future. I have great concern that not one worthwhile program appears to be in the works that will in fact create new jobs for young people in rural Saskatchewan, let alone our urban centres.

Can we continue to refuse to recognize that Saskatchewan cannot continue to pass up opportunities to move ahead? This is the question my constituents and I ask. We have a province that has enough potash reserves beneath that rich wheat land to meet the anticipated needs of that industry for the next 100 years. We have a province that has developed assets above and below the ground that gives us the opportunity for present and future wealth. That should truly be the envy of an entire world. An advanced uranium industry would have a dramatic impact upon our province, but we now see Ontario reaping the potential benefits in jobs and revenue.

Even in these somewhat difficult economic times, we have every reason to be confident in our future and to hold out hope for that future. But, Mr. Speaker, my constituents and I ask a simple question: what good are all those resources if we cannot create jobs? Must our young people continue to be forced to leave home without even the hope of return? We say not.

Mr. Speaker, I sought elected office because I believe, as do my constituents, that we could continue to build upon the strengths of our tourism industry — an industry that has significant precedence in the constituency of Arm River, and which enjoys a multitude of resort and hunting areas that are second to none. These resources and resorts continue to attract tourism from across North America and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, this industry will suffer if we do not protect and preserve the transportation roadway networks that enable the tourist industry to flourish, and the few jobs we have for people could be jeopardized. This member for Arm River will speak out loud and clear in ensuring that gas taxes and monies earmarked for highway preservation and upgrade are indeed expended for the intended purpose.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have asked that we address the issue of high taxes. They and I had hoped to see an indication of some tax relief for all of us. It is not too late to address this critical issue in the budget that is to be brought down in the near future. The people of Saskatchewan deserve no less. And if we are to create an atmosphere of hope, Mr. Speaker, then the government must act now and urge the members opposite to press for tax relief.

If I hadn't already recognized the major problem for small business, the constituents of Arm River sure have, and are sure quick to bring their concerns to my attention. Business is over-regulated and in many instances is forced to compete with government enterprises. All business asked is for a level-playing field, a working environment free from over-regulation and government interference, and the opportunity to compete fair and square.

The people of Arm River and I recognize that progress and change are inevitable and often welcome, but progress and change cannot occur without proper planning and foresight.

Government must take great care when proposing change and making decisions to bring about change; that these decisions are not made solely for short-term economic or political gain, and that the long-term effect of these decisions are thoroughly researched and communicated.

Changes to grain marketing and transportation must be researched to keep our agricultural industry alive. The value added processing of farm commodities will play an important role in the survival of our agriculture community.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that careful planning is absolutely essential

in redefining our road and rail systems. All three levels of government, together with the rail and elevator companies and the communities, need to sit down together to make decisions on where the rail lines and the heavy roads will be located.

Mr. Speaker, in all that we do and undertake, we know that we have to change. But more important is how a change is managed.

(1545)

In this session, let us learn from the mistakes that have been made. Let us become the agents of positive change and not the victims of careless change. We must insist that change is managed with sensitivity and done in the context of what is best for the greater good and not for political or any other expediency.

Having made my decision to work with and for my constituents and the people of Saskatchewan, in discussion with my 83-year-old dad who simply said to me, when you go to Regina, just take with you a good dose of common sense.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that in all that we do in this Chamber and beyond, that all of us will temper our debate and decision making with common sense and sensitivity.

Mr. Speaker, I am unable to support the motion of the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I want to start by thanking you for your rulings. The wisdom of the election that took place for the Speaker is already being shown repeatedly in this legislature and I know that you will do a very, very good job, and all members look forward to your continued wisdom and guidance from the Chair.

I want to start by talking a little bit about Regina Coronation Park, my constituency, which is boundaried by the pipe line running north of Walsh Acres, north of Argyle Park; Albert Street forms the east boundary, and the boundary follows down Albert Street to the Canadian National Railway line where it proceeds west to McIntosh Street; straight north on McIntosh Street to the northern limit of that street.

So I've got a nice compact, relatively square constituency that is largely residential. There's working people throughout the constituency. The housing is a mix of single family dwelling units. There's some duplexes; a fair number of apartments on the east part primarily, bordering on Albert Street and along near the southern border. There's also some special housing in it — a Salvation Army nursing home and some other special housing units.

Regina Coronation Park residents, or constituents, if I may refer to them that way, work for government, work for IPSCO, work in retail — either as owner-operator or as paid staff — with restaurateurs, real healthy restaurant industry in Regina Coronation Park. We have some professional services now and just a real good, healthy mix of just about everything that urban life has to offer.

And of course I'd be remiss if I didn't mention we do have some active farmers who obviously are farming their land outside of the constituency but who reside in Regina Coronation Park. So it's a real good mix, if I can describe it, of Saskatchewan people.

