EVENING SITTING

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

Mr. Thomson: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank members of the legislature for allowing me to introduce some guests who are joining us in the gallery before we get going here.

Tonight I am pleased to have, from south Regina, a group of Scouts who are joining us in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and you'll notice them here in their traditional Scout uniforms. They are here obviously to witness the proceedings of the Assembly tonight, and I note that they are accompanied by Brian and Kathy Black who are chaperoning them. I think that the Scouts are in for an interesting listen tonight to the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) Carlton who I know will be resuming his remarks shortly. I unfortunately will likely leave during those to go and meet with the Scout troop once they've had a chance to listen.

So my apologies to the member for P.A. Carlton that I won't hear the last of your remarks.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Procedural Matter

The Speaker: — Before proceeding, I wish to advise the House of a procedural matter.

The hon. member for Prince Albert Carlton, after 4:59 this afternoon in the course of his remarks on the debate of the motion in response to the Speech from the Throne, had indicated that he wished to move adjournment of debate. I wish to advise the House that the motion to adjourn debate was received in error by the Chair.

This being the fifth day of the debate of the motion for an address to His Honour, the House cannot adjourn without putting the question on the amendment to the main motion. However given the timing, the motion was moved by the hon. member for Prince Albert Carlton, was received in error by the Chair and then, the clock being what it was, at 5 o'clock, declared the recess.

So I wish to correct this error at the earliest possible moment — which is now — and to advise the House that the motion to adjourn debate was received in error and shall not be considered to be operative because there is a standing order under rule 14(3) which requires that the amendment would have to be voted on before we can proceed. And the House, without granting leave, cannot operate by ignoring the requirements of rule 14(3).

Therefore the motion will continue . . . excuse me, the debate will continue on the main motion moved by the hon. member for Swift Current, seconded by the hon. member for Saskatoon Southeast.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Wall, seconded by Ms. Lorje, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Kowalsky: — So thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank you for your ruling and I want to join with my colleague, the member from Regina South, in welcoming the Cub pack to the legislature . . .

An Hon. Member: — Scout troop.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Scout troop to the legislature. And I hope you make the member from Regina buy you some drinks after you're done.

Mr. Speaker, as I was making my remarks later this afternoon, I was noting that many of our people had gone . . . more members who had spoken before me were expounding on the theme of the government and the government's throne speech, and that is the theme of Investing in People.

And I was also making note of the fact that there were many times in the last two, three weeks as I've been in my home constituency or going to events, that the mood that was conveyed to me by citizens, constituents that I'd met with and talked with, in general, they were saying that they felt an air of optimism that has not been felt in this province for a long time. And I want to say that I also feel that myself.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to, before I went any further, to congratulate the member from Swift Current and the member from Saskatoon Southeast who were the first two to respond to His Honour's address. And I was impressed with what they had to say. And not only with what they had to say, but in the manner in which they said it. You can clearly tell, Mr. Speaker, that those two constituencies are very, very well represented by those members.

I was making some remarks with respect to the health system in general and with respect to the health system in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, and I was using some examples of what the health renewal system was doing for Saskatchewan and for people in my town of Prince Albert. I have a couple of more remarks that I want to make in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert Health Board, together with SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat), the government department of SIMAS, is investing in people in another way that does not cost more money, but in a way that will also pay great dividends. They have agreed to a protocol which will lead to more aboriginal employment in our health system. Under this new strategy, the Prince Albert Health Board has agreed to hire, first of all, the best people they can, but while doing so, to make a special effort to be certain that trained people in the aboriginal community are advised of job openings and of training opportunities in the system.

This is not exactly an affirmative action program because there is no quota system, Mr. Speaker. None of the parties wanted that. It is a positive agreement to avoid what is known as bureaucratic patronage, and to avoid missed opportunities due to poor communication or poor publicity of any job openings when they arise.

Well, Mr. Speaker, all in all the health system in Prince Albert, having gone through considerable changes over the last two years, is now better coordinated, it is better integrated and more modern than ever, ever before. Money is being spent where it is most needed and people are getting the care they need when they need it. And more and more people are taking responsibility for their own health and using preventative practices to stay healthy.

At this time I want to acknowledge a recent decision by the Saskatchewan college of physicians and surgeons. And that decision is to expand the scope of physician practice into alternative forms of health care. For several years many people have been experimenting with health care methodology other than that which is conventionally used by western medicine.

