

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of concerned citizens in the province of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the closure of the Plains Health Centre in Regina. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The names on the petition are from Regina and Balgonie, primarily. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The communities the people that have signed the petition from, Mr. Speaker, are such places as Midale, Weyburn, Lang, Estevan, Qu'Appelle, Yellow Grass, and Alameda.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina; Lafleche; McCord, Saskatchewan; and other centres throughout the province. I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present petitions from people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Kelliher, Parkerview, Wynyard, and Foam Lake. I so present.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Regina.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to present petitions of names from people throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Everyone that has signed this petition is from Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise again today on behalf of concerned citizens throughout southern Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the decision to close the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by many concerned and angry citizens in the constituency of Arm River, from the communities of Craik, Chamberlain, Bethune, Findlater, Aylesbury, and Holdfast.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions of names of Saskatchewan people with respect to the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from communities such as Craven, Saskatchewan Beach, Earl Grey, Lumsden, Southey, Sifton, as well as Pense and Morse in my constituency, and a number from the city of Regina.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I once again rise today to present petitions of names throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And the people that signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, they're from Regina, they're from Lipton, they're from Kelso, and they're all from throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues and the people of Saskatchewan today in presenting a petition on trying to save the Plains Health Centre here in Regina. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at these pages of petition, all of these people are from the Hazenmore area; I happen to know them all. And members will know full well where Hazenmore is. It is between the communities of Kincaid and Ponteix, the first two hospitals that that government closed the doors on.

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 petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to urge the Department of Social Services to reconsider the reduction of parent education and support programs.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Clerk Assistant: — Ms. Lorje presents the first report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations which is hereby tabled.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In presenting the first report of the Crown Corporations Committee to this legislature, I would like to thank all the members on the Crown Corporations Committee and those people who substituted, from time to time, for the regular members. I felt that the — to a person and all three parties — the members were extremely diligent in their deliberations and showed a great deal of cooperation so that we could bring the Crown Corporations' reviews to a more timely basis.

We will now, with the tabling and concurrence of this report, be up to date for all Crown Corporations up to 1995.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — With the exception of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, the good news company. But we fully expect that we will be up to date with STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) as well, come this fall when the committee again sits.

So again as I say, we did have a unanimous . . . we had a unanimous report today during our meeting, and I am very pleased to now move, seconded by the member from Regina

Coronation Park:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and to all colleagues in the Assembly, a group of grade 11 students who hold a very special place in my heart. These grade 11 students come from my home community of Invermay, specifically the Invermay School. And a number of them I have had the pleasure of helping to coach and helping to teach. One of the students is also a pretty special person to me, it is my son Bryce. I'd like to also introduce him specially.

And of course one of the people that is with that group is a teacher who I know is probably the best teacher in Saskatchewan — my wife Gail.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — She paid me a lot to say that. I'd also like to introduce the bus driver from Canora, Cathy Thomas. And I'd like to make welcome all the students and Gail and Cathy to Regina and to the legislature, and I hope that you enjoy your day very, very much. I'll meet you later.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure through you to introduce to the rest of the members of the Legislative Assembly today, 36 students seated in your gallery, grade 10 students from the Wynyard Composite High School in Wynyard, Saskatchewan. They've been in and had a tour of the building already, and I look forward to meeting with them later and sharing some discussion with them.

They have with them their teachers, Nick Jordan and Morris Sokul, and their chaperon, Alan Brooks. I hope they enjoy their visit in Regina and don't miss the school too much this day off. I realize that you would sooner be back in school but bear with us, and hopefully the members will behave themselves in question period today and they can take some good remarks back from the Legislative Assembly. So I ask all members to please join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You probably noticed when you entered today that there is a fine looking group of grade 4 students seated in the west gallery. This group of 27 grade 4 students are from Deshaye School which is in my riding. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Gwen Falconer, and I look very forward to meeting with them later. So if you join with me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a group of 21 grade 6 students from the fine town of Watson, Saskatchewan. They are accompanied by their teacher, Bernice Gerspacher, chaperons Lorna Strunk, Margaret Mierke, and Jan Le Gars. I will be meeting with them later to answer questions and have some refreshments with them. I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome our guests here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, some very special guests seated in your gallery. Our constituency assistants are in the legislature today for a training session which your office is very generously providing.

Mr. Speaker, the assistants are as follows: Jean Ball is the assistant for the member for Cannington; Tina Durbin is the assistant for the member for Moosomin; Cheryl Friday, the assistant for the member for Cypress Hills; Whitney Friesen, the assistant for the member from Rosthern; and certainly last but not least, my own constituency assistant, Susan Maedal. And I would ask all members of the legislature to please welcome them here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to join with the member from Watrous welcoming the group from Watson. They're not in my constituency but I know a lot of them and I'm really glad to see them. Have a good time.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Swift Current Collegiate Institute or SCCI has produced some pretty extraordinary and talented people, and one of them is my very special guest here in the legislature. This person went to school with Lynda Ham and Eric Malling. Those two left their home town and went on to fame and acclaim in either politics or the media.

Mr. Ken Baba did probably what is the more difficult thing. He stayed home in Swift Current and I do not believe that it's difficult to live in Swift Current but his chosen profession was a dentist, and so it was probably much more difficult for him to be a dentist in Swift Current. But it did allow him the opportunity to drill home, if you will forgive the pun, to drill home his theory that civic duty is extremely important and very worthwhile for all people.

He is a dedicated civic volunteer, a truly wonderful person, Mr. Speaker. And his wife Lillian and Ken Baba join us here in the legislature today while they are staying in Regina for a short while. I would ask all members of the House to welcome him.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's such a pleasure for me to join with my colleague from Saskatoon Southeast in welcoming Dr. Baba and his wife Lillian. They really do exemplify what good citizens of Saskatchewan are. And I think because of their activities, they've made Swift Current the very special place it is.

Dr. Baba I think has been a dentist for probably 25 or more years. I always knew him much better as Carol's big brother, and Carol was my very special friend.

I am very, very pleased to have everyone acknowledge them, the work that he's done as an active member of Kinsmen, the advocate he's been for the local dental association, and the community events in which they've both participated that really do enhance our province and benefit the people of Swift Current.

Please join with me as well in welcoming Dr. Baba and Lillian.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Training for Excellence Awards Luncheon

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleagues the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and the member from Regina South and I, attended the 1996 Training for Excellence Awards luncheon presented by the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board.

These awards recognize achievement in developing training programs and services to meet the needs of individuals and industry. In today's economy it is essential for training programs to prepare people for real jobs.

The philosophy behind these awards and behind this government's training strategy is to build partnerships between business, labour, and educators, so that students will get training that is relevant, and employers will get employees with the right skills for the job.

I found it particularly exciting because Buffalo Plains School Division, where I once taught, received an educational partnership award for its youth internship program with its partners, Bennett Dunlop Ford, and Brandt Industries. The program integrates workplace-based training with the needs of the business partners and will result in full-time employment opportunities for participating students.

Other Training for Excellence Award winners were the Bank of Montreal for its career development program; the Regina Public Library for basic skill development; and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) for its promotion of equity participation.

I congratulate all the award winners. I'm confident that these excellent training programs will bring excellent results for

individuals and for industry. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Flooding in the Fishing Lake Vicinity

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend all the people living near Fishing Lake who are trying to cope with extremely high water levels this spring.

Resort owners of Saskin Beach, Buckhorn Bay, Leslie Beach, Ottman Beach, and all the cottage owners at Fishing Lake, are seeing the lake at its highest water level since 1964.

The high water level is damaging cottages and several roads into the Fishing Lake area. But people in the communities are working together to try and salvage some of the busy vacation season. They are rebuilding boat launches, building extensive sandbag dikes, and setting up new campsites.

I hope that officials with Sask Water continue to carefully monitor the situation and try to assist the dozens of cottage owners who are facing disastrous loss of property. These people must be regularly informed and fully consulted about different ways to deal with this serious problem. These are trying times for these people, and I wish them well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tourism Saskatchewan Certification Dinner

Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Deputy Premier introduced to the Assembly, Mr. Ray Davis, executive director of the Association of Tourism Professionals, who is here to attend the certification recognition dinner '96, hosted by Tourism Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council.

A similar dinner was held the night before in Saskatoon. I was pleased to attend the Regina ceremony, and I was especially pleased to see the pride with which the tourism professionals received their certificates. The certificates say that these individuals have successfully completed training which enables them to perform their duties according to national standards set by the tourism industry.

We know the value of tourism to our economy and to employment. What is not emphasized enough is the importance to this industry of the front-line people, the people who cater to our visitors' needs and make sure that their stay is comfortable and enjoyable. If it is, they will come back. And that is the significance of this certification.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I must point out that our member from Elphinstone, the minister responsible for tourism, was called the best tourism minister in 30 years by Jim Kilkenny, the master of ceremonies and former chairman of the board of STEC (Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council). Mr. Speaker, a tribute to our minister as well as a tribute to our expanding and creative tourism industry, and a tribute to a

successful training program — a truly Saskatchewan success story.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Beauval Day Care Centre

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take time to congratulate the people in the northern community of Beauval who are in the process of opening their first permanent day care centre. Right now construction is under way at the future day care site, but in the meantime the day care has been running since January at a temporary location.

There has been a tremendous need for day care services in Beauval for years, so it's great to see this development of the day care. The community has embarked on an ambitious fund-raising project for the day care and has so far raised about \$20,000.

I'd like to commend all the people in Beauval and surrounding area who are donating their time and money to help this new day care open its doors. I'd also like to especially thank Dorothy Alcrow, who has spearheaded this project. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I had the distinct pleasure of joining Ms. Alcrow in her graduation ceremonies yesterday as she received her local government administration certificate at the University of Regina.

It's terrific to see what can be achieved through the vision and cooperative efforts of a community. The families of Beauval and area will greatly benefit from this new service. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Race Relations Committee

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, when I was on Saskatoon City Council I was very proud to take part in founding a city race relations committee. Since its inception this committee has been very effective and beneficial.

I was proud when the committee was founded and I am very pleased today to tell the Assembly that the city of Saskatoon has just been nationally recognized for its race relations work.

At its meeting this week in Calgary, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities announced that Saskatoon is the first city to be given the award for its, quote: "exemplary work in promoting harmony."

Federation president, John Les, presented the award and pointed out that the race relations committee is but one significant step. Saskatoon also operates an active cross-cultural training program for its employees, and it promotes an intense public awareness campaign.

Most importantly, I think, the city works very hard to build partnerships with significant cultural and racial groups, including the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), the Metis Nation, the Saskatchewan Inter-cultural

Association, and the Saskatoon Open Door Society.

The point to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, is that this recognition in fact does not go to a faceless corporate entity called the city. Rather it goes to the many individuals in government and throughout the community who know that racial harmony is something that you work hard to achieve. And it's well worth it.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Family Fishing Weekend

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Family Fishing Weekend which is coming up this weekend of June 8 and 9. During the weekend Saskatchewan residents and visitors will be allowed to fish throughout the province without a licence.

This weekend has become something of a tradition in this province, and I think it's a wonderful opportunity for Saskatchewan families to enjoy one of this province's great outdoor experiences.

In honour of this event, I would like to extend a special invitation to the Deputy Premier to come down to the south-east this weekend and enjoy the new fishing opportunities in the Rafferty and Alameda reservoirs. Environment and Resource Management has recently stocked the Rafferty reservoir with five million walleye — five million is a lot of fish, Mr. Speaker.

But for those who don't like to fish perhaps they could swim; and this would provide an opportunity for the Deputy Premier to fulfil his promise to walk across the Rafferty reservoir.

It might be interesting to note that neither the fish nor the ducks are drowning in these reservoirs.

Everyone, including the NDP (New Democratic Party), will have to agree that these opportunities are a tremendous testament to the success of the Rafferty and Alameda dam projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Land Donation

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Because this is Environment Week, I thought it was important that I comment on the spirit and generosity prevalent in my constituency that is leading towards a better environment.

Prince Albert is a community that exemplifies the Saskatchewan way — the way of caring, compassion, and cooperation. Recently that was demonstrated by the generous donation of the north-west quarter of 31-44-21 west of the third meridian to the fish and wildlife development fund by my constituent, Bill Hyshka.

Bill's donation will be maintained as wildlife habitat in accordance with his wishes. A plaque will be acknowledging the donation and it will be mounted on a cairn erected on the site.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that Bill's actions are very commendable, shows his appreciation for nature, and will make a notable contribution to the preservation of natural resources in the province.

I know the Minister of Environment and Resource Management, as well as other members of the Assembly, will appreciate the importance of maintaining and enhancing our wildlife habitat. As the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for the region, I want to say it's a great pleasure to commend his donation and ask that all members join me when thanking Mr. Hyshka for his generosity and his commitment to the natural resources of our province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Geriatric Assessment Rehabilitation Unit

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night about 450 residents gathered to express their opposition to this government's decision to break a written commitment to fund the geriatric unit in Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, the residents of the Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek district voluntarily agreed to rationalize services and cut at least one acute care hospital before government even began demanding cuts. They did so on the expectation that they'd get secure funding for wellness-orientated programing like the geriatric assessment and rehabilitation.

What they received in return, however, is a chain of broken promises from government. Those broken commitments now threaten acute care services that people in the community already reduced on their own, and that, Mr. Speaker, is unfair.

On Friday, it's my understanding that the Minister of Health is visiting Moose Jaw for a mental health convention. It's my sincere hope that he'll find time in his day to visit Providence Place and the union hospital to see firsthand the damage his cuts are wreaking on health care in this community.

Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to send the minister over another 100 letters from residents concerned about the fate of the geriatric unit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Political Donations

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education indicated to the media yesterday that many Canadians like to make anonymous donations to political parties, implying that it is appropriate that they be allowed to do so. He also did not understand our questions about the fund-raising methods of the Conservative,

New Democratic parties of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, on May 10, 1978, our Premier, who was then attorney general, introduced amendments to The Election Act. He stated at that time and I quote:

. . . all contributions to and payments on behalf of political parties and candidates must be handled through registered agents or the business manager.

Mr. Speaker, this is a clear exposition of the requirement of The Election Act by the man who is today our Premier.

Will the minister explain to the House in detail why it is that many thousands of dollars of contributions to the New Democratic Party have not been handled through the registered agent of the party or the business manager of any candidate, but somehow has been funnelled or laundered through an organization known as Tommy Douglas House Inc. so as to protect these contributors?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, we have examined this question at some length and we are satisfied that the requirements of The Election Act were fully complied with. That is the fact of the matter and it is so. We have been wrestling in Canada with this question of the obligation of political parties to disclose contributions for decades, even for generations. And we have arrived in this country at a certain consensus, reflected by the laws of the provinces and the federal government, as to what has to be disclosed. And we have disclosed all of that.

So that seems to me to be in perfect compliance with statements by everybody in this House since the Act was amended in the 1970s, and has been reflected in election returns ever since.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, then I guess we require a little bit of clarification, because yesterday's *Leader-Post* and *Star-Phoenix* carried a story under the byline of Dale Eisler stating that in the past five years the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party has transferred \$380,000 from Tommy Douglas House Inc. to its own party accounts. It indicates that a further \$270,000 of political contributions remain in the hands of that non-profit corporation. This news item also states that the NDP provincial president and the NDP provincial secretary refuse to reveal the names of the donors of those monies.

Mr. Speaker, The Election Act clearly requires that all contributions for the use of a political party be made to the registered agent of that party. It also requires that in the case of donations made through an agent, identification of the donors be made or the funds turned over to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. Speaker, in light of those facts and those legislative requirements, will the minister explain to this House how the NDP has been able to take advantage of anonymous political contributions in the manner described and still refuse to identify

the donors?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member gets the idea that we're dealing here with anonymous donations. We're dealing here with . . . We have reported all of the things that are required by the law to be reported. There is no obligation on other incorporated organizations like Tommy Douglas House to be publishing their activities in any way, shape, or form, except as required by The Election Act. And my point is simply that we've complied with that.

But while we're on that subject, I have been inviting the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, for the last two days to meet with me and discuss how we can improve the election law of Canada . . . or this province, how we can improve the election law of this province in order to accomplish the things that he apparently thinks should be accomplished. And he's been a moving target. To date I haven't been able to get a meeting with him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, there is an Election Act in place, and there is a law in place. And it seems to me that there's somewhat of an analogy here, that in fact it's not unlikely the speeding laws. . . there's a 100 kilometre per hour speed limit. But it's okay to go ahead and go beyond that until you get caught. And once you get caught, you suffer the consequences of the action, and you pay for that. You answer to that.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that the New Democratic Party places itself in the same position and the same shaky legal footing as the new Conservative Party of Saskatchewan when it comes to hiding shady and secret political contributions.