The concerns of my constituents are, not surprisingly, not that much different than the concerns of many members on both sides of the legislature. Jobs and job security is overall the biggest concern — it tops the list. Taxes and the economy are a concern, and the people that I am blessed to represent regret that taxes can't be lowered faster; although they are very pleased, generally speaking, with last year's $75 reduction in the debt reduction surtax, followed by this year when we doubled that reduction to $150 per tax filer, reduction in the debt reduction surtax.

We're all happy about that. But at the same time the general impression of the constituents in Regina Coronation Park is we have an inherent understanding that government is simply the collection of all of us in Saskatchewan, all 1 million of us. We band together, pool our resources to do together what we cannot do alone.

Together we've created a first class health care system There's been some ongoing dialogue and debate on that in the legislature today. Together we have developed a highway system that includes more miles of paved highway per capita than anywhere in the known universe, anywhere in the world. And we're charged with maintaining more miles of pavement per person than anywhere — a huge geography. It's a wonderful opportunity, and Saskatchewan is just a fabulous province to live in.

The United Nations has recognized Canada as the best nation in the world to live in, and then they went one step further and recognized that Saskatchewan is the best province in Canada to live in. And that's based on some things like life expectancy, the ability to access certain required services like health care — I've mentioned that — and like educational opportunities for primarily our young people, although education is fast moving from the stage where education used to be a K-12 feature, and some went on to post-secondary. It's fast evolving to the situation we have today where education is a lifelong part of our lives. So it's really a treat.

Regina Coronation Park residents, I've talked a little bit about their understanding of provincial government need for money — need for tax revenue, to put it as bluntly as I possibly can — to fund hospitals and home care and nursing homes, day surgeries, prescription drug plan, educational services, be it K-12 or the various SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) locations including the one in Regina, or the one of the two universities or both of them, including the very good University of Regina.

And Social Services requires funding, all good social programing. I know in the previous legislature, Mr. Speaker, I

spoke very proudly a couple of times of one of the initiatives that our government had in the first term. And that was the initiative of funding the early childhood intervention program so that the real, effective wait list was zero as opposed to four years or some other number. It actually at one time varied right across the province, but it could be up to four years. And by directing some well-placed dollars — I don't want to minimize the dollars, but I don't want to overstate them either; many hundreds of thousands of dollars would be the way I would describe it — by doing that we were able to effectively eliminate that wait list and really make an investment in all our collective future. I'm very, very proud of that.

My constituents in Regina Coronation Park understand that interest payments of $860 million a year are just huge. They're immense. They're so huge that it represents the third largest budget item of the province of Saskatchewan. My constituents want lower taxes; I've mentioned that, but more importantly, we all want government-funded and -delivered services to be effective. That's really what government is all about, is making sure that our services are effective.

So some historical perspective, Mr. Speaker, may be useful. How did we get the situation where the province of Saskatchewan's got a $14 billion-plus debt?

Well I don't want to beat the thing to death but I do want to just remind everybody how it is that we got to where we are in 1996 so that we can look to the future.

We fought largely a rearguard action against the former government and we watched them privatize the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and Saskoil, Sask minerals, Prince Albert Pulp, Sask computer corporation, and a number of other things.

We saw some major changes in our highways operations. For example we all remember the $40 million of highways equipment that was sold for $6 million. Many of us will know that SaskPower's natural gas wells were thrown into the deal when the former government privatized Saskoil. And that had an ongoing and very profound effect on us to the point where now SaskEnergy is simply a price taker.

They go to the producers of natural gas, negotiate the very best deal they possibly can on an annual basis. But we're price takers as opposed to the halcyon days of the past, when in fact SaskEnergy could have decided that it was going to pump its own natural gas, sell it to itself for less money than it could sell that same gas to somebody else. That ability is simply gone.

We saw a number of other problems during the former term of government. Again I don't want to spend much time in highlighting that but we saw expenditures of 250 million on NewGrade Upgrader, similar amount on the Lloydminster upgrader, 249 million taxpayers' dollars into a Cargill fertilizer plant. Weyerhaeuser wound up getting a pulp mill given to them. That cost just over $230 million.

We even had some rather interesting little ventures that the then government entered into. Remember Promavia, the jet manufacturer? We're still waiting for one of those jets to swish down on us. Of course it was a scam and it wound up costing the taxpayers some money.

We remember Supercart. We remember High R Doors. We remember GigaText, that fabulous thing where they were going to use obsolete computers to translate English to French. And of course Saskatchewan was going to become just wealthy beyond imagination through the model . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . through the GiggleText as one of my colleagues calls it, but GigaText.