Many people, through self-education and experience, wanted to be able to use other treatments, but they also wanted to be able to consult with their own physicians while they did so. Chelation treatment is a case in point. Hundreds of Saskatchewan residents testify to having benefited from this treatment out of province and wanted to be able to receive the EDTA (ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid) chelation right here in Saskatchewan.

Now, thank you to the newly established protocol, this will be possible in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan college of physicians and surgeons, our Department of Health officials, and our Minister of Health deserve a strong commendation for leading the way — leading the way in this alternative medical practice.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, this is a milestone policy change. And I predict it will serve as a model for Canada and across the continent. And that particular model is that trained physicians will be able to provide alternative therapies and that they will be following established, recognized practices to develop even a healthier population than we have now, and all at an affordable price. On behalf of the many citizens of Saskatchewan then, Mr. Speaker, I once again congratulate and extend my gratitude to the Minister of Health and the college of physicians and surgeons.

This too, Mr. Speaker, is a new path — not a path made for us by someone else, but it is a new path being created by the people of Saskatchewan, and it is an investment in the people of Saskatchewan.

I want to turn now to the topic of education. Mr. Speaker, almost all new jobs being created in Saskatchewan now are in the information or in the technology areas. This implies that there are jobs for people who have an education or who are trained. And conversely, those who are not able to access education or training have a very difficult time providing for themselves and for their community.

I am very pleased that our government is staying in close contact with the education community and is responding positively to directions needed, as suggested by parents, as represented by school trustees, and as well as our professional educators as represented by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

Our K to 12 education system is a model for other provinces to follow. The path we are creating enjoys a broad base of support from the Saskatchewan public. Teachers and school boards are, and have been, very diligent in implementing modern curriculum. Much has been learned about teaching for common essential learnings, and much has been learned about diagnosing and prescribing programs for special needs students. And with parental involvement and dedication, we are finding that our students continue to graduate from our public schools with a very, very high standard.

With the new program supplied to the students with special needs, many students are now encouraged to come back to school to complete their education. This bodes well for our young people and for the province, and I commend those who work within the education system who, even when they were asked to do more and more, pitched in to help our province.

And I commend our Minister of Education for fighting for our teachers and not offloading our budgetary problems on their salaries as happened in other provinces. Madam Minister, you showed that our theme of Investing in People was lived up to for our youth, a clear distinction from the direction taken by the Tory governments of Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our post-secondary education system faces a tremendous challenge to meet the evolving needs of our workforce and our businesses and our service sector. And not only because of the ever-changing needs to respond to a changing economy, but also to be able to accommodate the withdrawal of federal Liberal government funding to post-secondary training.

I believe this to be wrong, Mr. Speaker. I believe that when our post-secondary training and education trains and educates people, it does so for the entire nation, not only for the province. In fact many of our Saskatchewan trained people end up filling important, strategic, responsible roles internationally as well as nationally. And I believe the federal government should be increasing their role in post-secondary education, not withdrawing from it.

(1915)

Now our province can provide some programs excellently and probably better than many other programs; for example, post-secondary training in areas like agriculture. However, we find it difficult to offer top-notch programs in all areas. We should be sharing our expertise with the provinces, and we should be sharing this across the nation, and it should be coordinated federally. Immense damage is being done to our nation with the feds pulling out of the post-secondary education system, not only in funding the system directly, but also funding it indirectly, Mr. Speaker. A withdrawal of some $24 million from the unemployment insurance program, now ridiculously called the employment insurance program — which as my colleague, the Minister of Health, relates is another Liberal cut-back, and he has had to cope with enough of the Liberal cut-backs in the health field.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that leaves — with the federal government pulling out of post-secondary education — that leaves it up to us to provide for post-secondary education. But I am pleased that our government will not just leave a gap, but will work with the education partners in Saskatchewan. We will work with businesses; we will work with educators in communities to develop a Saskatchewan training strategy. The throne speech mentions that we will be involving SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), we will be involving the regional colleges, we will be using innovative programs like JobStart and Future Skills.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we will also be continuing in the K to 12 area to expand our community schools. I found, Mr. Speaker, in my teaching career that there . . . before I went into politics, before I came to the legislature — that I thought that there were two great innovations in Saskatchewan in the '70s. One was the establishment of the regional community college system, the other were the community schools. They have lasted and they have passed the test of time. Mr. Speaker, it is the community schools and the regional community colleges that need to be emphasized into the future.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech has identified reducing child poverty as a high priority. Now that we have pulled together to achieve financial stability, I believe it is time to make adjustments so that all people in our communities benefit into the future — especially Saskatchewan children.