Will the minister admit that in fact there has been a contravention of this, The Election Act, by the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — If the member hasn't understood my answer so far, let me repeat it. We are satisfied that we have complied with the election law of Saskatchewan.

I have, since the day before yesterday, been trying to arrange a meeting with that member and that caucus in order to discuss how we can deal with this question of what is in The Election Act, if they think there should be more in there. If they think there should be more in there, we're happy to consider that. We've already met with the third party on that very subject, who have been responsive to our request for a meeting.

I got a letter this morning, Mr. Speaker, I got a letter this morning in which the Leader of the Opposition says that there is no member of the official opposition caucus able to attend a meeting with me and that at this time with the House business at a standstill, due to the extended hours motion, it would seem

that a meeting probably couldn't be held now but could be held sometime in the future.

Now my friends opposite like to table documents. I'm going to table some documents. I'm going to table the exchange of correspondence that I've had with the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not a matter of dealing with things that need to be changed. It's a matter of dealing with things that have been in place and answering to any of those contraventions of the Act that is in place right now.

On May 10, 1978, our Premier, who then served as attorney general, spoke in this House on amendments to The Election Act. He stated, and I quote:

I would remind members that . . . election expense controls don't work unless all of us politicians want them to work and make them work. If we approach this bill with the mechanism of circumventing it, then the entire process is defeated. I know that every member will view it as his or her responsibility to make sure that this bill is complied with, both with respect to its precise precisions and its spirit and make sure that the high level of confidence that I think the electorate generally has in members of this House, is maintained.

Mr. Speaker, is the conduct of the New Democratic Party today and the attitude of the minister in keeping with the statements made then by the Premier? Or do they now approach this legislation, in those words of yesterday, "with the mechanism of circumventing it."

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I want to deal calmly and directly with the points raised by the member. I appreciate the comments that the member has dredged up from the 1970s, and I want to tell you that the law was passed in the 1970s, and was made to reflect the views of this House at that time as to what should be reported. I repeat again, those matters have been reported.

Now the member says what he says, Mr. Speaker, with a very high degree of sanctimony. And let me say this to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, through you. If we have not complied with the law, then neither has he. Neither has the Liberal Party. If the obligations under The Election Act are as he suggests that they should be, he hasn't been complying with them either.

I say, let's spell out clearly in the Act what those requirements should be. Let's get together and discuss this matter and pool our views and see if we can arrive at a conclusion. Accept my invitation to have a meeting. Let's get on with the discussion of this thing. Let's treat it as an important issue of public policy that requires discussion and debate, and let's do something concrete.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Providence Place

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. Last night hundreds of concerned Moose Jaw residents met to discuss this government's failure to keep its promise of funding for the now threatened geriatric unit at Providence Place. This government has callously tried to paint the funding shortage for the geriatric unit in this House as a dispute between the Providence Place board and the district health board.

A number of speakers at the meeting made it painfully clear that the boards have no dispute with each other. Instead they and the community simply disagree with this government's decision to renege on a signed commitment to fund the unit. In fact one of the persons there said this government will be dealt with at the ballot box.

Will the minister admit in this House today that his government is responsible for this funding shortage, and apologize for his cowardly attempts to pit people in this community against each other.

The Speaker: — Order, order. I know the hon. member will want to use parliamentary language as befitting of the House, and in his description of the minister I believe he's crossed that line. I'll simply ask him to withdraw the parliamentary remark and apologize to the House.

Mr. Aldridge: — I apologize for the unparliamentary language, and I withdraw those . . .

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said to the member before, as recently as yesterday, and I repeat again today, I believe that the way to resolve this issue is for the parties to come to the table, and I believe that people of good faith talking to each other in a reasonable way can resolve this issue. And I think all parties concerned want to have the issue resolved, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that the board of Providence Place and the board of the health district in Moose Jaw/Thunder Creek and representatives of the Department of Health will be commencing a meeting tomorrow in Moose Jaw. And it's my sincere hope, Mr. Speaker, that they will be able to have fruitful discussions, and that if they proceed in good faith — as I'm sure they will — that they will make some progress toward resolving this matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, at last night's meeting, the former Chair of the district board, a man this government appointed, took issue with the minister's statements. Dr. Don MacDonald stated that if funding for the geriatric unit has to come out of the district budget, which is shrinking yearly thanks to the NDP's funding formula, acute care in the district will fall to dangerously low levels.

He stated there's no more room to cut, as the number of beds have already fallen from over 200 to just over 100. If cuts have

to be made, Dr. MacDonald believes Moose Jaw will lose its intensive care unit. As a result, Moose Jaw's acute care hospital would become little more than another community wellness centre. Patients in need of serious care would simply have to go to already-crowded Regina hospitals.

Mr. Minister, are you breaking your promise on separate funding for the geriatric unit just so you can try and force the district to close yet another acute care hospital in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that both the district health board and the board of Providence Place are committed to coming up with an appropriate geriatric assessment and rehabilitation unit at Providence Place.

As I've said to the member, I believe the best way to resolve this dispute is for the parties to come to the table to negotiate in good faith and in a reasonable way. The parties are meeting tomorrow and I have every confidence they will come to the table in good faith. I have every confidence that in due course a resolution will be achieved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Regulations

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Minister, in your 1995 election platform you set a goal of reviewing 10 per cent of all government regulations in each of the next 10 years, and eliminating 25 per cent of all government relations . . . regulations as part of that review.

Mr. Minister, it's nearly been one full year since the election. Could you provide us with a list of the 10 per cent of regulations that have been reviewed, and the 25 per cent of those regulations that have been eliminated?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I do want to say to the member opposite that, on occasion the Minister of Energy and Mines has an opportunity to speak to the oil industry here in Saskatchewan and in Calgary. And they continually talk about the improvement in regulatory operation in this province that actually gives us an advantage over our province to the west, of Alberta, because the regulatory structures here in the province of Saskatchewan are simpler and more efficient and user friendly than they are in Alberta.

This is true as well in the area of ag biotech. When we travel to Berlin, Germany and deal with AgrEvo and other biotech companies, they are impressed, both with the Canadian regulatory structures and the Saskatchewan regulatory structures.

Now that's not to say there isn't improvement that can and

should be made. And to that end, Ms. Lynn Minja heads up a group that is reviewing the very issue you talk about, and there will be a report forthcoming in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again this government is more talk than action. The truth is you have no real commitment to eliminating the bureaucracy and red tape that is strangling business and stifling job creation in this province.

Mr. Minister, our Bill, An Act respecting Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan, will reduce the over-regulation and red-tape burden on small business, allow for public input, as well as write any new regulations in plain language.

Manitoba recently enacted a similar process, and in six months they reviewed 560 regulations and streamlined or eliminated 133 of them. The end result was the elimination of 3,000 pages of regulations, including over a thousand pages of government forms.

Mr. Minister, the business community in this province needs a similar process, and you promised it to them. Mr. Minister, I'll be introducing the regulatory reform Bill immediately after question period. Will you honour your election promise and support our Bill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I can understand why the member opposite is so concerned about regulation given the fact that we had nine years of Conservative government under Premier Grant Devine, at which time the regulatory structure was complicated significantly.

I want to say to the member opposite that we are reviewing in fact the regulatory structures in a very, very thorough and important way.

And I say to him again that, while the regulatory structures that affect many industries in our province are adequate and better than other provinces or other jurisdictions, we intend to continue that review. And if the member opposite has ideas and he has ideas in the Bill or some proposal, we'd be interested in looking at those proposals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Union Certification Process

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Labour or his designate. And continuing along the lines of government red tape and the hindering of business, it seems that there are some more examples.

Employees, Mr. Speaker, at the Peak Manufacturing in North Battleford were asked recently if they wanted to become a unionized business. Now we have been informed that 131 out

of the 175 workers, or almost 75 per cent of the employees, did not sign the union cards because they didn't want to join the union.

Unfortunately, because of the pro-labour legislation you, Mr. Minister, brought in, it only takes 25 per cent of employees to unionize a business. So the opinions of almost 75 per cent of Peak Manufacturing's employees are now being ignored. Of course the Labour Relations Board was speedy in this case and has rammed the unionization through in just a few short weeks.

Now since when is 25 per cent a majority? Mr. Minister, how can you possibly justify 94.9 per cent of Peak employees now making the decisions . . . and having their decisions made by 25.1 per cent of the employees? Do you honestly think, Mr. Minister, that this is fair?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I won't attempt in the space of the time allotted to explain to the member opposite the rules under which the Labour Relations Board functions, even if he were an earnest student. Let me just say that the rules under which the Labour Relations Board operates are the rules under which every labour relations board operates in North America. That is, if a majority — if a majority — of the employees want to form a union, they may do so. That's the rules, and I assume that those are the rules which apply.

This matter, Mr. Speaker, is determined by a judicial body. The Labour Relations Board is a judicial body. I suggest to the members opposite: you leave it with Labour Relations Board.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplemental for the same minister, probably, because, Mr. Speaker, this minister was in charge of Labour at the time that these regulations were basically brought into effect, so he does know better.

The owner of Peak Manufacturing says that your labour laws and regulations are the biggest deterrent to business in Saskatchewan, and, Mr. Minister, I couldn't agree more. How can you claim to want to promote job creation and help small business while you are tying the hands of the people with unfair and unnecessary labour laws? Would you do the right thing and amend The Trade Union Act so that the majority of employees are listened to, that the majority will rule?

Will you amend it so that it takes 50 per cent plus 1 in order to — by a secret ballot — in order for a decision like this to be made, rather than your government's ridiculous 25 per cent of the employees, as it is now? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The member opposite to continues to misstate the rules with respect to forming a union. If a majority of the employees of a free and fair vote determine they want to have a union, they may do so. But it takes a majority.

I say to members opposite: we have no intention of bringing in any legislation at this session having to do with The Trade Union Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Political Donations

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the minister in charge of Liquor and Gaming Commission.

Will the minister, the member from Yorkton, explain if he has any knowledge of any monies received by his New Democrat constituency association by way of a gift, contribution, loan advance, deposit, or otherwise?

And if so, will the member explain, to his knowledge, if any of these monies have been paid or transferred to a duly-elected business agent or the registered agent of the New Democrat Party? Or have any of these monies been paid to or shared with the business agents of other New Democrat candidates? Or has a business agent or constituency association received any monies from another New Democrat constituency association?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Now the hon. member knows that in order . . . in question period, questions must be directed to ministers regarding their portfolio. Order. As I've listened to the question, I have failed to recognize the connection to a responsibility for a portfolio — order — and I will ask . . . give the hon. member for Wood River an opportunity to just make that connection to portfolio responsibilities, otherwise I'll have to rule the question out of order.

Mr. McPherson: — Then, Mr. Speaker, I will put that identical question to the minister in charge of The Election Act, the Post-Secondary Education minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to wait for the transcript. I haven't got the faintest idea of what the member was talking about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the member that refused to answer that question will get that in a written form.

I'll go on with another one. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education has proposed Bill 92 this session — without amendment. It offers no change to the section of the Act that clearly demands political donor disclosure in law and intent. The minister believes that the practice of anonymous donations should be allowed to continue.

Will the minister tell this House if his government is in favour of disclosure of political donations — yes or no? And if not, is this another case of passing legislation, signing contracts, and then deciding to double-cross that bridge when you come to it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I'm dumbfounded by the question. I have been trying to have . . . I've been trying for the last two days to have a meeting with anybody from that caucus on this very subject of how we could address the question of contributions . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Now as all members of the House will recognize, the minister is not seated very distant from the Chair and I'm having difficulty being able to hear the minister — order. I will ask for the cooperation of all members of the House to allow the minister to be heard in his response.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll speak more loudly. I've been trying to have that meeting for the last two days. I want to have that meeting today. I'll have it right after question period today, and we can get into the question of what ought to be in this Election Act.

I mean we have lived with these provisions since the early 1970s. They are very similar to provisions in other provinces. We think we're in compliance with them. If we're not, then you're not either. But let's get together and reform the law so that we can try and bring it into some kind of shape so that you'll agree and we will agree and the third party will agree that we've got an appropriate elections law in place in this province. Let's meet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of Post-Secondary Education stated yesterday, and I quote, "We need to think long and hard before wiping out the process by which people can make political donations without revealing their identity."

Mr. Speaker, section 207 of The Election Act states that all monies — not some monies — provided by a person for the use of a registered political party shall be paid to the registered agent of that party.

Can the minister explain by what process he and the New Democrat Party enable their supporters to make donations and remain anonymous?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As I said previously, and I'll say again, we think we're in compliance with that section of the law. The question of the obligation of political parties to report all donations, wherever from, is a matter that has been debated in this country, as I said earlier, for generations, for decades and decades. And we have made some progress along that line. The member shakes his head. We have.

The laws are fairly uniform in this regard right across Canada, Mr. Speaker. If it is time for us to move those laws to another level, let's get together and talk about it. But so far as we're concerned, Mr. Speaker, we're in compliance with the law. If we're not, they're not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Hon. members will come to order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 119 — An Act respecting Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting Regulatory Reform in Saskatchewan.

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

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Questionable Use of Private Trust Funds

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I rise pursuant to rule 19 to speak on my written request that I made to your Clerk this morning seeking a priority debate motion. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a couple of things very briefly in the House before I receive your decision on my request.

Firstly, the integrity of our whole political system has been shaken by the recent revelations of private trust funds being used to finance campaigns, and an unregistered, non-profit corporation being used to finance political campaigns for New Democrats.

Mr. Speaker, the people continue to lose faith in the political system. We hear of millions of dollars of quiet donations being channelled through these funds and corporations to finance election campaigns, and we have no way of knowing who gave the money. That is outrageous.

Further, the directors of these organizations state publicly that they have no remorse for their actions. They have no regrets and they won't tell us who gave the money to finance the Tory and New Democrat campaigns. And we wonder why so many of our young people have little respect for the law.

Now we have . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. The members will come to order.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition has given notice to all members of the House that he wishes to move a motion under rule 19. And in doing so, he has the privilege of advising the House as to why he considers it to be important to consider this as a matter of priority of debate.

And I would ask all members of the House to extend to the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to be heard, to explain to the House his reasons for why he feels it deserves to be considered as a matter of priority of debate — order, order — so that the matter can be properly dealt with.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now we have a Premier of this province, and his House Leader, moving to extend the hours of this House so they can shut down debate on urgent and pressing matters like the illegal raising of funds for political parties, through the use of secret funds, secret trust funds, and unregistered corporations.

Mr. Speaker, the people who have engaged in this illegal activity, under The Election Act, are saying they don't care. Well we do care, Mr. Speaker. We want to debate our resolution. We want to have that debate here in the Assembly today, before the current legislative session is shut down by the actions of the Premier and this House Leader.

There may not be any chance to put this question before the House any other way in the reasonably near future, so it is truly a priority debate motion. Mr. Speaker, I await your ruling.

The Speaker: — Order. Earlier today, the Leader of the Opposition provided a notice for priority of debate to the Office of the Clerk, as is required under rule 19(2). The notice was accordingly distributed pursuant to the notification provision of the rule.

Members will be aware that it is the Speaker's responsibility under rule 19(5) to determine whether the matter is proper to be discussed, and whether the matter should receive urgent consideration over other business presently on the order paper. Having reviewed the member's case, I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

The Leader of the Opposition has made a sufficient case to suggest that the matter is of public importance. The question then remains whether the matter is sufficiently urgent for the Assembly to set aside all other business to discuss this matter now.

Under rule 19(5), the Speaker is required to give "regard to the probability of the matter being brought before the House within reasonable time by other means." This leaves the Speaker's decision hinged on whether any other ordinary parliamentary opportunity remains available to raise this matter in the foreseeable future.

The Speaker finds the argument that the existence of a government motion to extend the sitting hours of the Assembly will impede the ability of the Leader of the Opposition to put his motion on the order paper by regular means, is not well taken. Nor is it evident to the Speaker that the government motion will dictate when the session shall conclude.

If the Leader of the Opposition chooses to give notice of motion tomorrow, there is no reason to believe the matter could not be debated on the next private members' day. It is the opposition's turn to determine the subject of the first private member's motion during the next private members' day, which is on Tuesday of next week, three sitting days from today.