Those are some of the things that brought us to the situation where the government changed, Mr. Speaker, in 1991. There was much that needed to be done. We were into a situation where the provincial treasury was in annual deficit, more than $1 billion per year. That represents about 20 per cent of the total budget of our roughly $5 billion budget; 20 per cent of that was simply over expenditures. And we all — members on both sides of the House — readily understand. We know at a gut level that you cannot over-expend your household income year after year after year without getting into very, very significant trouble.

The former government overspent its annual budget year after year after year after year. There was 10 consecutive deficit budgets. There was a litany of bad deals. I've outlined just a very few of them in passing just to help bring us in a historical sense up to date to where we are.

Well that couldn't continue when we formed government. Simply put, our ability to continue to borrow huge hundreds of millions or billions even of dollars, that ability was gone. It was done. We were a province right at the edge of our borrowing ability.

I cannot even begin to describe how . . . I can say it now because we've backed away from that precipice, but I can't tell you how terrifying it was in those early days knowing that we were just teetering on the very edge of bankruptcy, knowing that Saskatchewan was in incredibly tough shape, knowing that we had to make some choices.

Choices that just wrenched at us but choices that simply had to be made for our province to continue. And if we didn't make those choices — this is the other bad part of it — if we didn't make those choices the federal government had a transition team in place. They would have callously made the choices from Ottawa. It would have been done. They'd have handed us back a province with almost as much debt but with a hugely reduced ability to do absolutely anything other than tax and pay for bills from the previous government.

(1600)

We've moved a long, long, long ways from there, and now as we enter this first session of this term of government, we have to continue, Mr. Speaker. This government must continue to focus our collective efforts on job creation and economic development. We must work to create the conditions for job growth, for economic growth. We recognize that Saskatchewan

has gone from a low of 451,000 employed people with a 40,000-person unemployment rate at the same time, we've gone to 460,000 people employed and 34,000 people unemployed. And that's according to StatsCanada as reported in the labour report, fourth quarter for 1995.

We also know, on this side of the House, that that record of job growth is simply not enough. It is not fast enough. It is not enough. And that's why the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and all other members on this side are saying we must focus our efforts on job creation, economic development and growth this term just as we focused on eliminating the annual deficit and working to reduce the long-term debt in the first term of government. That's the commitment we have. That's what we plan on following.

I have very, very high hopes, Mr. Speaker, that in this term of government we will see even stronger job growth, even stronger economic development. And part of this, what I know for members opposite will seem like a grand leap of faith on my part, but part of that leap of faith is I'm part of a team that has gone through some of the most traumatic times that any government or any province could ever hope to go through.

We did it. I couldn't be prouder of the team on this side that helped set the tone. This team set the tone. One million people in Saskatchewan came along for the ride, many willingly — fortunately for us, the majority willingly. As a result, we're back for a second term of government, along with a good, healthy smattering of brand-new faces so that the process rejuvenates itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — But whether a Saskatchewan resident was in that majority that clearly supported the actions of the government or in the minority that did not, they were all part of the solution, and I want to take my hat off, Mr. Speaker, to all 1 million Saskatchewan people who have willingly, in most instances, in some instances not so willingly, but have all participated in the fabulous turnaround of our province. We went from a more than $1 billion annual deficit to the last two budgets were balanced; modest surpluses in each of the last two budgets. As I mentioned before, that's a 20 per cent annual turnaround or one dollar out of every five that we've changed from deficit to surplus.

With that done, the second term looks to me like it should be relatively easier than the first term. That's part of why I think our focus on job creation will pay off. We can sort of turn our efforts, focus our efforts on that.

We also must focus our efforts on change to social programing to make our assistance more meaningful in today's world. We're going to be focusing our efforts on our health delivery system to make it even more effective than it is now. We're going to be doing everything we can, including strong new legislation to prevent the creation of a two-tiered health care system in Saskatchewan. We are simply opposed to it and we'll stay that way.

Mr. Speaker, we'll be focusing our efforts or re-focusing our efforts on maintaining a frugal yet effective government — frugal yet effective. And I think this bears some comment from me, particularly in light of my earlier statement.

I want to share a concern and I hope that people don't take this in the wrong manner. But in my discussion with constituents and with others around the province, inevitably it will come around to, well we should be reducing the size of government. My response, or my question to these people is, well what is it you'd like us to reduce? Well I don't know, I'm not the expert. That's what you're elected for; you figure it out and you reduce it. That's fair enough, except that it's not that easy.

I then push a little further and I say well, let's see now, which hospital would you like us to close; which service? Maybe there's some services that doctors are doing that we should, as a government, overrule and say, no, no, you don't have to do gall bladder surgery or you don't have to do appendectomies or some other service.

Or I say maybe we should eliminate the more than $60 million that we spend on the prescription drug plan to see that the highest users and poorest — lowest income individuals — have access to the much needed prescription drugs. Well of course the answer is no, no, no, you can't cut those.

So my next question is, well what school or what school service should we reduce or eliminate? No, you can't reduce education. And I agree with them.