For this reason it is the Speaker's decision to deny the request for a priority of debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

Extended Hours

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. members will recognize that the hon. member from Kelvington-Wadena has just been recognized to enter into debate, and the Speaker is unable to hear her first words when she enters into debate because of shouting across the floor from both sides of the House. Now I will ask all members of the House to extend to the member the courtesy which she is entitled to as a member of this House. Order.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to continue my remarks regarding this motion. Yesterday I talked to the Assembly about some of the important matters that were of concern to my constituents, those being the health and education in our area. And I think it's important that I continue talking about these areas of concern, that being the economy and my important critic area of economic development.

I think that the fact that the Minister of Economic Development is indeed very optimistic, which I would like to be as well, but as a result of my contact with a number of employers in our area and across the province, I think it's very important that I bring to the attention, to this Assembly, some of the concerns that people have.

In question period and through other means it's sometimes difficult to make sure that the government realizes that there are concerns and there's not just playing politics when we get up to speak. I'd like to give some information to the Assembly and this motion allows me to do that because I'm able to let them know as opposition members we do have some interests that are important to constituents.

We actually did a business survey ourselves and asked one of the really important questions about the problems facing businesses in this province. The first indication we had, and the biggest problem that most businesses face in this problem, is government interference. I concur with the members of the third party that there is indeed over-regulation, and the concerns that businesses have when it comes to their day-to-day operations, when it comes to dealing with the extra paperwork that is put before us in running our business.

(1430)

Maybe in larger companies where they can afford to have a lot of staff running around shuffling papers that it appears government needs to have to make sure that we are considered a viable part of the economy, maybe other companies can afford it, but small companies can't afford it. And basically a

lot of the larger ones are finding problems too with the increasing number of regulations that we're finding.

We're actually very worried about the occupational health and safety standard regulations that are being threatened in this province. I'm getting calls every day from employers who are concerned with these regulations. I'm afraid that because these regulations were passed last year, but they haven't been implemented, there's a fear out there that they can be put in at any time. And they will again cause a lot of concerns for employers in our province.

Another one of the concerns that was indicated to me was the lack of consumer confidence. Now that may be something that the government feels they can't deal with. But it seems to me that a lot of confidence has to come from the feelings that we get, the signals we get, every day from the media and from government, trying to assure us that things are going well, when in our everyday life we understand that there are concerns out there and we know that they're not always going well.

Anybody who doubts that should go to coffee row in any small town in Saskatchewan and you'd know what the real feelings were out in this province.

There's been an increase in the employee benefits. And by that I mean things like workmen's compensation. That's one concern that every employer in this province has. I know that there was a band-aid solution offered last year when we asked for an inquiry into it, and it actually gave people a little bit of breathing space, but the worry is still there. The problem hasn't disappeared; it's still on the back burner. And I think as an employer, everybody is very worried about this, and I'm hoping that the government understands the importance of these concerns.

They keep saying numbers like 3 or 4 per cent increase isn't going to make a difference. I don't know if government realizes that small businesses work on a very small bottom line, and any time you take a sum right out of the bottom line, that percentage is gone. It's not like we're taking it from our gross profits; it's out of the very bottom line. And we can't afford to continue to do that.

The job stability concerns is another one that employees and employers have as well. I think that this government, through a lot of the regulations and rules that they have at this time, seem to believe that employers are out there thinking that we don't have the basic concerns of our employees at hand. And that's not true.

I don't know of any employer who isn't concerned about their employee. Every day that we have to work with our employees, we want to. The only way that we can make some money is to have the very best productivity from everyone that works with us. And the only way we can do that is make sure that the people are happy and satisfied in their jobs.

It's difficult some times to do that, but we work very hard to develop relationships. And I'm not sure that the government realizes that this isn't the Dark Ages, where we come in in the

morning and set down rules and tell the employees they have to do this before the end of the day.

The days when we had a production line and the boss standing there hollering at employees are gone. We have leaders, we have teams, and we work with our employees in ways that we can manage their needs and our productivity hand in hand to the best of both people.

The economy itself is a concern. When we look across the border and see what's happening in Alberta and in Manitoba and it looks like their . . . we realize that the pastures are greener there. There isn't any doubt about that and I think that this is something that the government has to realize. With the global economy we have now, it's very easy to go across the border. People in my constituency can shop there very easily, go across either border and pay less tax. And you're often going there to visit your children anyway. So it's just an incentive to spend your extra . . . your tax-free dollars over there, your after-tax dollars, in another province.

I think to recognize the fact that by cutting things, taxes, PST (provincial sales tax), would actually encourage economic growth in this province. People aren't as apt to want to jump in their vehicle and go some place if they can buy the product at home for around the same dollar.

Mr. Minister, I'm . . . Mr. Speaker, I think that when we talk to our constituents about what's going on in the House right now, and we try and explain to them that the reason we are doing this every day is to make sure that the concerns that they have are brought forward to the floor of this Assembly, even through this motion here, it's difficult sometimes to make them understand that if we don't have some say in the agenda that's set forward by the government, there isn't any way of bringing their concerns to the floor of the Assembly.

Another one of the questions that we asked was, what was the major impediment to growth. And one of the major ones was capital to finance growth. Now I understand, and I don't believe that employers are looking for grants, we're not looking for government hand-outs, but we are requiring some way to make sure that there is some capital there, some ability to expand.

One of the concerns that I have, and I think has been obvious as I've been in the House, is government departments or Crown corporations like SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) who are there specifically to help businesses. And yet when we see the amount of businesses who are actually aided by this corporation, it's difficult to see that, where they're actually helping the vast majority of the businesses.

Most of them don't have the time or the money or the inclination to run to a government, and fill out all the papers it requires, and to jump through the loopholes that government needs to decide in their own minds if we're viable businesses. I think businesses aren't asking government to do that. We're asking them to create an environment so that we are willing to gamble or to invest our own money in our companies. If we win or lose, that should be our choice. But many of the roadblocks and the high taxes and the unhealthy environment in this

province is making it just about impossible for us to continue and to want to expand.

There are lots of us who would have the option of going to friends or relatives and saying, would you like to invest in our company. But there isn't any incentive to do that. I think that this government could find a way of doing that if they wanted to. I think that some of the regulations and laws that were in effect a few years ago, like investment tax credits and . . . that would allow people to have some security in the dollars, or at least some tax relief by investing in a Canadian or a Saskatchewan company . . . would give them an opportunity to feel more secure.

Another one of the concerns that I had put forward was the declining rural populations and the poor economy in rural Saskatchewan. Yesterday I indicated that things like closing schools and hospitals had a cumulative effect on rural Saskatchewan because as soon as you lose a teacher or a nurse, then that affects the drug store and it affects the stores and pretty soon more people are moving out. And the desire to build in rural Saskatchewan, to build their homes or build businesses, is gone.

I think that if the government had a real interest or desire to revitalize rural Saskatchewan, they could do it. I think if as much energy was put into promoting rural Saskatchewan, into showing the world what we have out there, instead of some of the laws and regulations that are in place right now, we could actually have people moving out there.

Right now in our small towns, I have seen ads put in papers in Toronto and in Vancouver, telling about some of the advantages we have in our small towns, and people do move out there. And I think that government advertising, if you're going to do that, should be advertising outside of this province, telling them what we have to offer.

I think that if there's one thing that I would like to be known for, before this session is over, is the fact that I believe rural Saskatchewan is the best place in the world to live. I know the whole province is stated to be that, but I believe where we have . . . the constituency I'm from and my colleagues are from, are wonderful places. And if we would have the opportunity to tell the world that, it would improve the whole economy of this province.

The unloading of costs by government, that is the downloading and this famous word we've been hearing so often, I think that we're bearing the brunt of it on our businesses and in rural Saskatchewan and if there was some . . . if the whole idea of what would be the priorities of this government — the education and health care and highways — if that was re-examined so that's where it was put and the rest of the money was left in the hands of the people of this province, we could re-energize our province very quickly. We wouldn't have to wait for the heavy-handed government to decide when and where there should be some growth allowed.

The third question that I asked in the survey that I sent out to 200 businesses was: if you could implement one change or

addition to government legislation to improve company growth potential, what would it be? The first answer, and the one with the most responses, was eliminating corporate tax and pick up revenues in personal taxes, and not to tax the production inputs, especially for businesses that export.

Actually they've asked for removal of E&H (education and health) tax on building materials. And many times in the House you've heard me talk about E&H tax, the large cost involved in building hog barns. I know in my constituency, one of the people out there built a major hog operation last year and just the education and health tax on that building was over \$30,000, which was more money than he took home personally.

I can't see that the government is not understanding that this is actually an impediment to growth. That \$30,000, sure, they got it, but they don't know how many more buildings they could have got if that tax was gone. And the economic spin-offs of having a number of these barns, or any kind of manufacturing plants around this province, would definitely increase if that tax was gone.

One of the interesting items that was given to me was the deliverance of more good news. I think that that's something the government is trying to do right now, and I find it kind of interesting. Because a few years ago I think they spent most of their time trying to make sure we were all depressed and now they're trying to make us believe that everything is great again. And it's taking them a lot longer to improve our disposition than it did to get rid of our good disposition.

They asked for graduated taxation for property reassessment. They also asked for some job creation programs. And one of the interesting things that they asked for was teaching entrepreneurship.

Mr. Speaker, I've had five children that graduated, so I've been attending graduations in my small town now for over 12 years. And I find it very interesting that when they talk about kids . . . ask children, or young adults, when they graduate what their goals and aspirations are, I've yet to hear any of them say that they were going to start a business.

I find that really disappointing, because everybody wants to either go to school or work for somebody else, and they haven't either been taught or they fail to understand the importance of doing something to create a sustainable employment for themselves. They don't understand that within themselves there could be an option or an opportunity to build on their own talents and skills, as well as making use of the places around them and the people around them.

(1445)

I wish that there was something that could be taught either in schools or by government or media to let them know that there is opportunities out there. It's scary that when we think that this government is banking on the fact that it's going to create 20,000 jobs in the next 10 . . . or four years, I guess they're saying, and that may happen. But if we get that many jobs in Saskatchewan, there's probably 20 times that many in the other

province. And it's because we have so many restrictions to job creation in this province.

I think that the real idea of economic growth does not come from job creation — it comes from gaining . . . from measuring the actual economy. When I look at the economy, the numbers that was given out in May, Statistics Canada said that Saskatchewan's economic growth is only .8 per cent, or was only .8 per cent in 1995, the third worst in this whole country and less than half of the national average of 2 per cent.

I think what the government isn't realizing is that we can't be banking on specific companies or job creation numbers that means our economy is going to be moving again. Even if they do create a few jobs, it could be more if people were allowed to work and build the province the way they see that it could happen.

The companies I talked to also asked to reduce the size of government and decrease involvement in business. This year we saw the actual size of government increase again. One of the most annoying growths in government for me was the addition of the second Department of Education in this province.

I understand the importance of secondary education. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that if the government was . . . if their real important growth item is the economy, I think it would have been interesting for them to look at the idea of joining Post-Secondary Education with the Department of Economic Development.

I don't know if that's a unique thought, but if we actually believe that entrepreneurship is the way to go in the future, we should be teaching children in school that there is an opportunity to start their own business. And the only way we can do that is by starting at the basics, starting in grade 6 and 7 and 8 and letting them know what it takes to actually run a business.

I had somebody tell me on the weekend the story about Rip Van Winkle. When he woke up after 35 years, the only thing that hadn't changed in that time was education. And that is true. They have the same books as . . . My children are using the same books that I did, and some of the names in the front of the covers were a lot older than me.

I think that's a sad state — it's a sad statement on what's happening in our province. If we're actually going to get our children involved in the future and in the global economy, we have to allow them to work in industry and with business in such a way that they can see that there is work for them outside of the structured job set-up that we as parents and the government expects to measure the economy by.

There is so much potential out there and the potential is within the people themselves. And we're not encouraging that. And through Post-Secondary Education in a link with Economic Development we could actually put some new sight or some new thoughts into the future.

They also ask to expand small-business deductions to \$500,000

from the current \$200,000 limit. I tried to get numbers from the Minister of Economic Development on the number of businesses that actually are paying income tax and that are involved in this \$200,000 limit, but I haven't received those numbers yet.

But for myself, I think the number of small businesses actually paying income tax is very small. I wish somebody could give me that number.

One of the other suggestions that businesses had was to implement tax credits based on job creation and in-house training after the fact. They're not asking for grants and loans for projects . . . for projections and promises, but they're asking for the government to look at businesses on one basis and then measure it again in a year from now or two years from now and see what type of growth has actually happened. That way we're not allowing for some kind of a number that may or may not make a difference to this economy.

And I think that this type of legislation or these type of suggestions that the people in this province had given to me and to our caucus is what the government needs and I think the opportunity to bring these motions forward or these suggestions forward is given to us through this motion. I guess I'm delighted that we do have this chance to talk about some of the things that the people in this province are looking for.

Mr. Speaker, out of the number of replies when we talked about sales forecasts, there was an increase of about . . . about 30 per cent of them said there would be an increase, about 30 per cent of them said there'd be a decrease, and 40 per cent felt the sales numbers would be the same.

When I talked about the employee numbers in 1996, I had a different survey number than the minister had and some of the other surveys that I received answers back . . . Pardon me. About 15 per cent of them said that there was going to be an increase and about 30 per cent of them said there was going to be a decrease.

I've heard numbers given by members opposite saying that they're actually . . . that most employers were talking about increasing numbers, but that wasn't what I had heard.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my place I just wanted to touch briefly on the one point that I had made this year a couple of times and that was for farm women who are farmers in their own right and have now, through current . . . through the Human Rights Commission, been told that their complaint that they are not eligible for the fuel tax rebate is actually justified. And I was dismayed when I heard the Minister of Finance say that it was something that they were considering appealing. I can't understand how a government — a modern government, a government like ours that we should be proud of — is actually considering taking the women of this province . . . or why they would let them go to Human Rights Commission on an item like whether they're considered a farmer or not. It doesn't make any sense to me.

If a man is farming with his daughter or a brother and sister are

farming, they have every right to both collect this fuel tax rebate. But now because of the marriage contract, they're not allowed to do it. I think that does not give a woman any individuality in her status as a farmer because she's married to someone else. I don't understand that, Mr. Speaker.

There's a number of concerns in the economy that I have and I think that our caucus is dealing with them. And it's unfortunate that our voice sometimes isn't heard the way we would like it to be.

But, Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the opportunity to bring forward . . . or I appreciate the opportunity to bring forward my concerns, and I thank you for this. Thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would say that I am pleased to also be able to stand to speak to this motion, but I'm not sure if pleased is the correct word. I am standing to respond to the motion simply because the motion is here. I am dismayed with the fact that a motion of this nature has even come to be.

As you well know and many of the people in this Assembly know, it's their . . . for some of them it is their very first year in the Assembly, and I just find that rather than getting to the point and dealing with those things that are of utmost concern to the province and to the people of this province — in fact those very good people of the province that I have great respect for — instead of looking to their concerns and so on we are playing really stupid political games here. I have no desire to do that kind of thing and nor do I ever feel that I will get tangled up in that, but goodness only knows.

Mr. Speaker, I really am concerned about the health Bills that are out there. I've had many of my constituents come to me and they are concerned about those Bills also. Now in order to effect proper debate on those Bills, it is my firm belief that we should be doing that very thing.

We cannot constantly keep on like this, and I don't think historically . . . I guess looking into the future that the citizens of this province or of this country want this kind of thing to continue. I really believe the face of politics is changing, and it will change. It may not change as quickly as some of us would like it to happen, but it is changing. And it is simply going to change because people will no longer, they will no longer allow themselves to be governed by governments that ignore them and continue to get caught up in political positioning and everything of that nature. Every decision, it seems, that is made through politicians, long-time politicians, is made for every reason other than for real politics.

Politics is about serving people. Politics is about remembering what we were put here for, that we are the voice of people. We are here to express their concerns for them. And we must remember that we are one with them. We are not separate from them; we are one with them. And so everything that we say, we do, and every decision that we make, reflects what those people out there would like to see happening.

And I think they particularly would like to see the province

being able to move ahead, forward, using all of the potential that we have in this province, the abilities and those talents of those people. They want to be empowered to use their own talents and to have things moving ahead so that their children, and the children of future generations, can in fact end up being in, I guess, somewhat of a heaven, you could say, for themselves. Although those things don't happen overnight, Mr. Speaker, I know that that is the dream of those people.

Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me, I do have a little reading that I would like to do. And I do this because it's such a wonderful piece of literature, an essay written by the president, I think it is, of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel. I really ask for leave to do this because I know that constant reading is not accepted always in the legislature.

Mr. Havel has come out of the Communist regime, and after the overthrow of the Communist government, he ended up reflecting on the past and what had happened there. And he then writes of his reflections and what his hope is, and how in fact morality and decency and so on are in fact tied to politics, and are the very essence of politics because our whole justice system has been based on the need for moral directives and order in our society. And, Mr. Vaclav says, he writes:

I have been persuaded time and time again that a huge potential of goodwill is slumbering within our society. It's just that it's incoherent, suppressed, confused, crippled, and perplexed — as though it does not know what to rely on, where to begin, where or how to find meaningful outlets.

And I reflect on the people in our province and I have a sense of that very same thing. People do have so much potential within them, but they need that potential to be articulated for them, named for them, and encouraged. And so I get the feeling that Mr. Vaclav is in fact speaking for what is happening not only in our province, but around the world. He says:

In such a state of affairs, politicians have a duty to awaken this slumbering potential, to offer it direction and ease its passage, to encourage it and give it room, or simply hope.

They say, Mr. Speaker, that a nation gets the politicians it deserves. In some senses this is true. Politicians are indeed a mirror of their society and a kind of embodiment of its potential. At the same time, paradoxically, the opposite is also true. Society is a mirror of its politicians. It is largely up to the politicians which social forces they choose to liberate and which they choose to suppress, whether they rely on the good in each citizen or on the bad.

The former regime that Mr. Havel speaks of systematically mobilized the worst human qualities like selfishness, envy, and hatred. That regime was far more than just something we deserved. It was also responsible for what we became. And this is his words:

Those who find themselves in politics therefore bear a heightened responsibility for the moral state of society, and it is their responsibility to seek out the best in that society

(and empower it) and to develop it and to strengthen it.

Even the politicians who often anger me with their shortsightedness and their malice are not, in the most part, evil minded. They are, rather, inexperienced, easily infected with the particularisms of the time, easily manipulated by trends and prevailing customs; often they are simply caught up, unwillingly, in the swirl of bad politics, and find themselves unable to extricate themselves because they are afraid of the risks this would entail.

(1500)

Some say I am a naive dreamer who is always trying to combine the incompatible: politics and morality. I know this song well (he says); I've heard it sung all of my life. In the 1980s, a certain Czech philosopher who lived in California published a series of articles in which he subjected the "anti-political politics" of Charter 77 . . . (and he was met for that) with crushing criticism. Trapped in his own Marxist fallacies, he believed that as a scholar he scientifically comprehended the entire history of the world. He saw it as a history of violent revolutions and vicious power struggles. The idea that the world might actually be changed by the force of truth, the power of a truthful word, the strength of a free spirit, conscience, and responsibility — with no guns, no lust for power, no political wheeling and dealing — was quite beyond the horizon of his understanding . . .

Because his doctrine had taught him that the bourgeoisie would never voluntarily surrender its leading role, and that it must be swept into the dustbin of history through armed revolution, this philosopher assumed that there was no other way to sweep away the Communist government either. Yet it turned out to be possible. Moreover, it turned out to be the only way to do it. Not only that, but it was the only way that made sense since violence, as we know, breeds more violence. This is why most revolutions degenerate into dictatorships that devour their young, giving rise to new revolutionaries who prepare for new violence, unaware that they are digging their own graves and pushing society back onto the deadly merry-go-round of revolution and counter-revolution.

I'm going to skip some of this but I appreciate his words that he has further down. He says:

Genuine politics — politics worthy of the name, and the only politics I am willing to devote myself to — is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community, and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility, expressed through action, to and for the whole, a responsibility that . . . grows out of a conscious or subconscious certainty that our death ends nothing.

I will leave it at that for now, Mr. Speaker.

I have seen time and time again where many people have come to this Assembly and they have had to have . . . tried to have,

rather, their words or their concerns brought forward and really they end up stonewalled many times.

This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, when I think of the waste of time that we put on things like this and not really getting to the matter of people's concerns . . . I came into the legislature this afternoon and I had been out for dinner, and on the steps of the legislature was a man sitting with a chain around his neck. And he was chained to, in fact, the railing out there.

So I stopped and asked him what he was doing in fact. He had stated that many times over he was trying to get across a point that he needed to get across, as far as maintenance orders were concerned, that he needed some help with that. And that he had gone to government a number of times.

He has no choice but to give over whatever he has for maintenance orders and he wants to do that. However he finds that he has no money for himself to live on. And so in protest and basically to the fact that government isn't doing what it's here to do — to assist him in somehow finding a resolution to this — he has come to the legislature today and put himself here as a symbolic protest of really government not listening to the people.

Now I'm not too sure what could be done for this gentleman, but I know very well that something should be done to assist him if in fact the government doesn't have the authority to do what is necessary. So it's not good enough to be referred to the federal government when there's cases like this, as he had done to him. Because he said: I can't walk to Ottawa, and I haven't got the ticket to Ottawa, and I can't afford to get to Ottawa, so I need to depend on those people around me. And that is what I'm doing here.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about service, that is what I talk about. I talk about cases like that — of people that have genuine, real problems. I don't talk about political wrangling and what not in this legislature. I don't talk about wasting a lot of time with games that move people towards power structures and a major hope for power and that's all — power and control — because in fact that is something that people out there are saying that they no longer will have.

Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns also that I'm not even sure that I'll be able to put forward by the time this Legislative Assembly is over. And so because of the lack of time that it seems that is imminent here, I would like to be able to put them forward now.

The whole health care situation in the province is in fact causing people great distress. And we've heard many times about this. My concern is for the affiliates of this province. The three Bills that we have coming up in fact are going to probably end up negating the affiliates of any authority that they have.

Now many people have . . . We have a freedom in this country — a freedom for religion, a freedom of choice, a freedom of speech, etc. Part of that, freedom of religion, is associated and in fact worked into the affiliate organizations, many of them that are religious denominations that have these facilities. I see

that if in fact their ability to choose how they want their organizations run and to run them in a manner that is conducive to their religious beliefs, if that freedom is taken from these people, we are in fact . . . I guess what we're doing is we're going back to what Mr. Havel has said.

That is control, and that is the power and control for no other reason but the thrill of having power and control. To be able to effect something in this province that enables people to have continued freedom, I think we have to take a close, close look at these Bills. And I certainly hope that somehow these Bills, as written, will not go through. People are really very afraid out there.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency I have a great number of people who are self-motivators. They do believe in themselves and they encourage each other. They take each other and they say, you know, this is what I've done and you can do it too.

We have got people there who are certainly involved in major industry. We have people there involved in farming. And we have children there, young people, high school children especially, that are very involved, in fact much more than they were even 10 years ago, in what is happening around the world. They are very astute and very aware. And I hope that as time goes on, we give them every opportunity to use again their abilities and their talents and that we are here to help them develop that potential.

I want so very much, and I'm sure that most people do, to ensure that we have free enterprise, the freedoms associated with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I want those things — and many people do, as I've said — to continue on. We have to be very, very careful in this day and age, when power and control are such an important part of everybody's mind it seems, that we don't in fact negate and destroy those wonderful freedoms we've had.

Mr. Speaker, everything changes, and everything has changed, I think a lot, in the NDP Party. The ideals that the NDP Party have . . . had put forward in the past, at the time of Tommy Douglas, I believe were wonderful ideals. I had a great deal of admiration for the man, and so did everyone in this province. But things do change and we have seen a great deal of change.

I remember even when Mr. Blakeney, if I may refer to him now, was talking about rural Saskatchewan as being such a vital, vital force, a vital part of this province in order that urban Saskatchewan would be able to continue and to thrive, also in order that northern Saskatchewan would, there was so much onus put on rural Saskatchewan at that time and I see now that things have completely changed; there has been a complete shift.

So I say that that's happening because of politics. When we are only concerned about elections and getting elected, and power, those kind of things happen.

Now it's really very sad, because I know that some of the members opposite would probably agree with me in their hearts — but that's another thing. We don't feel that we even have the

chance here to express truly and openly — and oftentimes we don't have the chance — what we're really feeling.

So, Mr. Speaker, my hope is that some of the ideals and the philosophy and so on put forth by Mr. Douglas can again come to be, because I think that he would be wanting that. He knows very well . . . or he knew very well that this was the only kind of a province that could possibly bring us honour. We would include everyone and we would know how very interdependent we are.

So without the understanding of interdependence and respect at the very core of our being and our decision making and our philosophy, we in fact cannot go ahead with any kind of, I guess, renewed, new politics. It's impossible.

So I would just hope that some of the members would take those words of respect and understanding, the ability to be able to discuss, to communicate openly, honestly, with each other and to give some decent consideration to what many of the good people are trying to do here. I think if that had taken place we wouldn't be looking at this motion right now.

So my concern again is for my constituents out there because I really feel that I am one with them. They have got some concerns about the future more than they do about the present. They see a lot of changes in legislation. We see put in front of us, Mr. Speaker, this legislative session, 119 Bills. I have no idea, but I doubt very much, if there's any other province that has had this many Bills come forward in one legislative session.

And even the fact that there's that many Bills makes us question, for sure, why all the legislation? Why all the regulation? What's going on here? I mean if we're freeing people we would need laws and legislation and to ensure that there's order in our province certainly, but not controlling order, not controlling to this extent.

We have had so much put in front of us within one session that it's unfathomable how anyone could possibly deal with this. We're trying to deal with it. We need the time for it and we need time that doesn't end up overtiring us. So to ask for our days to entail 10 o'clock in the morning till 10:30 at night, is that what we would ask our constituents to do? Would I go to my constituents and say, well you know I think that it's . . . you will represent me very well if you come into this Assembly and you sit every day from 10 till 10:30 at night.

I doubt very much that we would do that to anybody that we care about, and I don't believe that that kind of thing should be done here. I believe that we can sit for extended days. That would be wonderful and I'd be most willing to do that, but I don't think that purposely overtiring people is anything that is going to be . . . or effect any good in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place shortly. I want to say that I have appreciated very much of the order that you have tried to conduct in the House and certainly have from time to time. I give a great deal of credit to the many people who in their hearts are working towards the common good of this province, and I would just hope that as time goes on we recognize, even

though we have differences in philosophies and differences in how to achieve our goals, that we can do that through some constructive criticism and also some respect.

And I would ask all the members of the Assembly to chew on those words for a little while. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well to speak on the motion before the House about the extended hours. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words by way of preface in this and that is, is that as a new member of the House, I guess I came to the Assembly with a lot of high expectations as to how we would proceed.

I came with a certain amount of trepidation and misgiving, and a lot of feelings that this was going to be an occasion where it would be extremely adversarial in nature, and that every single day that we were here leading up to, I believe we're on the 67th day, would be very difficult and would always be very, very partisan.

(1515)

I have to say that in many, many ways that that initial illusion was exactly that — an illusion. Because I found in many instances that the dignity and decorum of the legislature and colleagues in the legislature was something that everyone took very seriously, and members opposite and members of the opposition and third party respected the position of the really sacred trust each of us were given when we accepted our responsibilities to be members of the legislature.

And I think that I found that I was anxious to do my job as an MLA. And I have to say that I really found the work after June 21 in my constituency to be incredibly rewarding and incredibly interesting. I found it particularly rewarding to be able to meet with people that look to you for guidance, and wisdom, and for assistance in a number of issues that were facing their lives. And I found it particularly rewarding to go out again after a campaign and meet people on a new level, a non-partisan level as an MLA that now represented everyone, irrespective of the fact that they may or may not have supported you on the ballot.

And so as we waited and prepared for the legislature to actually come to session, I became increasingly disappointed that time kept dragging on and on and on, and that it seemed very, very strange that in an instance where a government had been re-elected that it took virtually eight months from the election to the time that the legislature was called together.

And I had to ask myself many times, why the delay. Why would it possibly take eight months from the time a government was re-mandated, from that time, for it to call the legislature together so that the people of the province could debate and look at a legislative agenda for the session.

It struck me that there might be some argument for a delay of that magnitude if there was indeed a new government. And a new government would have all kinds of additional challenges

before it that an incumbent government should not have. It wasn't as if, after four years of government, suddenly the NDP Party had to rethink its whole mandate and how they were going to approach the challenges before it.

In the previous four years, the government seemed to have as a principal agenda the need to balance the budget, and I understand the great impediment that was necessary for that to happen. But after that process occurred — and we can debate at length if it was an appropriate approach or not . . . but I fully recognize that the budget was balanced. If it was on the income side or expense side or too much on one side of the ledger and not enough on the other side of the ledger is, I'm sure, a point for debate for many, many years to come.

But the point that I want to make here and now is, that it struck me as well that, as a member of a very small caucus and a relatively small opposition, that it was necessary that we had to do our jobs extremely well. It was going to be incumbent on us to represent and take our parts in government as the official opposition to hold the government accountable for the directions that they were going to choose to take.

When I looked at the results of the election, it seemed to me that many, many people did not visibly and forcibly endorse the policies and mandate of this government. I don't know the exact statistics, but I believe something like two-thirds of the population voted. Of that two-thirds, less than 50 per cent voted for the current government. And I don't know how that math works, but it certainly means that something in the order of a third of the eligible voters actually expressed their confidence in the government by casting a ballot in favour of the government.

And so by extrapolation, if you like, it struck me that two-thirds of the people did not necessarily accept everything that the government was proposing before the people of this province, and by extension, it struck me that the opposition had a role to speak for those two-thirds of the electorate of this province. And that was indeed a very heavy responsibility.

It was a responsibility that was heightened by the fact that nine of us were brand-new MLAs and that the process of adjusting and acquiring the necessary skills that we would need was going to be a challenge over and above that which would normally be the case when you re-elect incumbents. And so when I looked at the challenge ahead, I realize that it was going to be a very great one indeed.

I also had the expectation, if you like, that there was a great spirit of cooperation that could occur by the members of this Assembly. And I was given the privilege of being a part of one particular committee of the Assembly. And I was also given the privilege to chair the Public Accounts Committee. That gave me the very strong impression, firstly, that not all of the business of government happens in this Assembly.

In fact in many instances, a great amount of the work that we are all responsible for happens outside of the legislative sitting hours, and indeed outside of the functioning of this formal Assembly. And I realized that in particular with the Public

Accounts Committee that I have the pleasure of chairing.

During the course of this Assembly thus far, we have conducted nine meetings. We have found it very difficult to find a meeting time that was appropriate and convenient for all of our members. We have met regularly on Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 to discuss the business that was before the committee. And the members have worked extremely hard. I know that every member would agree that our committee has set aside, by and large, our partisan natures and has focused on the issues at hand, and we have certainly worked hard.

I know that the member for Meadow Lake, a member of my committee, would agree with the fact that we have worked hard in a very non-partisan, organized, responsible way. I know the government member from Last Mountain-Touchwood would also agree that our committee has functioned very well and worked very hard.

The member from Regina South has been a vocal member of our committee but has worked very hard to see that the job has been done. Likewise the member from Lloydminster has worked very hard and diligently to make sure that the work was done.

The member from Saskatoon Eastview has worked very hard to see that the Public Accounts Committee has been functioning in a very strong and organized and effective way and in a way the Legislative Assembly would be very pleased. The member from Saskatoon Sutherland as well has worked and contributed to the efforts of the Public Accounts Committee on many occasions and added to the debate.

The members from the opposition, the member from Thunder Creek, my colleague, has participated in debate and the questioning and the discussion that has happened within the Public Accounts Committee. The member from Moosomin and the member from Saskatoon Greystone as well have also put a great deal of effort into our committee.

And I have to say before this Assembly and the people that are watching that I'm very, very proud of all of the members of the Public Accounts Committee and commend them for all of the work that they have done.

And it illustrated to me in a very clear way that, using that committee as an example . . . and I know that there are many other standing committees of the legislature: Crown Corporations and Procedures and Rules and Regulations. And all of the committees of the legislature that are here function very well in a non-partisan way outside of the normal sitting hours of this legislature.

And I guess that the point that I'm making here, Mr. Speaker, is that I feel that we have to fundamentally suggest that one of the fundamental flaws of the motion that we're debating here today, in my opinion, is the fact that it only focuses every work of government onto the actual legislative sitting hours.

How in the world is it possible to have members function on a committee like I've indicated, that is critically important to the

people of this province, to the functioning of this legislature, if we are to meet from 10 o'clock in the morning virtually until 10 o'clock at night? That is something like twelve and a half hours a day. How in the world can people then be expected to think clearly, to use their faculties properly, and to then find time to meet on Public Accounts or Crown Corporations or all of the other responsibilities that members have to the people of this province and to this legislature if we're supposed to be doing these extended hours?