Then I say, well what highway would you like us to reduce maintenance on? And of course that's a non-starter.

I've talked already about the fabulous highway system. And I do at this stage want to commend the many hundreds of highways workers we have around the province who are just doing a terrific, terrific job with the limited or finite resources that we're able to give to them through the courtesy of the taxpayers. If we could double their budget, I know they could do even more with the highways. But with the finite resources we're giving them, I think they're just doing a fabulous job.

Well the answer to my question about what highways do you want us to reduce maintenance to is oh no, no, you can't reduce the highways maintenance.

And the list goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker. Invariably what I have found is that when taxpayers or individuals are talking about cuts to government, what they're really talking about is cuts to the Premier, cabinet, and MLAs.

And I say, well that's fair enough, that's fair enough. If we were to eliminate the Premier, all of the cabinet, all MLAs, including opposition MLAs, if we went away from our democratic form of government completely, if we did all of that, there's roughly $9 million could be saved on an annual basis.

Well $9 million, Mr. Speaker, in a $5 billion annual budget — $9 million, while it's an amount of money to be reckoned with,

when you consider the alternative and you realize that we've fought world wars over the issue of democracy, $9 million a year doesn't seem to me to be that huge a price to pay for the maintenance of our democracy.

It also — $9 million — pales in comparison to the $106 million federal Liberal government cut-back in established program funding for this year, or the additional 200 million they are going to cut back next year, and the additional 200 million that they are going to cut back the year after that if their budget documents are to be trusted. I almost hope they aren't to be trusted, but that's what they are clearly signalling.

Now that I've broached the subject of the federal government and its transfer payments to the province of Saskatchewan, because that represents a very significant problem for us, I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, so that there's no mistake about it, what we're complaining about is not the cut in equalization transfer payment from the federal government.

Equalization, if you like, is a form of just that, equalization. When our economy grows and our ability to self-generate money — in this case, to be brutally frank about it, through our own taxation sources as our economy grows — the federal equalization payment goes down roughly an equal amount. And if our economy were to drop, the federal equalization payment will go up. Fortunately, we have come through a period of very reasonable, never strong enough, but it is stronger economic growth in Saskatchewan than in the Canadian average. We have been leaders in economic growth for some few years now, let's put it that way. So we're not complaining about the equalization drop in funding.

But what we very clearly are complaining about is the established program drop in funding, where the federal Liberal government have outlined 106 million drop this year, an additional $200 million cut in established program funding next year, followed by an additional 200 million the year after that. Very, very significant money.

And the established program funding, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, is for health, for education, and for social programing. The three key issues that, when we were consulting with the people of Saskatchewan, you say: what is it that is most critical to you? — they tell you health is number one. You must adequately fund health care. We're very, very proud of the system we have. We would like to see it improved if that's possible, and of course it is always possible to improve.

But health, education. We in Saskatchewan have long viewed that we have an obligation to particularly our youth, but as I mentioned earlier in the ongoing, we have an obligation to all Saskatchewan people to see that continuing education can carry on.

So it's very difficult, to put it mildly, to try and implement improvements in programing when you get the rug tugged from under you. And that's exactly the situation we find ourselves in. We thought we had the debt — pardon me, not the debt problem because there's still more than 14 billion total debt in Crowns and government, although it's going down — we had the deficit wrestled to the ground. And we thought our own economic growth could generate a little bit of running room and could make Saskatchewan a whole lot easier place to live in.

I haven't belled the cat, but of course I'm referring to such things as our civil service, which has taken virtually no pay increase since we formed government. They have very, very, very much been a part of the solution. And a very dedicated group of individuals our civil service is. They've done a fabulous job. Teachers throughout the province have carried their weight. As you know, we've carried our weight in the legislature. We're now in our fourth or fifth year of a pay freeze. Cabinet ministers and the Premier took a 5 per cent cut in pay when we were first elected in 1991 and we immediately froze our pay ever since.

I'm never quite sure whether I should get excited and cheer about that or whether I should sort of just go and talk to the credit union and see if I can't get another loan again. It is difficult for all of us, including, as I mentioned, the civil service, teachers, and others throughout the province. It is asking a lot of people to forgo what we all feel is our just reward for doing a job well. And our just reward is usually a 3, 4, 5 per cent annual increase in our income when inflation is running at 3 per cent. We all expect or hope to at least break even with inflation, and hopefully gain a little bit over the years.

(1615)

So, Mr. Speaker, there are many choices to be made in this term of government. There are choices that are going to be made on a daily basis; quite literally on a daily basis. I'd love to tell everybody that all of the choices this government makes are going to be perfect. I'd love to tell everybody that we never, ever make a mistake. That would not be exactly as truthful as I'd like to be. What I can say is I am very, very proud of the way the mechanism that . . . we do make choices on the government side. We get as complete information as we possibly can. We have very full debate on issues, and sometimes these debates can get fairly heated within the confines of the caucus.