The motion recognizes the fact that we have to do more work, and I accept that. But the motion completely ignores the physical limitations on people to be able to do their jobs properly, and it completely fails to recognize the fact that there are so many more issues out there than what can be rammed through in a short period of time by extended hours. It does a disservice to this legislature. It does a disservice to the process that is needed for the people of Saskatchewan to follow to make sure that their issues have been well thought out and well debated.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that we have to take this vehicle of talking to the issues of our province at this time, to make sure that the issues of our constituencies and the issues that we see are important have to be put on the record, because we know that if we are going to go to these outrageous type of hours in order to get the government's position satisfied, we will not be in a position to do the job that we have in representing what we feel is the two-thirds of the people that need to be represented properly and well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in principle I, as the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, know that it is unfair and impractical to ask the members of my committee to add two extra hours of work on top of a twelve and a half hour day and to be able to devote their full attention to that work.

The work is not just the time we spend. The work is that plus all the preparation, all the reading, all the background study, all the research that has to be done, in order to discharge our responsibilities properly. And so I fail completely to see the logic of this kind of a brinkmanship kind of motion, if you like, that puts us into the position that we have no choice but to defend the issues of our people in a way that may be brought into consideration or debate.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I then am asked to join the debate in terms of saying what are the issues in terms of a perspective for my constituency. And it's important that my constituency realizes that they have had their issues recognized and that I have stood up and said that the appropriateness of this extended hours is really unfortunate because the work is not getting done properly.

You know, I know as well as everyone that one of the most important things that are happening in our province right now are the changes that are being dictated from this government in so far as health care is concerned. It has been something that has been very disruptive to this province ever since it was first introduced after the government came to power in 1991.

And again what troubles me so much is that instead of using the common sense and cooperation that I find underlying most of the members of this House, what happened is the process was flawed by ideology and hastily ill-thought-out plans from the very beginning.

And that's what I'm afraid we're going to face here again, Mr. Speaker, by this extended hours and the desire to have a defined time when we should be out of this House. We should be out of this House when we've fully and completely and with due thought and process debated all of the issues in front of this session, and not one day or one minute or one hour before. And not because we've sat for 14 hours in a day to get it done by a magical date.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that has happened in health care is that we've ended up taking an ideological approach based more on brinkmanship than on consultation and communication. I remember at the . . . roughly in about the 1989-90 time frame where I was involved with, in our church, the Diocesan Pastoral Council for the diocese of Prince Albert. And the bishop of the diocese of Prince Albert is Bishop Blaise Morand. And when I was the Chair of that committee, the bishop was a very busy man serving the people of the province in his role as a member of the Murray Commission of health care reform.

And I remember him coming to our regular meetings with literally volumes and volumes and volumes of briefs and notes and things that had been before the Murray Commission. And the bishop was not a partisan politician; he was appointed there because of his role as a leader of a particular denomination of the Christian faith. And he took that role very responsibly on that commission that was constituted to look at the whole issue of health care in this province.

(1530)

And I realized from my perspective of observing that man's work on this issue, how much work went into it over that period of time. There was due care and diligence, there was careful deliberation, and it was done properly and thoughtfully over a period of time with absolutely thorough consultation all across the province. They travelled from one corner of the province to the other and they listened to all of the people that had any interest at all.

And then they sat down and they brought in experts and people that could give them the advice they needed from a technical point of view, and they drafted a report. And there was sort of the *Reader's Digest* version of that report and the full report and I was interested enough because of my concern about health care to read both versions in detail. And it struck me as, while you could argue that it was not a perfect report and it didn't provide absolutely every answer to every situation, it did provide a well-thought-out, well-documented blueprint for where health care could go into the future.

And I thought that that was extremely well done and that, even though it was so well done, there was going to have to be a very great deal of work put into consultation with the people in order to implement the far-reaching ramifications of that report.

Mr. Speaker, I was dismayed after the election at how little attention the government of the day paid to that report. I was terribly dismayed because there was absolutely no consultation. There was no discussion. There was no meaningful consideration of that report as far as I could see. And so what we ended up with is some other ideological approach to health care that we now are in the middle of stumbling through.

Instead of taking what was a very well-thought-out blueprint and model, we ended up feeling our way through this current wellness reform process that, I'm sorry to say, was implemented by another lawyer who seemed to think that they knew what was best for the people of the province, who convinced their colleagues that they knew exactly all the answers, and who then were in the process, from 1992 on, of ramming it down the throats of the people.

And, Mr. Speaker, I recall what happened in my constituency. The first thing that happened in 1992 is 30 long-term beds were closed from Parkland Regional Care hospital. And I remember how outraged the people were because they were not consulted; they were not considered; and they were not properly consulted in terms of how this was happening, and why it was happening, how it should happen.

And the reason that it had happened is because the first thing the government had done is they ended up throwing the communities at each other's throats to compete for some magical salvation that was necessary. And what had happened is they had said to people is, that what you're going to do is you're going to have this different vision of health care, and you better go out and try to preserve what you have as best that you can. It was like throwing five T-bone steaks out in a pack of eight dogs and to say, now figure out how this is going to work and let us know when it's all over.

Well you know what's going to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When it's all over the steaks are going to be gone, the dogs are all going to be bloodied, and someone is going to end up with nothing at all except wounds and hurts. And that's what happened in health care, Mr. Speaker.

We ended up with a situation that forced communities, out of fear and self-interest, to go out and try to outdo, outmanoeuvre, outbid each other, if you like, so they could hang on to a health district that would save what they know is sacred to the people of this province. That's what happened. And so instead of people in my region cooperating, they fought like crazy in order to try to preserve what was near and dear to them.

So instead of Melfort and Tisdale and Nipawin as three large communities in the north-east coming together with a common vision — as they might have under the Murray Commission because that's the kind of district that that commission report envisaged that would then be capable of providing all of the services that were needed by the people of that district — the first thing that happened, Mr. Speaker, is that Melfort and Tisdale and Nipawin started competing with each other.

They started trying to bid for the municipalities around to see who would get who and who would come where. They tried to

go to the other communities and say, will you come with us? Will you go with the other places? And so we ended up in a bidding war that was destructive to everyone concerned and we ended up with no vision, and that's the problem. When you move with too much haste and you do not consider the ramifications of your decisions, you end up with a situation that you have nothing that's workable.

And then you sit down and say, okay, now what we're going to do, we're going to control your purse-strings so that you then have to knuckle under to the fiscal imperatives that we're now going to dictate to you.

But these people have no way of knowing what the plan is. They have no way of understanding where we're headed. There was no plan, is the problem. It was this ideologically, fiscally driven, knee-jerk reaction that . . . I understand the fiscal imperatives, but there was no plan. And we ended up with a situation of being rushed into something.

And so the first thing, when the fiscal realities then hit home to these little districts, all of a sudden the Melfort area — the North Central District — ended up with, what do we do with a provincial regional institution? How do we cope as a little health district with a regional provincial institution? And I'm talking about Parkland Regional Care home. Well the government said it might be ours right now but we're going to give it to you.

Well thanks a lot. Because the people are there, the institution physically is there, but it didn't just provide a service to the community of Melfort and the immediate district; it provided and had the vision for providing a service to all of the people of the north-east. And so it had special funding. It had special consideration. It had special programing that dealt with those type of people that were not designed to be dealt with in the normal 1, 2, 3, 4 level care home. That's the kind of situation that we had.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's really important that I give that information to you, because I understand that you need to understand the fundamental backdrop that was necessary and why this government has made the kinds of mistakes that they have.

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

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, with leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the members of this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce some guests in your gallery this afternoon. Of course there is my wife Beverley, who has recently returned home from Ottawa and the Canadian Association of Health Care Auxiliaries' conference, as well as attending the CHA, the Canadian Healthcare Association's conference in Ottawa.

With her today in our gallery is some out-of-country guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that of Mr. Bob Damurrell and Mrs. June Morris. These folks are on holidays from London, England and doing a tour of Canada over the past couple of days and the next few days. They flew into Canada, into Toronto, and enjoyed the sights down there of Niagara Falls and arrived in Regina last night.

From Regina, Mr. Speaker, they'll be going to Calgary and then on to Vancouver. From there, they're going to New Zealand as well as Australia to where Mr. Damurrell was born and raised at, and from there, they're going to continue on to Singapore before they return back home to the daily grind.

So I'd ask all members to welcome my wife back to Saskatchewan and these folks into Canada.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTIONS

Extended Hours (continued)

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To recap the point, just to get back into the logic of it, the reason that I'm having so much objection to the motion on the floor is because of the problems that I see that have happened in the past and affecting my constituency when you start unduly hastening the due process of legislation and you expect people to make decisions under the ridiculous stresses of 12- and 14-hour days or from an ideological point of view instead of a logical one.

Mr. Speaker, as the communities went out, I remember the mayor of Melfort as one member of a key group that was dealing in negotiating about what the boundaries for the health district should be. He said to the committee and to the community that he's never worked on anything so hard in his life.

And I know that people from Tisdale, which is another community that is now in my constituency as well, worked equally hard from their perspective. Because they knew that there was going to be changes dictated from Regina, and they were very, very fearful that if they didn't work extremely hard to protect what they had spent years and years and generations to build up, it was going to be taken from them systematically one step at a time by a government whose only imperative was balancing the budget.

And so they worked very hard, and at many times the work that they did created difficulties between the communities. Because if you're competing for the same base of citizens that you're trying to draw to your area, very often the debate and the discussion gets very competitive and very difficult. And so animosities and wounds were created that I believe, Mr. Speaker, are going to take a number of years to heal because of the nature of the pressure that this government put on local people because they had no vision except balancing the books.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the first thing that happened is that local district health board was forced to look at their new budget. And the reason it became increasingly difficult for them is they had a relatively . . . because of this competition and because of the carving out of districts, they ended up with a district of between 12 and 13,000 people, smaller than probably what is really needed in order to do a good job of delivering services for the people.

And what's so particularly disturbing is that in the natural evolution of things, the Melfort health community had come to provide services to that whole north-east region, and many people from that whole area came for particular services to that region.

We had a surgeon in Melfort by the name of Dr. Ernie Smith who was of particular . . . Ernie Fuller, I stand corrected. Dr. Fuller was particularly well qualified in the work he was doing. He was an outstanding surgeon to the point . . . is that he took his people on a seminar at the University Hospital in Saskatoon where they were looking at the newest techniques in laparoscopic surgery. And they were bragging about how new and how wonderful it was for these procedures to happen in the University Hospital in Saskatoon. And when they said to Dr. Fuller, when do you think you'll be able to implement that in your clinic, he said, we've been doing it for over a year already.

They were doing laparoscopic surgery in Melfort, Mr. Speaker, before they were in the University Hospital in Saskatoon. That's the quality of this man's capabilities.

And so we had something special. We had radiology; we had urology; we had the features that gave a real regional centre to the Melfort community, not only for our community, but for the north-east. We had Parkland care home that was not only for the people that had particularly difficult situations of dementia and Alzheimer's and advanced brain damage because of accidents, to the people of Melfort, they provided that service to the people of the whole north-east.

And suddenly then the government dictates that, in this dog-eat-dog world of competition, the North Central Health District has now got to absorb all those services and find ways to fund them. And instead of the regional hospital having regional funding because it was a regional hospital — because it was a provincial institution — they said, sorry, this is now part of your responsibility.

But they didn't just do it to Melfort, Mr. Speaker. They did it to the four regional hospitals in this province, all four of which had that regional responsibility and all four of which are now having a great deal of difficulty in meeting the commitments and the needs of the people of their region because funding is no longer recognized for that kind of work.

I mean the same thing exactly — the government pulled out from with the geriatric assessment unit in Moose Jaw. The same kind of reality for those people occurred, and when the sisters had done it in good faith.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, that kind of competition has been

totally destructive. We've ended up with situations where people have had no way to turn except the way the government was going to dictate by their fiscal imperative.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what happened in one of the very first decisions of the appointed health board, was to close 30 beds at the Parkland Regional Care Home — 30 beds, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 25 per cent of the bed allocation. And I remember that when that happened how upset the community was.

I can remember the picket lines in front of the former MLA for Melfort, the Hon. Carol Carson's, office. I remember by the fact that she did not stand up for the people that she represented, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I remember how upset people were, and they remembered what happened. They remembered, Mr. Speaker, because I think that it was a major factor in my election in 1995, that an incumbent cabinet minister went down to large defeat, and it was largely over the fact that what had happened in inordinate haste because of health care in my community.

(1545)

Mr. Speaker, we now try to bumble our way through this whole health care issue to try to find what's going to go on and where our solutions are. Now we hear again, because of further reductions of funding in our health district, that the local health board is now again faced with the need to reduce the number of long-term care beds by another 30. So we've gone so that we have actually reduced our component over the . . . since health care "reform" in this province. We are losing 60 long-term beds in Melfort. And, Mr. Speaker, we do not have any fewer seniors that need caring for.

One of the great eye-openers for me, Mr. Speaker, in this whole process of campaigning and seeking election, is the experience of going out and meeting people. Mr. Speaker, the election, as you know, was in June last year but I certainly was one of the people that started campaigning much earlier than that. And my first experience in this last election, the campaigning, happened in November . . . I'm sorry, in January and February. My nomination was in January and I started campaigning shortly after that.

And there was a lot of snow on the ground, and I went out into some of the rural constituency areas. And what surprised me immensely, you expected to see farm families living in rural Saskatchewan, and you expected that these people would have tractors and dozers and snowblowers and four-wheel drive trucks if you like, to make sure that they were able to get out if something happened as an emergency to their family. You saw a lot of that, that's true.

But it struck me as really shaking when I went to one farm home that had a driveway that was hard to get into. There was a little bit of manual shovel work that had been done up around the house. There was smoke coming out of the chimney from a wood stove obviously, and it sort of . . . one of those nice, little picturesque things where there was improved maples and trees and a few yards and everything was painted and looked nice and tidy and neat.

And I went up to that home and I knocked on the door, and an elderly gentleman came to the door and welcomed me in and asked if I'd have a cup of tea with him. And he and his wife were living there all alone, in the middle of nowhere, with a very limited ability to get out if anything happened. They had a telephone.

And so, in the conversation we had, Mr. Speaker, I asked him, how do you stay out here? What would happen if there is an emergency? What would happen if there's a storm? How will you clean your driveway? How would you get out if you needed to get to Melfort for medical attention? And he said, we simply couldn't — I would have to phone and if I'm lucky my neighbour, who lives two and a half miles away, will come and start his tractor and open the road for me, Mr. Speaker.

Well that struck me as a kind of a serious situation. And so, Mr. Speaker, I asked him, I said, where would you like to be? And he said, well my wife and I had planned, we had planned for a number of years, that we would now, when we knew we couldn't take care of ourselves, we would go to Melfort and we would live there so that we could be looked after. But, he said, Mr. Speaker, because of the closure of the beds, we think that we might as well stay right here because we're afraid there might not be a place for us. There might not be a place for us, Mr. Speaker.

And that was weighing as heavily on their head and their mind as if they had been told that they had to leave the situation they were in. They were afraid about what was going to happen, not today but in the future.

And so the impact this has not only on the fact that people do no longer have a place to live — of course they do — but they're worried about what happens when their situation changes so they can no longer be looked after. And I said, oh but goodness, the government talks so bravely about their home care and all the rest of it. And he said to me, he said, the road is just as tough driving in the other way of the driveway than it is for me to come out. The nurses and the home care workers that try to come around here have a very difficult time. We're too far from town, we do not get regular service, and it's extremely expensive and costly so we don't like to bother them.

Now I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but my mother doesn't like to bother people. She may need help but she doesn't like . . . she's fine, thank you very much. I don't need your help; I'm fine. They're very proud, independent people, and they're very kind and considerate and they do not want to bother people, Mr. Speaker, because they think they're just fine.

And you know and I know that in many instances they're not just fine. They're afraid of what's happening and they're afraid of where they're going to be if something does happen. And they quietly, quietly stay at home, day in and day out, long hours. They don't sleep much. They have all of this weighing on their mind and the time is long and the time is slow, and they have nothing much more to think about than worrying what's going to happen to them if their health deteriorates or the situation changes.

And we now, by rushing through decisions, by dealing with decisions without due care and deliberation, by rushing things now because it's expedient for us, by jamming up a 10 or 12 hour day, Mr. Speaker, we end up condemning people like this to waiting slowly, minute by minute, hour after hour, and worry. And that is simply unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

And that is one of the fundamental reasons why I have so much difficulty with the fact that this government seems hell-bent to rush through this kind of stuff by making us put in this time in a rush. I would rather stay here till July and debate these issues properly than to rush through stuff if it means that it's going to end up being that people like this are going to have to sit alone and worry.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of situations that we have. We need to deal with these issues properly and effectively, and we have to realize that not all the business of this House happens within the 1:30 to 5 o'clock or the 1:30 to 10:30 time frame. A lot of the business of what ultimately is decided on the floor of this House is time that's taken to think and reflect and plan and research and talk and, foremost, listen to the people out there that we serve.

And that's where this government has failed. This is where this government is now in an inappropriate situation by trying to just get the job done in a short time frame. The decisions we make here, we have to make after very carefully thinking through everything that we do — taking the time to research, taking the time to listen, taking the time to contact the people — the decisions of which we're going to have people live with for a long, long time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors across this province are worried about what we are doing here. They're worried about what this government is doing. And we are going to debate the issues. We certainly will, Mr. Speaker. But we're not going to debate these issues 14 hours a day for two or three days until we physically drop to the ground and our minds no longer work because this government is jamming these hours.

We're not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to take the time to thoughtfully, carefully consider the issues. Not like this government has done, about ramming things in front of people's faces. Because we know that we not only represent the one-third of the people that these people have representing them, that have voted for them, we represent the two-thirds of the people that want nothing to do with this government. And that's who we're going to stand up for. Even though we're few, we speak for many, Mr. Speaker. And you know that that's right.

Mr. Speaker, the other people that are concerned are the people who are families of these seniors. I know in my community that there are many, many people who are living at home, who are senior, who are in increasingly difficult situations because of their health, and who have family, not necessarily right in the community.

The government is right when they say that the world is changing. It used to be that families stayed very close to home.

Where mom and dad homesteaded or where they had their family business in a small community, in many, many cases the children did not live that far from home. They became part of the family business. They became part of the family farm. They married neighbours' sons and daughters and they stayed near to home. And so the image of the nuclear family or the family of that era was much tighter and closer geographically than it is today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Today we have in many instances a whole changing reality for a whole number of reasons. People are living longer, so our parents are living to an older age. And the children of these people by and large have spread much further, not only through Saskatchewan or Canada, but the world, looking for opportunities and pursuing careers that they now had. That's the one major change that has happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The second thing that has happened is, it used to be that it was rare that there were two working people in a family's relationship. They were all working but not in professional jobs or careers. Very often the traditional model of family was the husband was out doing the job away from home and the wife was at home doing the job at home. And so they both had jobs to do for the family, but one was different than the other and one of the jobs was centred at the home.

Today that's largely not true. It's necessary, both because of careers and of the changing atmosphere of job opportunities, that people are looking outside for jobs, and so both couples are working. And so we see the situation in many instances where these families are looking at their parent or parents in increasing age and decreasing health and they are physically unable to provide the kind of physical support that they used to be able to do.

I remember a neighbour of ours on the farm, that when they took over the farm, they built a new house and their parents lived in a smaller house, the original house, just across the farmyard. And it was an easy matter for them to check one or two or three times a day, to go and see how their parents were across the farmyard.

The mother and the father, the grandmother and grandfather, you know, tended to their house, tended to a small garden, watched the flowers, played with the grandchildren. It was a wonderful type of situation. But that no longer exists, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's no longer the world of today.

But people still love their parents. They're still concerned about their grandparents, and they're still worried about who's going to look after them. And so we in our wisdom have said, you've got to look after yourself, and what we'll do is we'll come around with a nice meal for you in a styrofoam box, that's been prepared three or four hours earlier and rides around in the back seat of a car of a bunch of community volunteers to do the meals on wheels, and this is what you're going to get your meal for the day on now, thank you very much.

And so all of a sudden everybody, all of these people who for their whole lives have been used to preparing and eating home-cooked meals, have now got take-out food that's sent to

them from an institution. Wonderful way that we're looking after our seniors, isn't it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the reason that we've ended up doing this, we end up then with a nurse that comes around once a week and does the high blood pressure. We end up with someone that comes around and cuts the grass and paints the fence every now and again because it's a job. There is no love, there is no community attachment, there is no personal relationship here any longer. And people then say . . . the minister gets up in this House day after day and say they're going to have a very good home.

Well thank you very much, Mr. Minister, but your definition of a very good home and a comfortable and suitable place to live is a little different than my definition, Mr. Speaker. Because it may meet the definitions under the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) but it doesn't meet the definitions of home under what I consider the dignity and respect that our seniors are deserved of.

And the problem that we have, Mr. Speaker, is we've rushed again and we've ended up with no choices and no solutions because we wouldn't talk and listen; we wouldn't even engage in the possibility that there may be other creative solutions for providing proper homes for these people. The only way we've thought of this is it had to be some institutionalized, union-based institution where people are treated as numbers instead of as people.

(1600)

No one sat down and dealt with the community organizations and said, is there any vision that could be done more effectively, more cheaply, more cost-effective, but also more humanely and would create an atmosphere of home and an environment of friendship for these people. It wasn't done.

And so we're ended up into this situation where now not only the seniors are afraid of what their future holds for them, their families have the same fear of what the future holds for their parents. And there is absolutely no ability, no process, no thought about how we can develop alternatives that will make this happen a lot more humanely.

And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the result of what happens when we sit here and say, it's now time to get out of this legislature; in order to get "done," we have to meet ten and a half hours a day.

I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our job isn't to get done here. Our job is to represent the people well, to listen to them and to provide creative solutions and alternatives that we just absolutely have to have if we're going to move this province humanely into the 21st century. We can do things differently. We do not have to just follow the fiscal imperatives that have occurred, because they have not worked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at what's happened to health care in my community, and I think that the cut-backs and the hurts and the hardships must have at least resulted in substantial savings. And you know what? When I look at the public

accounts numbers, health is receiving roughly the same one and a half billion dollars a year that's it's been receiving for the last number of years.

There is no savings that we're incurring. All we're doing is re-jigging things. We're moving it from here to there, and there to here, and we're trying to feel our way through a process. And we're spending more money on the process of change and the process of experimentation and the process of ideology, than we are on the actual people that need the service. Because we're following an ideological vein and we're not taking the time to properly consider all of the alternatives.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's the reality we have, in my mind, and that's the concern that I have for the seniors and the issues that confront them in my constituency and this province.

But health care has not only failed the seniors of this province, it's also failed the people that work as front-line workers in the health care profession.

Mr. Speaker, I recall not very long ago, where my wife needed surgery, and I went in with her to the hospital when she was having this surgery. And I sat with her after her surgery, and I sat in a ward where there was too few nurses. The nurses that were there were extremely conscientious and extremely mindful of their responsibilities, but they were asked to do the physically impossible tasks of providing the care that was needed for these patients.

They were asked to have a great number of people on their ward. They were asked to deal with these people's health situations. And it was physically impossible for them to do it with any kind of time and any kind of compassion, with any kind of care. And what happened is that they were worn out at the end of the day.

And, Mr. Speaker, it strikes me, it strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that what was happening is that there was just ideological . . . again cut-backs. And you know what happens when cut-backs occur in the union shop. Well bumping starts happening. And they say, oh nobody loses their jobs. Well of course they do. The most protected of course retain theirs.

And so we ended up in a situation in this hospital where most of the new graduate nurses, the people that were the youngest, the freshest, the most able to put up with these kind of extended hours, were all the people that had lost their jobs. They had been bumped down the system by the people that were more senior to them. And so you ended up in a situation where the people that were providing the actual front-line care were people of a more advanced age. They had been supervisors and managers. And so now they were asked to do these heavy, heavy ward duties, and it was wearing them out.

The other thing that happened is, because of the cut-backs and because of the rushing, there was also a very much increased workload and injury factor that was occurring. And so what was happening, I suspect, is that there was much more time off for injury, for hurt backs and pulled muscles. And so substitutions had to come in. The people that were now on leave were still

being paid because of the nature of the contract and the responsibilities, so that the whole process ended up costing as much or more than if the wards had been staffed appropriately in the first instance. And so where's the savings?

Well obviously there is no savings. The Department of Health's budget will show you year after year there are no savings. It's just money that's misspent, money that's wasted, because this government has had no plan for health care from the very beginning. And, Mr. Speaker, it's because you've rushed through things too quickly without proper process and consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the other people of course that fit into this are employees, the front-line employees who aren't necessarily the professional health care providers. And I'm talking about the people that have to provide the physical support for the facility. And so we have people that, instead of now having to push a mop down a mile of corridor, were being told they got to push it down two miles of corridor. That is what was happening, and the reason they were being told that is because they now had two managers to tell them to do that so they could justify their existence over the process.

And again what's happened in these shut-downs is, nobody is remembering the employees. Nobody is giving consideration to the people that are involved in the system. And the process of top-down direction in health care does not lend itself to listening from the ground up. I mean if the direction from the funding comes from Regina and the Department of Health and Mr. Duane Adams, and he says, this is what you shall do and this is how you shall fund your money and it'll come through this pool or this stream and you can transfer one way but not the other way, and those are the rules, people — this is all you've got. There is no more — then what happens? The district health board says, well what are we going to do? The CEO (chief executive officer) says to his people, what are we going to do? And they make a decision, and down it goes.

And the result is lay-offs of service and people falling through the cracks of an ill-thought-out process that we are only now fully beginning to comprehend the magnitude of, as we have closure and closure, beds cut back after beds cut back, at a time when we have an increasingly ageing population. And it's totally inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, because we don't know what's going on. You know, my colleague certainly says, we've got the money to spend \$70 million on a computer system. We've got the money for that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we get wrapped up into this technological world, and we begin to actually believe that it saves us money. We think that, and we believe it. And I will challenge anyone in a business who 10 years ago was operating that business without a computer, I will challenge anyone in a business, including one like my own — who has said they used to do their booking systems and the functions that they now believe the computer is saving them so much time over — I will challenge them to show me how much actual time and money this computer system is saving them.

And I will challenge this government to explain to us how a

\$70 million computer system is going to make health care better in this province, Mr. Speaker. I understand it will do this and that. It will transfer this and that. And what we end up doing is having way more information that travels faster between places and takes way more people to assimilate and understand. And health care does not get any better. The bureaucracy gets bigger. The administration gets bigger, and the system goes missing with a bunch of things that we used to do much better with common sense, on the ground, local decision-making processes that happened all along.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible for me to say seriously enough about what the ramifications have been to health care in my community and my district and into rural Saskatchewan. But it's also happened in urban Saskatchewan.

We end up with the situation where we have been tabling through the 67-or-whatever-odd days that this legislature has been sitting, petitions from across this province of people who are saying your decision to close the Plains Health Centre is absolutely unconscionable.

We will table over the course of this sitting over 70,000 signatures of people that say you're wrong. And when I say that we're speaking for the two-thirds of the people that didn't support this government, I think that you know that that is a serious commitment, because we have 70,000 people that have signed petitions to say, stop what you're doing, rethink the process of why you're closing the Plains Health Centre.

And so it's not just urban Saskatchewan that's suffering under the fact that this government has never had a plan thought out for health care; who totally ignored a very well-thought-out Murray Commission report that at least could have been a fundamental starting point for serious discussion and planning for the people of this province. No, we couldn't do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We had to move on with some ideology out of Ontario or somewhere else.

Mr. Speaker, health care is a very, very serious concern for people. Over the last few months and weeks I have met an increasing number of people who serve to me as inspiration and examples of why we just must do better in our health care.

Mr. Speaker, I was in a small community in our constituency last summer. And I walked past this house, and it had a caragana hedge in the front that was grown up and overgrown and looking pretty wild. The house was in obvious disrepair with plastic . . . It was a house with a . . . older home with a veranda. Some of the windows in the veranda were broken and there was plastic stapled over top of these missing window panes. The grass was grown up and there were dandelions everywhere. And it looked to me when I was walking by on the sidewalk that this house was abandoned, that it was condemned.

But I thought, well I better stop in if I'm going door to door anyway and see if anyone's home. I knocked on the front door and a lady's voice from inside invited me in. And here was an elderly lady sitting in a large armchair in the middle of a living-room, and on her side she had a little coffee table and she

had a remote control for her television there. She had a telephone. She had a glass of water, and she had a tray of pills, of medication. And she was sitting in a chair crocheting something or other, and I went in to visit her. And she said, please come in. She said, I can't get up very easily; would you mind coming in? And so I did, and we started having a conversation.

And we talked about, was she alone, and did . . . was her husband around or did she have children in the community? And she told me that she was all alone. Her husband had predeceased her a number of years earlier. Her one son was working in the oilfields in Alberta, and she was alone in this small community — all alone. And she wasn't able easily to get up. In front of her was a walker that she used to get around her home.

And this was not in the city of Melfort or the community of Tisdale that are major communities, this was in a small, rural hamlet, and she was there all alone. And I said to her, what are you going to do if something happens to you; how is your health? And she said, well I will phone my neighbour and if he's home, he will come and help me. And I said, what do you mean, if he's home?

And she said, well he has a job from 9 till 5 or 8 till 4 or whatever, every day, Monday to Friday — this individual who she counted on helping her in an emergency was at work. I said, well what happens if something happens during work hours? She said, well I leave it to God.

So here she was sitting all alone, pretty well isolated, and she was willing to endure that. I said, where would you like to go? She said, I'm here; God will look after me. Well God better because this government surely won't.

That's the reality of these people's homelessness and helplessness. And I know they're not out in the street, I know they're not living on a bed on a sidewalk. They are in these situations, and this government does not seem to recognize what a great deal of fear that puts on people.

Mr. Speaker, two weekends ago when I was home in my constituency, a lady phoned me and said, I need you to meet my neighbour in Caskey Place, which is a home in Melfort, and this lady lives independent and she is not able yet to be seriously enough considered and classified to be able to move into Nirvana or one of the long-term care homes.

(1615)

And you know what's happened, Mr. Speaker, because you're cutting the beds on the long-term care facilities, what they're doing is changing the classification requirements for entry to these homes. And so the people that are now entering these homes are more seriously and more seriously in need when they're able to meet the qualifications. This woman was in a situation where she was virtually restricted to her room because of a lot of health complications that she had, and she knows she has no hope of getting into Nirvana, particularly now, because the community has to withdraw 30 beds.

And I know that the minister has said, well we're not throwing anybody out — I know that. But what happens, what happens when you draw 30 beds from the available pool of beds for long-term care?

It means people like this lady, who are waiting for one of those spots, are going to have to wait even longer. Because the reality is it's going to take from 12 to 20 months for 30 people to pass away in these beds so that we just get down to where the minister's new dictate about the quota is going to be. And that is how long people are going to have to wait before any new people can come unless there is an extreme emergency. And the people that are there know that and that fear sits on their head and in their minds every single day, Mr. Speaker. That's what they're facing.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very troubling thing when a person reflects on the great deal of pride that this province always had about the way we treated each other and particularly the way we treated the seniors of this province.

Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that two-thirds of the people are asking us as the opposition to represent them and to say to this government, take the time to think out the ramifications of your decisions properly. The solution is not in trying to get out of this House in a hurry. The solution is in trying to work together without this ideological framework that is forcing us to make these kind of ill-thought-out decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I know of other issues that are particularly important to me and my constituency and I think in rural Saskatchewan as well. And it's part of the concern I have for what we're being asked to do in terms of 14-hour days for discussion of the issues. And I'll refer specifically to the government's proposal for a 911 system in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when we first had 911 on television we looked at the whole thing that 911 could be to people. Everyone watched the show *911* and perhaps that was both a blessing and a curse, because what we could do is, we could see what technology and emergency services could be. And granted, in the initial instances these services were based out of the Los Angeles County perhaps, and it was idealized by television. That's true.

But everyone in the province came to understand that there was real merit in having a 911 system for emergency responses. And so initially the first 911 systems were located in the larger centres, in Saskatoon and Regina and, Mr. Speaker, I don't fault that because it makes sense to start somewhere.

And so when that was occurring everyone watched and looked with a great deal of anticipation to the day when a 911 system could be made available all across the province. And so, Mr. Speaker, I certainly was one person, when I was chairing the chamber of commerce in Melfort, that felt that we could take a role as rural communities to facilitate the implementation of a 911 system throughout north-east Saskatchewan at the time.

And so the chamber of commerce acted as a facilitator and invited municipalities, towns and villages, fire departments, ambulance associations, health care providers — anyone we

could think of that would be remotely interested in the various aspects of 911 from the whole north-east — to come to a meeting to discuss the whole issue of the implication of a 911 system.