But at the end of the day, we all have our opportunity to be heard. We all have our opportunity to win some of those debates and to lose others. But collectively, it's a fabulous decision-making process. The people of Saskatchewan have put their faith in a large number of government members — not quite large enough — but a large number of government members. For that I'm grateful because collectively we do make very good choices.

As I said, the choices will continue, and I very much look forward to being a part of the ongoing process of helping make choices for Saskatchewan people for the good of the working women and men throughout the province, and I'm looking for even better things to come from this government in this term.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment to the Speech from the Throne, but I will very, very, very proudly be supporting this Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and an honour for me to stand in this House and represent the people of the new constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. It's an honour to be able to make my contribution to this debate and be part of this parliamentary process that we all cherish.

But before I begin to tell you about my constituency and thank the people who have placed their trust in me, there are traditions I am delighted to observe. My first words will then be words of congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — It's a most honoured position, and although at times in its long history it's been a dangerous one, it will be challenging, no doubt occasionally frustrating, but also very rewarding. And I know that you are a most capable speaker with a tremendous respect for this institution, and I have every confidence that you will conduct this House with the necessary dignity and decorum.

Because the hon. member from Regina Victoria also put his name in nomination, we had a first in Saskatchewan: the election of a Speaker by secret ballot. I'm so proud to have been part of that, Mr. Speaker.

And I also want to thank the member from Regina Victoria for his contribution to the running of this House in the previous legislature when he served as Deputy Speaker. Those of us who were here during the last session will never forget his words which were spoken to a recalcitrant member, one who no longer serves in this House, when he said, go ahead, make my day.

I also offer my congratulations to the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood on his election as Deputy Speaker and to the member from Moosomin for allowing his name to stand for that position so that again we participated in a first: the democratic election of a Deputy Speaker.

I could not enter into this debate without a few more words of congratulations to the member from North Battleford-Cut Knife for her most eloquent and thoughtful words in moving the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Well done indeed. And also to the youngest member of this House, the member from Regina South. His candour and his wit were most refreshing when he seconded that motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — I'm proud to call you my friends and my colleagues. And. I also want to congratulate of course all new members and all returning colleagues to this House.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, a new constituency, a new name, but the same wonderful people, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for electing me to represent them. It's a tremendous honour and a great responsibility. I will work hard to earn their respect and their trust.

And what a constituency it is, Mr. Speaker: 11,000 voters, and more families moving in every day, young families, students, single people, people who are ready to retire. There's a lot of new construction going on in my constituency, so it's obvious that it's one of the fastest growing areas in the province.

And when I was thinking the other day about what I would like to say about my constituency, I began to think about what you could do if you lived there. And I was actually delighted and quite amazed at the list. Now I couldn't possibly tell you everything, but I'd like to share some of the things that you could do if you lived in my constituency.

You could live in a variety of wonderful housing. You could buy your groceries and your meat there. You could go bowling. You could go swimming or skating in the North West Leisure Centre. You could play pool. You could attend any number of churches. You could walk or play in well-maintained parks. You could have pictures framed. You could do your banking there. You could have your oil changed or your wheels balanced or gas up your car.

You could lie down in an alfalfa field, and you could marvel at the acres and acres of wheat and other grains. You could canoe down a river and go by some of the most productive market gardens in the province. You could swim in a lake. You could bet on a duck in the Lumsden Duck Derby. You could paint a grain elevator at Grand Coulee. You could shop for antiques, or you could watch a potter at her wheel.

You could spend a few restful days at a retreat. You could ride a horse or a bike through what is surely one of the most lovely valleys in Saskatchewan: the Qu'Appelle Valley. You could adopt a puppy or a cat from the Humane Society. You could eat out at a fast-food outlet or enjoy a more leisurely meal. You can watch pipes being shipped all over the world from one of the most productive steel plants in Canada.

You could attend one of the many vibrant and progressive schools from kindergarten to grade 12, and in the fall of this year you could attend the opening of the new Winston Knoll Collegiate. You could play baseball or soccer. You could join a very active community association and volunteer with the Guides or the Cubs. And in a few short weeks we hope, something some of us are looking forward to doing, you can play golf. There are two fine courses in my constituency.

I could go on, but you know that it's a very special place, and you can see why I'm so pleased and proud to represent it.

Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne outlines this government's plan for this session and our plan to prepare our province for the 21st century. What particularly excites me is that this plan, this agenda, is the result of a program of public consultation and cooperation on a scale never before seen in this province, with resources never before used. From public

meetings to electronic town halls via Saskatchewan cable network, by 1-800 telephone numbers, and through mail-in reply cards and to the Internet — Saskatchewan people have been given the opportunity to have their say.