And we invited a gentleman from Swift Current who is very implemental about working on a 911 system in the south-west as well, to come and speak to us. And, Mr. Speaker, to indicate how important this was to the people in the north-east, every single municipal jurisdiction in that whole north-east corner came to that initial meeting. Now, Mr. Speaker, that tells me something, when there's that much interest in a topic that every single municipal jurisdiction will come to a meeting, about how important it is to them.

And, Mr. Speaker, they said that they could think of no reason why there could not be a fully enhanced 911 system developed for the north-east. Because at that time, the only logical argument that was an impediment to a fully implemented system was technology. And with the digital telephone system that was at that time spreading across Saskatchewan, that physical, technological impediment was removed. And now it was going to be physically possible to link all these systems to an enhanced 911 system.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we started working on the project. All of a sudden the government, and particularly the then minister of Municipal Affairs, the Hon. Carol Carson again, of course at least read the minutes of the chamber of commerce meetings and thought, oh-oh, these people are on to something; I better jump on the bandwagon.

But again, because there wasn't the time to consult and to think through the process and to listen to what the people really wanted, they then, before the last election in '95, made the commitment that they were going to have a 911 system for all of Saskatchewan. But they never did say what kind of a system it was going to be. They just jumped on the bandwagon about what was obviously a good idea, again without thinking any of this through and without dealing with proper consultation.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have in front of us on the floor of this legislature now, a proposed Bill as to the solution the government proposes. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have acknowledged in our discussion, in our work, that there have been a good number of very positive things that have occurred in terms of direction the government's going. And we concur with them and support those positive things.

But again, as in health care, the government has simply not thought through the whole process. And now we're being asked to consider this legislation in these ridiculous hours and try to get someone to understand why this system is flawed fundamentally and why what's being proposed is simply not going to again meet the needs of the people that we represent. And again we're repeating the same flaw.

And the reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're so adamant that this Bill is flawed, is because what we've ended up doing is ending up with a placebo for the people out there. We've taken, over the last four years, a situation where people like I've outlined,

are living out in rural communities, snow bound, alone, with a telephone at their side . . . that's true.

I showed you the example of the lady living in a small community that has a telephone at their side, that's true. And we now are going to do the ultimate disservice to these people in that we're going to fool them into thinking that while on the one hand we've taken all this health care away from them; we've taken away the ability of the health care in the region to respond to their needs by having proper and decent, humane, comfortable places for them to live and call home . . . and not just a sterile institution; we've taken that away from them and said, now you're going to stay at home.

And we make them think that they should end up with a fast food, styrofoam-packed lunch and that's supposed to take care of their nutritional needs. We send around a nurse and a janitor every now and then to help them with their home and their medical needs. And we have them alone with the telephone in their hand. And now we're going to propose the ultimate disservice to them because we're going to tell them that we have given them a 911 emergency system.

And these people, who have had very little to do over the last while because they're homebound, have watched the same television programs that you and I have. And their hearts leap with joy when they think they now have a 911 system like they've seen on television.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is not anywhere close to what this government intends to offer. They're going to call it 911, and they're going to allow people to think that they truly have the 911 system that they believe is what 911 means. Where if they phone there's someone on the other end of the line who can talk to them and can counsel them about the emergency that they're experiencing. They believe that while that person is talking to them, they're dispatching a helicopter or trucks or ambulances or paramedic units or whatever, and as that's happening they know where the most close unit is to their physical location. They believe all of that is going to happen when they dial 911.

And they are being duped — duped, Mr. Deputy Speaker — into thinking that they are going to have this kind of a service.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the cruellest joke of all on these people in rural Saskatchewan, because you know and I know that that is absolutely not what's going to happen under the legislation that's before this House. And now this government is asking for us to sit ten and a half hours a day so that they can wear us down and make us deal with this legislation and force it on the people without the due process and the thoughtfulness that is needed. And that, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely a disservice and injustice to the people that we represent.

And so we need the time to be able to point out to this government, if they will listen, what's flawed in their system. We owe it to the two-thirds of the people that have not been mandated by this government. That's who we owe it to. We owe it to these constituents to point out our role as opposition is

as important as the role of government is in charting the course and the future of this province. It is our role to do that thoughtfully, with due process and time for consideration, time to point out to this government where we believe fundamentally their process is flawed. And we should not, Mr. Speaker, get into a rush in order to make this happen.

Mr. Speaker, I have attempted to show how the decisions of government are interrelated and how we run a real risk of doing fundamental long-term damage to the people we represent if we do not take the time to allow each of us, all 58 of us as legislators, to do the proper work we have to for research, for consultation, and for thoughtful approaches to legislation that this House has to deal with. I don't believe in any way we can do that by all of a sudden, after some magical time in the session, if it's at 60 days or 63 days . . . I hear people tell me, well it's traditional that at this time we go to extended hours.

Well if this tradition has served us so well, why are we experiencing all these problems in health care? Why are we in the mess that we are on all these issues if this tradition of ramming through everything at the end has served us so darn well? Why is that something that is a way that we have to ultimately and blindly follow into the future? What is wrong with this Assembly sitting a little longer?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've heard some interesting arguments from the tradition as to why this happens, as to the fact it's very, very costly. Well, Mr. Speaker, after 70 days I'm not going to get paid at all. So the costly day here is the first day, the day that we sit down and do the ceremonial things and we all get paid, and we accomplish absolutely nothing other than ceremony. That's the most expensive day. It would be logical that we disband that day if that's a day that we should get rid of. So that's a day that's expensive.

Mr. Speaker, I know my basic job as an MLA doesn't change after day 70. My job is to stand and represent the people in this province. So that isn't costing a darn cent more. I suspect the lighting bill costs something, and that'll change a little bit. Mr. Speaker, the library, the legislative staff, all the legislator staff, they're all going to get paid irregardless. The Clerk's office, your office, all of our offices are still going to get paid the same way. So what is the extra cost?

But I figured it out, Mr. Speaker. The extra cost is the pages. We are going to burden on the people of this province, the extra cost of the pages. And, Mr. Speaker, if that's the argument of why we should rush legislation is because we're overpaying the pages, I submit you should ask what we're paying them. Because it's nothing when it comes to the importance of what we have to face here.

The argument of how much it costs to run this place is ludicrous. It costs the same to run it irregardless if we're here or not. The only thing that changes is the cost of the pages. And if any member opposite is going to tell me that they're prepared to put in jeopardy the people of this province's health care, or 911, or any of the other issues because of the wages that you're paying to the pages, then I think you're on very dangerous ground because that would be the best money that we have ever

spent in this province in its entire history. So let's not forget about that argument.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

Mr. Gantfoer: — The point is well taken because the best money that we're paying on the pages is because they're at least here every day and they do the work that they're intended to, while the members of the Assembly take a great deal of latitude in terms of when they're here.

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues that we've attempted to bring before this legislature that this government will not deal with, irregardless of the fact that we sit longer hours or not. Mr. Speaker, for example, I want to talk about two further areas to illustrate what I mean.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that the government did when they came to office after 1991 or '92, is they decided that they had to pick the pockets of the people in Saskatchewan in order to balance the budget. And balance the budget they must. I agree with that.

And so instead of dealing with any of the ridiculous things that they had promised to spend money on, like their union friends, they went into our pockets. And one of the things that they did in going into our pockets, because they weren't bold enough to just raise taxes to the point we all bled, what they did is say, well let's start drawing money out of communities through vices.

And so we decided to get into the gambling business because, Mr. Speaker, the government knew that this was going to be one avenue that was going to be a golden calf for them, and it has turned out to be. I'm not sure what the last numbers are for the province in a fiscal year, but I understand that the gain is between 90 and \$110 million annually — \$100 million, Mr. Speaker. And that sounds like a lot of money, and it is, but it sounds like a lot more money when I relate it to my community.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure right now how many VLT (video lottery terminal) machines are in Melfort. I'm not at all sure. I'm not sure what the current number is in terms of how much money leaves the community of Melfort each and every year because of gambling. But *The Melfort Journal* a year or 18 months ago had done a study and they had learnt and had shown at that time that it was approaching a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, out of the community of Melfort alone.

Now Melfort is a great community and a growing community and a fairly prosperous community by and large. And it has over 6,000 people living there. But, Mr. Speaker, for a community of 6,000 people to have a million dollars net money leave that community each and every year to ching into the coffers of the government's money habit is unconscionable, Mr. Speaker.

And so what we end up having is a Melfort contributing a million dollars to the government's coffers. We have Gronlid

contributing several tens of thousands of dollars. We have Tisdale sending hundreds of thousands of dollars. We have Star City sending tens of thousands of dollars. We have Kinistino sending tens of thousands of dollars. All throughout my constituency in that whole district . . . the town of Nipawin, again, probably contributing something in the magnitude close to a million dollars. I shudder to guess how much money is coming out of that corner of rural Saskatchewan to feed the government's need and drive to have money.

Mr. Speaker, that was not a problem at all for this government to do, absolutely not a problem to take this money out of rural Saskatchewan.

And what's the ramifications of that, Mr. Speaker? The ramifications are pretty easy to see. There are people who habituate these places that I think may have a problem. But they're fortunate enough that they also have the financial wherewithal to afford that problem if you like.

But you know what? I don't know many people that can spend 2 or 3 or 4 or \$500 a day, in some instances, that are going to have the financial wherewithal to afford that problem for long. And so what happens? Someone who may have decent assets and wealth is going to have fewer assets and wealth sooner or later. And so that happens.

You have the situation where people who have only modest means get hooked into the trap of gambling and VLT addiction if you like, and so their modest means are now stretched. And so what happens is that instead of the pay cheque lasting for 35 days in the month, all of a sudden it only lasts 25 days and we have a period of five days at the end of the month when maybe the cupboard isn't as full as it used to be and maybe the two quart of milk or the two litre of milk isn't purchased as it should be for the family, because suddenly essential money is going into VLTs.

You have people who have turned to theft because of their addiction to the VLTs in communities. You have people who have virtually lost everything they've had because of these VLTs. And so it touches us all.

Even the people who have the wherewithal to have the money to spend into these VLTs are being touched by it because a million dollars is being removed from my community for this VLT addiction.

And where might it go otherwise? Where did it go otherwise? Well some of it went to the local service groups that held bingos and ran the small little operations where people got together, played five cards of bingo, spent \$5 or \$10 in an evening. And it was a social event and by and large the profits from that stayed in the community.

And so when I look in my community, I see things like ball diamonds. I see youth groups and organizations that were sponsored by the Lions Club and the Kinsmen Club and the Knights of Columbus and the hockey associations and all of those things that were supported by the benefits of the community bingos.

And so in an evening a person who is really into bingo big time, boy if they are on a real losing streak, they are out 10 or \$15. And it was a wonderful social evening while they visited and all these things went on. And probably out of that 10 or \$15, 70 or 75 per cent stayed right in my community. And so it became a social event. It became an entertainment event and it became a source of local revenue to be used by local people for local priorities and local projects. And that was all right.

But now what happened? Because we're pulling a million dollars out in VLTs, people don't have money to spend the 2 or \$300 on a VLT, or the roll of quarters or loonies or twonies, or whatever is going into these things now. And so the bingos are having a very difficult time. They're having a very difficult time in order to raise the funds through the bingo that they used to, because the money can't be used everywhere.

And so what's suffering is the Knights of Columbus and the Kinsmen Club and the Lions Club. And all the projects that they supported in our community are having a very difficult time. And that's the ramification of the government's policy on VLT. Because again they haven't thought it through. It was just rammed through ideologically without due process. And what's happened? Here's what we now see, is the ramification of this.

This opposition wants for this Assembly to consider some things that maybe rural Saskatchewan needs to progress and move forward. We wanted this Assembly to consider a regional telephone system . . . regional telephone districts for long-distance purposes. And I proposed a Bill to address those type of issues, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the fact it got first reading.

But I know and the Assembly knows that that's where it's going to be. Because we're in a hurry now to get out. We have to get all this work done because we can't possibly consider a good idea that anyone else might have. Because it's just fiscal or it's just because of ideology.

And I understand that it would cost money for SaskTel; I understand it would have money implications to SaskTel if this was implemented. And the point of the whole exercise was, is let's consider it and let's look at this type of a concept. We could say that it's difficult for people. We acknowledge that it's difficult for people across the road to phone each other. It's difficult to have 11 or 12 or 13 telephone exchanges in a constituency.

And what we've proposed is that if we want to have an add-on, an enhancement to the regional economic development authorities . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I recognize it would cost. The member opposite asked me how much . . . the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, asked me how much it would cost, and I will certainly get to that, Mr. Speaker, because I recognize it would cost money. I recognize, from the information we have received, if you were going to implement this system . . . and the only source of the replacement of the revenue that you're now taking from rural Saskatchewan again to implement this system, if that was the only source . . . and I understand the number approaches \$70 million globally if you look at that in the total context of the province; I understand

that.

So if you're going to replace that \$70 million with revenue from the subscribers, I recognize it would take something in the magnitude of 25 to 30 dollars in order to do that, per subscriber in those areas. Now that is probably not a viable solution in itself. I understand that.

So we have to come up with solutions that will mitigate this whole situation to some extent. Does SaskTel have to have a \$70 million annual profit? We should ask ourselves that question. Is it fair that you have no problem to take \$100 million out of rural Saskatchewan in gambling revenue, and you're taking \$70 million out of rural Saskatchewan in long-distance charges? When in the world is this government going to put something back? It has to go back. You can't just keep taking from rural Saskatchewan if you expect rural Saskatchewan to be able to sustain itself. It's just not possible.

And so what we have to do is we have to be able to consider alternatives to the status quo if we're going to be able to meet the challenges of the next century. And we can't do that if we're going to keep rushing and hastening our decisions on all the issues that are before us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague will undoubtedly speak more eloquently about issues of education, but I would like to touch briefly on them because I did spend six years as a member of the board of education in my community. And I do have at least passing knowledge about the issues of education. And I will tell you that through that time we spent a great deal of time with challenges that were in front of us — some of them totally unrelated to the government situation. I think that in the time we were treated fairly by government. Some of them were just things that happened in terms of demographics. In terms of the school division having to deal with a decline in enrolment, that was sort of a short-term thing, but certainly also a trend of what was happening to rural Saskatchewan.

And so I understand what it means to have fiscal imperatives that you have to meet. It's not unknown to rural people to realize they have to live within balanced budgets. School boards have been doing it for years, municipal budget people have been doing it for years, and it doesn't come as strange to us to have to do that.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I look at what's happening in the whole educational field with a great deal of concern, because again I think one of the problems that we've been experiencing is the fact that we don't think through solutions early enough.

I have to as well, in having said that I served on the school division, I also have to note with considerable credit to the government of a proposal that we had made as a joint community effort. And it was a joint community effort because it involved the Melfort urban school division, the Tiger Lily rural school division, and the city of Melfort in a joint project to approach the Department of Education, back before 1991, about a regional college in our area.

And the government of day . . . I recall we had met the then

minister of Education who said this was an impossibility; that there was absolutely no way on earth that there would ever be any likelihood, in a reasonable way, that it was going to be possible to deliver university education programs to a regional college in a place like Melfort, Saskatchewan.

Well we persisted, and we talked about this, and we met with people ongoingly over time. And I have to give this current government credit because on this issue they did listen to us, and they did take the time to look and try to build some creative alliances, if you like. And so I note with considerable satisfaction that there has been a great deal of progress made in our community of Melfort in terms of this whole initiative.

And I use this as an example of what positive things can happen when you take the time to listen and to think through and work with local people in a constructive way instead of an ideological way to make things happen. And today I think the Department of Education points to the Melfort situation where we now have first- and some second-year university classes being offered, that we're using facilities that were extra, if you like, by and large in the composite collegiate to deliver those services. And I do believe that it would show as an example of where the constructive, comprehensive kind of work that can happen will bear very, very good fruit.

And so it's not as if I would totally stay here and slam everything that this government does. I point with considerable satisfaction as one example where working together bears some dividends.

(1645)

Mr. Speaker, another area that is of critical concern to my constituency is the future of agriculture. And it is something that I think many people think is just sort of a homogeneous group of people and that the farming community is all the same.

It became a very obvious thing to me when I travelled around the large constituency leading up to the election how different the farm community was, even within my constituency. And I'm sure it's going to be an increasing source of amazement as you learn how the provincial scene changes very dramatically from the north-east to the south-west, from the East to the West, and from different soil zones and areas.

But no matter where you go, agriculture is the backbone of Saskatchewan. And we often get carried away by the great things that people say that's happening in the mining industry and the forestry and the lumber industry, and they are incredibly good things. But we can't forget that the backbone of this province is, and is likely to continue to be into the foreseeable, imaginable future, agriculture in one form or the other. It's either going to be agricultural as we've known it or agricultural in a changing world and with changing technology. But it's still going to be agriculture.

And within that broad definition, Mr. Speaker, there are a whole lot of different folks. You know, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, if you go back to communities in rural Saskatchewan, that you find all kinds of farmers. You find farmers that are very close to

the earth, that have almost a spiritual linkage with the soil and with the environment and with the animals that they raise. It's almost something mystical in nature that happens, and very often that they are the people that we think of when we think of agriculture.

Other times we think of the very highly mechanized farmers that have four large, four-wheel-drive tractors and four large air seeders and hired men, and it's like a corporate entity and a big business scenario. That, too, is agriculture.

And they're all businesses in one sense or the other, some more rooted in the soil and the tradition of the earth, and others more corporate in nature and attitude and responsibility. But they're all farmers, and they're all agriculture.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're the people that have been the backbone of our province, and they're the people that right now are undergoing incredible change. They know that their industry is changing, and the forces of competition and free market and worldwide situations of famine and drought and oversupply or under-supply of commodities are having incredible pressures on them.

Last night when I was watching television, I saw the effect of the downpour of rain in the community and the farming area around Kamsack, where an individual was interviewed on that program. And he said the field was just moving, that he had seeded. The water was like he had never seen. And in the downtown area where it showed pictures of vehicles going through two feet of water in that community.

Well when that happens, what does that do to the community? There are those that are not as nearly immediately affected by it. But the person standing out in his yard, looking across that field, knows what it means to him. They know what it's going to mean because the spring is late, and they know that what's going to happen is that they are going to face an insecure future.

And, Mr. Speaker, where are we, as government, for these people? What have we done in order to build them some sense of security and then some sense of a plan that we can offer to them to say, here is a disaster of God, of nature; and we need you to know that if you will work with us, we have a plan in place that will sustain you, that'll allow you to stay on your farm till next year.

And we've dabbled with things. There was a plan in place, as you know, Mr. Speaker, called GRIP (gross revenue insurance plan). And no one suggests that that was a perfect plan. But at least it was a plan. It was at least a beginning. And I know that there were many farmers who did a better job of farming GRIP than they did of farming their land. But there was also many, many times more than that of farmers that used that and needed it in the best interests of the plan; and used it because it was a protection for them in the eventuality of travesties of nature or travesties of price which were out of their control.

When you had a war between the Americans and Europeans and a price war, what did that person connected to the earth

have to do with that? His job was to grow his commodity and to try to be protected while politicians globally did their little political games.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we forget about what farmers mean to rural Saskatchewan. We forget that they are the core and the base on which our society and our province exists, Mr. Speaker. And we again are sitting here behind the illusion of the fact that now wheat is \$7 a bushel, the farmers are fine. Everything is all right. We have nothing to worry about.

Well I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, the only thing the farmers have going for them now is the fact that they've paid the highest prices that there's every been for fertilizer, for chemical, for fuel, and all the input costs that they're desperately trying to put into those fields. And they only get the \$7 a bushel or the \$6 a bushel if that crop is successfully put in the bin next fall.

And so they need to know that we would take the time to think out programs that would be there for them when they need them. And so they have an important aspect to our community, and we have to take the time to make sure that what happens is in their best interest because what's in their best interests is also in the best interests of everyone in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in our area there are a great deal of aboriginal people that live around the community, and I want to briefly say a few words about how they have impact on the lives of the community. I am very much touched by the fact that when I spent some time on the bishop's council, I had the privilege of meeting and beginning to know a gentleman by the name of Harry Lafond.

Harry Lafond is a respected chief of his people and has moved his people forward a great deal with service and vision and integrity. And he tried, at least a bit, to explain to me the richness of the culture of the native people and how much they have to offer us. And I really think that what we have really missed over the years is the fact that none of us, as the communities that we grew up in, have taken the time to properly listen to the native community. We haven't taken the time to appreciate the rich tradition that they have in their culture. We haven't taken the time, Mr. Speaker, to understand the depth and breadth of their spirituality.

We haven't taken the time because we again knew best. We decided a number of years ago at Confederation that it was better that we make little, white, European Christians out of these people than to let their natural beauty and culture come to the fore. And today we grapple with that problem, Mr. Speaker.

And it hurts me deeply when I listen to some of the rednecked rhetoric that goes on about discrimination and prejudice against these people because again, Mr. Speaker, we've missed the point. The point that I've been trying to make today is that we have to listen, and we have to take the time to understand what the real issues are for our people and our aboriginal people. And if we do that, we will have the ability to all be enriched, to all be enhanced, and all to have a better situation.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I raise that issue because I think it's

important to put it in a context of how we have to approach the whole challenge that we have of reconnecting ourselves to the real richness that the aboriginal community offers to our communities, offers to my community in Melfort, and to the whole of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that I have sufficiently demonstrated the reason why I have a fundamental problem with this motion. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly needs to take the time so that we can properly consider all of the ramifications of the issues before us. It means that we have to work, but it can't mean that we have to impose on ourselves superhuman hours of work so that any of the other work and all of the thought that we have to put into these issues are lost.

We are making a fundamental mistake, Mr. Speaker, if we think that we can accept the direction of this motion, which is going to force us into ten-and-a-half or twelve-and-a-half hour days and to pile on top of that our committee work, our research work, our discussion work, our planning and preparation work. And to say that, when you look at the number of Bills that we have to deal with yet, that they can be dealt with thoughtfully and properly just by compressing all the work into the shortest period of time with the most amount of hours, that we will do it properly in the best interests of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, I think is a huge error that we're making.

And I really, for one, do not care . . . I do not care, Mr. Speaker, if the precedent has been always to do this. I trust that I have demonstrated to you and to my colleagues today that, Mr. Speaker, that this has been, in my opinion, one of the faults that we've had, one of the failings that we as an Assembly have had in dealing with things too quickly, without due process and consideration.

And, Mr. Speaker, for the reasons that I've outlined, I cannot support this motion. And I would ask all members, irregardless of political partisanship or philosophical bent, to give due consideration to what we're asking all of ourselves to do.

I'm told that I should continue to raise one other issue that I have inadvertently overlooked. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will try real quickly to understand from my colleagues what it is.

Mr. Speaker, the one other issue of course avoids me for the moment. But I do recognize the challenge that was put before the hon. member of Post-Secondary Education some time ago, when he was asked to continue speaking on a topic, and some discussions were happening on the floor, and I sort of marvelled at his ability to do that. And I didn't realize that I should've been listening much more attentively because I was going to be asked to do it.

Mr. Speaker, it has occurred to me exactly what the issue is that I have neglected to make, and it's a very important issue. Mr. Speaker, one of the important things that when we talk about the needs of agriculture to be considered properly, we have to consider the fact that in our rural communities agri-business is now becoming an important add-on to what agriculture used to be in its isolation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm really particularly glad I thought of this, and I'm glad my colleagues pointed out the fact that I had inadvertently neglected to mention it in my speech because last night I had an opportunity to have a meeting with an individual that I had not seen in the agricultural business for almost 20 years. And, Mr. Speaker, this individual is now a very important individual in the agri-food business, and it was a great pleasure to see him because when I had last contacted and worked with this individual was when we worked together to establish Plains Poultry in Wynyard, Saskatchewan.

Plains Poultry was an interesting concept of how rural and urban people can work together to better agriculture. What it was, was a processing plant that was owned by a family in Wynyard, Saskatchewan, and I was in the poultry growing business at that time. And there were a number of people that I got to meet through my association with the business, and they were the KFC operators — Kentucky Fried Chicken.

And I was raising chickens, and they were selling chickens, and so we realized quite quickly that there was a very symbiotic relationship that had to occur between these two groups of people if anyone was going to succeed. So, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of being the first chairman and president of the company, Plains Poultry, that brought together these two groups who purchased the family processing business in Wynyard and who then together met the challenges of their industry.

And, Mr. Speaker, I use that as an example in terms of a reference of where I'm coming from when I say that agriculture is now evolving into a new relationship between producers and primary producers and the market-place.

And I know that one of the critical things that happened within that is that we have to do that more and more. And I point with a great deal of pride to a couple of businesses in my constituency that come to mind and I know in pointing them out that I seriously run the risk of omitting some, and I hope I will be forgiven. But I will point out, for example, Thomson Meats as an example of how relationships can come between agriculture and business for the betterment of all.

Here you had a small, family business that originated in Naicam and was able to build a meat processing and cutting business. They moved to Melfort because it was more central and offered more labour and more people to work with, and so the business started and grew. Rusty Thomson, the patriarch of the clan, if you like, had a million ideas of how he could further process meat products and added recipes for cold cuts and sausage and things of that nature that are quite famous, Mr. Speaker.

His son Lorne, who has ended up being the operational head of the company, has a lot of vision for the future. What he did was build a company and expand it so it was always growing and providing an outlet for Saskatchewan and world products of meat. And he had a vision that what you have to do if you really want to expand is you want to get into markets where there's thousands of people, millions of people, tens of millions of people, and he expanded into the Asian market.

And I was really pleased, Mr. Speaker, some weeks ago to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture on his efforts with the federal Minister of Agriculture and Mr. Thomson on their work of moving into the whole Asian market and to further enhance the opportunities that our companies have to value add agricultural products and to find market-places over there where they have huge difficulties in terms of meeting those markets. And so, Mr. Speaker, I know that that's a positive initiative that is going to bear fruit into the future.

(1700)

Mr. Speaker, another area of development that has occurred in the relatively near future . . . or in the recent past, has been the whole area around the lentil seed production. Mr. Speaker, there's two major organizations in my constituency that I know are doing an incredible job over the last two years of developing markets for lentils. They are Walker Seeds out of Brooksby and Naber Seed out of Star City.

Mr. Speaker, these two companies based on farm families in the area who recognized they not only could grow these products, they needed to find markets for them, have developed markets all over the world.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I note with a great deal of pride that these people are now marketing their product throughout the Americas — North and South America — who have product going into Africa and Europe, into the United States. And this has created an incredible advantage for our people in our area.

One of the impediments that they have that we have to recognize and look at, is we've got to make sure that we have the transportation system in place so that their needs can be met. A tremendous amount of transportation is involved to bring these products from the fields of the farmers in the constituency onto the trucks and into the processing plant where it's cleaned and further processed and then sent out to these international markets.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that one of the challenges this Assembly is going to have and into the future, is that these things have to be looked at in a spirit of cooperation rather than ramming things through.

Mr. Speaker, one of the further things that I know is important to people is the whole area in rural Saskatchewan of the importance of recreation. Mr. Speaker, we have to, as an Assembly, deal with some of the issues of recreation because, as the Minister of Economic Development has talked about in the past, this is a real area of opportunity and a real opportunity for people, not only in the service industries but people in the hospitality industry and the people in the cottage industries.

I recall in 1989 our family had the great pleasure of taking a family trip. It sort of reminds me of the Wally World thing — Chevy Chase goes to Wally World — because we packed the five of us . . . I should say the six of us because it was Carole and I, three daughters and a neutered poodle. And we packed ourselves into a trailer, and we headed for Disney World. And in that whole exercise, I guess that if you really wanted to

filibuster, if I could connect it enough on a long enough term, we would probably all enjoy the stories of this vacation.

But, Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make about this trip is that when we were coming through the Smoky Mountains we came to a place called Dollywood, and it was an interesting place because what it did, it really catered to a cottage industry mentality. And if anyone has been into that area, when you travel through the Smoky Mountains, you go from quarter section almost to quarter section. And you find a little stand along the road where people from the farm are marketing their product. But it wasn't just agricultural products, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sorry to say it also wasn't illicit alcohol because I would have been very interested in some of the squeezings from the hills.

But, Mr. Speaker, what it was, was quilts, for example. People would make quilts, and they would offer in a display in front of their home, quilts for sale. Down the road you would go and people would have vegetable garden produce for sale. Further down the road you had all other handicrafts, like carving — beautiful things like that, that people were making and using the income, for tourists to subsidize their farm operations. And quite often people took their primary farm products, if it was berries or things of that nature, and further processed them and made them into jams or jellies and things that they sold.

And there was a real sense of pride in that area. It was a unique area of the Americas that I remember very fondly because it was so based on fundamental skills that people had. It was based on their interest in fundamental things that they needed from their land, and their talents and their skills that allowed them to market them to the tourist industry.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there has been progress made and there's a real initiative for tourism. And I think, though, it's incumbent on us as a government to make sure we think through every opportunity we possibly can in order to enhance our opportunities for tourism.

And one of the things I point out as a positive that the government has done is that, for example, they've designated Highway 6, coming up, as the CanAm route. Well I happen to be sitting on the new CanAm route and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in my estimation, there are double — at least double — the number of American visitors come past my store each year since that CanAm route was designated as such.

Now I don't think it was a very costly thing that the government had to do. I'm sure that there was some cost in terms of signs; maybe some work that had to be done with the tourist groups along the way. But I'll bet you that it was a very low-cost idea that provided some very good returns to people all along this route. And I think that that's the kind of creative thinking that we have to do in order to build some of our inherent strengths in a positive way. And we have to take the time to think about it.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that rather than advertising for things that we know about in our province and our communities, for example the telephone things or whatever we do . . . and I don't

care how they much cost. If we're just sort of giving ourselves a feel-good advertising feeling by the family of Crown corporations, why instead aren't we taking the kind of money that we're spending on that, which provides very little return I suspect in terms of actual benefit to our Crowns, and why are we not developing enhanced marketing strategies for the American people so that they are further encouraged to see the very, very many advantages that we have in this province to offer to them.

Why aren't we taking a more proactive role with Europeans or the Asians? Why aren't we doing those kinds of things, Mr. Speaker? I think what we have to do . . . in fact I know what we have to do. We have to develop a new attitude in this Assembly that develops a mechanism where we can more responsibly, more cooperatively, more openly, discuss alternatives rather than just debate issues that the government brings forward.

I really believe, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province are demanding a new accountability. They're demanding a new approach to politics that we're just beginning to understand, all of us here, and that we have to understand. And if we don't, we don't at our peril, because I think the world is changing. I know Saskatchewan is changing. I know the way they look on us as legislators is changing, and not always for the better, Mr. Speaker, and I think we have to change that. There is a new way that we can approach politics, I believe, that allows for more open discussion. And I don't believe for one minute that it's going to be something that happens because we confront each other time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about the strengths that I see in Saskatchewan. I've talked about the things that I think are challenges for us. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to now touch on what I think is the greatest strength that we have of all and that is our people. Mr. Speaker, we talk about the inherent wealth and value of our natural resources. We talk about our forests and our land and the crops that we can grow on them. Mr. Speaker, we talk about the mines and the economic prosperity that we have. We talk about the GNP (gross national product) and we talk about all those things, but, Mr. Speaker, we too often forget the challenges of the real asset that we have, the real treasure that we hold in this province, and that's in our people.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken too often the course that deals with the technology. We've taken the course that deals with the GNP and the GDP (gross domestic product) and the per cost this and the ratio that, and we deal with all of those things and we get wrapped up into it. We think that these kinds of things are what makes life real and what makes the world turn.

But, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't, and far from it. Quite often what happens is that when we focus on those cold and hard numbers, we end up doing a disservice and a hurt to the people that truly are our wealth and our asset and our gold — the people.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to more regularly take the time to focus in this Assembly on the real gold that we hold — the real treasure that we have in this province — and that's our people, Mr. Speaker.

You know we talked about the seniors and how they're feeling. And some of them are doing well. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, they are. But the measure of society isn't how well that we treat the most well done or the most secure; it's how gentle and how caring and how responsive we are to the weakest of our number, not to the strongest.

And so we focus too much, very often, on the richest man in Saskatchewan, the most powerful man in Saskatchewan, the most influential woman in this province, and that is well and good. But the real strength of our society, the real test that we are going to be looked on one day, is how we deal . . . and how we focus on the weakest man and the weakest woman and the weakest child in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — And so when we face these issues, we have to listen to the people. We have to become more attuned to what they're really talking about. And we have to withdraw ourselves from this place and the advisers and the bureaucrats and the people that surround us and we have to focus on the true strengths that we all have, Mr. Speaker. The real strength . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I draw your attention to the clock.

The Speaker: — It now being past the hour of 5, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 o'clock a.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

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