And much of what they had to say, of course, is what we heard on the doorsteps in June and what we have been hearing from our constituents since then. This entire process of ongoing consultation makes for wiser decisions and thus more effective government. And everything in this plan, in this Speech from the Throne, is worthy of the support of us all, of all thinking and concerned citizens of this province.

The time is right to redesign our social program. This program was designed for our world as it was 30 years ago. That world has changed, and it's not only right but responsible that we should acknowledge that change and redesign our programs to be sustainable in this changing world; redesign them to build strong communities and help families move off the system.

In health we have set up our health districts, set up our health boards, our elected health boards; and we have begun the second stage of health reform. We are working with the health boards and the health care professionals to ensure that all people and services work more effectively together as part of a wellness team.

In agriculture we continue to encourage diversification and value added processing and to promote the ag biotech industry. We will put $200 million into agricultural funds over the next four years. It's most encouraging to see the number of farmers beginning to use the resources of the Internet to access vital information. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I was at the university the other day when a group of farmers were visiting the computer area of the university and one of them said, well I suppose if you could tell me what the price of sow bellies are right now, I might find it useful. And the young man who was actually conducting them through there said, well I think I can do that; and he did. And you could see that his whole attitude to the idea of computers as a source of information changed.

In my conversations with my constituents, they tell me they are concerned about the cost of governing. I'm always very pleased to be able to tell them that we have shown leadership in this area and that our operating costs per capita are already the lowest in Canada, but we're committed to doing more. And, Mr. Speaker, we plan innovative changes to the administration of justice, tougher sanctions against drinking drivers for instance and their more effective rehabilitation.

We will continue to be fiscally responsible with a four-year financial plan to ensure balanced budgets and debt reduction. We have expanded regional economic development authorities, and our *Partnership for Growth* will provide Saskatchewan with a clear, forward looking plan for job creation.

Speaking as a teacher and a parent, it is the future of our young people that has always interested me most. Here I feel are the two most important elements of our plan: continuing to train and educate these young people and providing employment opportunities for them. Nowhere is the need for consultation and cooperation greater, I feel, than in developing partnerships between educators and employers, between schools and the market-place. Saskatchewan has always been a leader in education, and now more than ever do we need a well-educated work force. The Internet itself will require sophistication and skills in literacy that our education system has always sought to provide our students.

One of the most innovative and exciting training and employment initiatives to date is Future Skills and JobStart. Last year this program created 1,560 training and employment positions of which almost half were with rural employers. The Saskatchewan film and video industry is particularly excited about this program. And as we all know, it is with small businesses that the opportunity for employment growth exists.

Regional colleges, SIAST, and the universities have the responsibility of graduating the best trained and most educated of our students. And it is in these institutions that the greatest challenges for change in education lie. The challenge is how do you do what we have done and how do you do it better to compete in the global market-place when the federal government has cut $80 million from its spending to post-secondary education. Here cooperation, creative thinking, partnership and vision are essential. The leaders and the students of these institutions are taking up this challenge with energy and remarkable good will.

We will work closely with these educational leaders as well as industry, business, and labour to improve links between training and jobs. And we will encourage the sharing of information and of resources to reduce costs while at the same time maintaining our standard of excellence.

I do not need to say, Mr. Speaker, that if we continue to graduate students who are more than capable of making their way in this increasingly complex and challenging world, Saskatchewan will continue to thrive along with them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

Ms. Murray: — Mr. Speaker, before I take my place and in recognition of International Women's Day later this week, I'd like to pay tribute to one strong and marvellous woman and through her to all women. I'd like to talk about Hannelore Frombach.

In some ways she's a very typical Saskatchewan woman. She won the heart of a bright young Saskatchewan farmer when he came to Germany to visit in her home town. So she left her family and moved with him to his farm in Edenwold, to work by his side. They had three gifted and beautiful daughters and helped each of them achieve success in their own way.

But then Hannah Laura turned to her own interests and she began the study of psychology. She worked hard over a number of years and graduated with an honours degree. But that wasn't enough for her. She wanted to continue; she wanted to do more. So she worked harder and she achieved her master's degree and

graduated with great distinction. In fact, her external examiner was the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

All the while she was studying, she was continuing in her role as partner and wife, mother and community leader. She was quickly hired as a clinical psychologist by Child and Youth and her sterling qualities were soon recognized. She began to make a real difference, not just at the clinic, but in the lives of the children she counselled. Her energy and her enthusiasm and her wisdom were much admired.

Well now this wonderful woman is in the fight of her life — the fight for her life. She has cancer. But, Mr. Speaker, this remarkable woman is an inspiration to all of us who love and support her. She sees the joy in everything and she celebrates each day. And when I talk to her, she always likens herself to a dandelion.

Now we all know that dandelions grow in people's yards and gardens all over Saskatchewan, but people try and get rid of them. They mow them down, they yank them up, they try and kill them and destroy them with chemicals. But like those yellow dandelions, Hannah Laura will not be kept down, and she continues to come back sunnier than ever.

So, Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day on Friday I shall honour her particularly, and through her, all women. I am very pleased to support this Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne. But before I get into some remarks on that, I would first of all like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to the Chair. But given the history, Mr. Speaker, of what has taken place to Speakers in the British parliamentary system and the passion of debate that occurs in this Assembly, I want to at the same time, just to be on the safe side, Mr. Speaker, to extend my condolences.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have been granted the opportunity, the fourth opportunity, to represent and serve the friends and neighbours and residents of the constituency of Shellbrook-Spiritwood. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the people of that constituency for the faith that they placed in me in electing me last June.

But, Mr. Speaker, most members in this Assembly will know that this, the first session of the twenty-third legislature, has eight fewer members than the twenty-second legislature. I would like to point out a reduction of some 14 per cent in the number of members. This is a reduction in the size of government. And the impact, Mr. Speaker, on the constituency that I represented in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-second legislature was particularly dramatic. Mr. Speaker, that seat, the Turtleford seat, after having been represented in this Assembly over most of the life of the time of the province, simply disappeared from the map.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about that constituency and the disappearance of it because I believe that the people of all political parties that worked and lived and ran elections feel a loss of the Turtleford constituency. It's a constituency that over time changed from being a north-south constituency along the Alberta border to one that went east and west, south of the Meadow Lake constituency.

It's a constituency that was represented over time by a number of all different parties — by members from all different parties—and at the same time represented in a manner that I think was very good for this Assembly in keeping this Assembly.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people who were in the Turtleford constituency and now find themselves in Meadow Lake constituency or the Lloydminster constituency or in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency will become comfortable with the passing of time.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to thank my old friends in the Turtleford constituency, those people who lived in Edam, Mervin, Turtleford, Spruce Lake. It was indeed an honour to have represented them and served them in this Assembly.

Representing the new constituency of Shellbrook-Spiritwood has already proven to be an interesting challenge. It takes more . . . well almost three hours to drive from one end of the constituency at Glaslyn to the south-east corner of the constituency at Duck Lake. And that is in the summertime, Mr. Speaker, when one is not faced with the road conditions that force you to slow down or keep on main roads and cuts off some of the shortcuts that are available.

When I mail out a householder, Mr. Speaker, it's received by people in no less than 18 different post offices. But for all the differences that you would find, Mr. Speaker, my constituents, I believe, share a great deal in common — not just in common because they are rural in the nature but common in the sense that almost the total constituency is found in the boreal forest area. They are also hard-working, imaginative, and a practical people who believe that challenges are opportunities and that solutions to many of the life's problems can be found if you just take the time and exercise some common sense.

Mr. Speaker, I pledge to do all of that, all that I can — to meet with them in their communities and in their homes so that this Assembly may have the benefit of that common sense.

My constituents believe that this government will meet the new challenges outlined in the throne speech as successfully as they met the challenges of protecting health care for the new century in the last term.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, as you know, the throne speech talked of the need for further reform in health care; a new role for nurses and other health practitioners. Most of my constituents reside in the Parkland Health District, where we have already seen a number of improvements to the system.

One of these changes was beneficial for the people in Big River. The Big River area was poorly served by ambulance service up until recently. Your wait could be in excess of an hour and a half. But, Mr. Speaker, local residents knew that this would not be allowed to continue, and the health care reform gave them the authority and the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to change this. There is now an ambulance unit stationed in Big River and it was established by using $50,000 from the provincial rural initiative fund and another 30,000 from the health district's resources. And the ambulance is now stationed and working out of Big River.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this ambulance service in the community of Big River has a lot of side benefits, one of them being that the people who formerly moved out of the community of Big River and area are now in a position where they can remain there for a longer period in their life and not have to move into a major centre because the type of health services that they had in Big River did not meet their needs. Today with the ambulance it does meet their needs.

Mr. Speaker, other successes in health care reform in the Parkland Health District include the introduction of 24-hour nursing services at the Idylwild Lodge in Spiritwood, an increase of 50 per cent in time covered. The provision of a family resource coordinator in the area, something that was not available before, and where one would have to go to one of the major centres — Saskatoon, P.A. (Prince Albert), or North Battleford — to find. Mr. Speaker, it is these things that show improvement in having regional health districts.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on and comment a little bit about some of the other communities in the constituency because I think it's vital that we in this Assembly pass on the ideas and information of the communities we come from, so that when the decision-making is being done there is a wider spectrum of information from which to draw the information for making decisions.

In the village of Glaslyn, Mr. Speaker, a company, L & M Wood Products, in the recent years has changed ownership. It's a company that . . . a forest and mill operation company that produces rails for fences, treated fence posts, treated construction material, dimension and other timbers, and dimension lumber. Mr. Speaker, this organization employs some 50 people in the mill, yard, and office in the village of Glaslyn. And about the same number of people are employed indirectly through subcontracting that supplies the material for the mill from the forest and the other services such as trucking of material to its use in the province.

Mr. Speaker, this particular company also purchases about a million or more dollars worth of wood products from small operators in the area, giving them an outlet to a much larger market, combining wood from two or three different operators so that they can have a sale that can be economically served and much appreciated by them.

But, Mr. Speaker, my real reason for commenting on this company is not to describe the company so much but to inform this Assembly that L & M has made a major commitment and have retrofitted their mill in Glaslyn. After having toured this operation, what they did was almost removed all of the milling equipment and replaced it with new equipment.

For two reasons, Mr. Speaker, two reasons I think that are commendable and that we should be looking at. The first one being to improve the yield from the material that is being processed to ensure that there is not a large amount of waste product generated but that there is . . . that all of the material that can be produced from that wood is produced. And the second one, Mr. Speaker, which is I believe equally commendable, is to improve the safety for the people that work in their mill.

This, Mr. Speaker, also indicates to me that the company has a commitment to the future. A future, Mr. Speaker, that I hope that we in this Assembly and the government are going to be able to support in providing them with material.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other areas that is being stressed and, I believe by the government, is tourism. And in this case, Ski Timber Ridge, for an example, a community-based initiative that has taken the advantage of a natural, beautiful hill in the forest fringe area is one of those particular examples. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Ness Creek Music Festival, which is held every July and attracts visitors from all over western Canada and which I attended last year — actually it was attracting some people right from Toronto — are two examples of things that are going on in the community to improve the . . . to give tourists activities that they can go to.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, I hope that other members of this Assembly will join me in . . . or will go to Debden this year in August as this village hosts the La Fete Fransaskoise, a four-day cultural and educational celebration of the rich heritage of French-speaking people in the province of Saskatchewan. I say to the Assembly here that for this community of about 400 people, this is a major undertaking.

Mr. Speaker, leaving aside the tourist potential and activity in this province, I'd like to move on to an issue that I believe is a significant consequence to the province of Saskatchewan and especially to the constituency that I now represent. Mr. Speaker, that is the area of first nations. I'm privileged, Mr. Speaker, to represent five different first nations in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency: Pelican, Witchekan, Whitefish, Ahtahkapoop and Beardy's are the five different first nations that are there.

They constitute something like, in the neighbourhood of 6,000 people in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency. It is not a small number of people and they are moving ahead in a whole number of different areas. The economic and social challenges facing these first nations are great and solving their problems will not be easy.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the way that the problems will be solved will be if the people of Saskatchewan work in partnership with the first nations to find solutions. And that is

the key, Mr. Speaker, to a long-term solution.

Some of these things have been being done and I would like to just comment on them. On September 15 of last year our government signed an agreement with Beardy's First Nation. This memorandum of understanding opens discussions between the government and the band to develop the first nation's child and family services agency, an agency to be run by the band.

On November 30, Mr. Speaker, Canada-Saskatchewan Policing Agreement was signed with the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation. This agreement provides for a police management board with local membership similar to police commissions in other jurisdictions and an elder to assist the police with their work. An additional officer will be hired at the end of the first year in about 18 months.

Mr. Speaker, it is these types of agreements and cooperation with the first nations which will bring about a lot of solutions.

Mr. Speaker, while these agreements demonstrate the Saskatchewan way of cooperation to finding solutions to common problems, more work remains to be done. Further work is needed in the area of land entitlement, Mr. Speaker. Land purchases under the Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement are still, in my mind, happening too slow. The transfer of land, the reserve status, I believe could be speeded up, and at least some of the roadblocks and problems in the way could be cleaned up so that we have a system in place that works efficiently.

Treaty land entitlements have an effect on the rural municipalities and the local ratepayers in the area, and they deserve, Mr. Speaker, these local ratepayers and that, deserve a little more certainty and predictability in what is taking place, so that the community may adapt and move on to making a living and not be held up because things are not moving forward. Where you are in the position of not knowing whether anything is going to take place or not, decisions cannot be made.

The treaty land entitlement process, as I have indicated, needs to be expedited. It must be one of, I believe, this government's major priorities. And I pledge now before this Assembly and to all, that as a government member, I support the treaty land entitlement process and will do all I can to make it effective and a more speedy process.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank those people of the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency for the opportunity to serve them, and I may say to my colleagues, that I look forward to working with you on all sides of the House to build a better Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the speech and I will not be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, as the time is now coming close to 5 o'clock, I move that this debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

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