Saskatchewan's economy is doing well: our growth was the best in Canada last year; we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada; we've paid off 1.8 billion from our accumulated provincial debt; retail sales are up; housing starts are up; farm receipts are up; resource revenue is up.

Now the statistical indicators tell us that most of us are better off than we were five years ago and the prospects for the future look good. Now buoyed by this positive outlook it behoves us to take a look at what can we . . . what we can do collectively to help those who are most vulnerable — those who have benefited little from our recovery. And I speak of the children within poor families. Their future is not assured. Free trade, deregulation, global marketing, is leaving them with less, not more, Mr. Speaker.

As mentioned in the throne speech, the Conference of Catholic Bishops point out that almost one Canadian child in five lives in poverty in one of the richest countries in societies in world history. A damning indictment from the present socio-economic order. And it's a damning indictment because we have prided ourselves in developing ways where we can share our riches. But the mechanisms that we used in the past to implement the sharing are being eroded.

Canadian social programs in health, education, and welfare, used to be guaranteed by federal funding. But they have pulled out of the Canada Assistance Plan, they're pulling out of education, and they've reduced payments for health.

Now we have local casualties right in Prince Albert, and one was on the newscast this evening, Mr. Speaker, and that is Children's Haven, which used to receive $227,000 from the federal government, and their payments have gone down to 96,000. Pardon me, the one that was on the news today was the mobile crisis centre. They have been cut by $16,000 from direct federal sources.

Mr. Speaker, this emerging Canada . . . In this emerging Canada, these programs are being left to the provinces. That's irresponsible and it won't be long before there will be greater interprovincial disparity in these areas, and it's the children of the poor who will be the hardest hit.

In Saskatchewan our provincial taxes were used to fill the holes left by federal cuts to health and education. Thanks to the combination of good fortune and good management, our health and education systems, albeit under stress, are functioning well.

We made a commitment to our Saskatchewan children through the Saskatchewan action plan for children two years ago. Under this plan, services like early intervention preschools, community school programs, and integrated children's services are being provided province wide. It's a small beginning, but it served to bring this issue to a national level and I commend and I congratulate our Premier for putting it on the national agenda.

Last November our province, Saskatchewan, received a national Champions for Children Award from Canada's Child Welfare League for the unique Saskatchewan action plan for children. We are the only province so recognized.

Our Premier, as I mentioned earlier, has spoken nationally for the need for a child benefit. I was momentarily very pleased to hear the federal government profile the national child benefit plan in their budget and then I was disappointed when the budget details revealed that it would not be implemented until July 1998.

Mr. Speaker, we need a strong voice to continue to speak for Saskatchewan's children. I'm afraid that that federal announcement may well go the way of the Liberal promises to eliminate the GST (goods and services tax) and to eliminate the 20-year patent protection on drugs and the election promise to implement . . . will go the way of those two items, Mr. Speaker.

We need a national child benefit plan with federal standards and federal financing. It is the singular new positive thing the federal government can do to assure access to schools and health for all Canadian children.

Mr. Speaker, our young people are being asked by the federal government to dig deeper so that we can all benefit from the Canada Pension Plan. In turn, we older folks should be willing to support a child benefit so that every child in our country has a chance to make it in life. That's the Saskatchewan way. Let's make it the Canadian way, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — I am pleased that the path being taken by our government in this area has been set out in the throne speech. And I know it also from the throne speech that our government plans to introduce amendments to The Saskatchewan Assistance Act and to accommodate a Saskatchewan employment supplement. In addition to that, I am pleased that a provincial training allowance will be implemented to help low income individuals enrolled in adult education programs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to talk for a few moments about jobs and the economy, another one of our priorities outlined in the budget.

It's a good feeling that to date we can record that we have, in Saskatchewan, a strong economy which has resulted in 11,000 of the 30,000 new jobs created . . . of the 30,000 promised jobs already created in Saskatchewan. This did not come easy, Mr. Speaker. It came as a result of good planning and, in some cases, good weather. And some of it . . . Not to say that the interest rates didn't help, but, Mr. Speaker, I tell you that without good planning, this would not have helped.

Within Saskatchewan, the jobs that came were as a result of a strong economy. Our agriculture and resource sectors are strong. For example, StatsCanada estimates that our harvest of wheat was 46 per cent greater in '96 than it was in '95.

The Saskatchewan Energy and Mines tell us that the total expenditure in mineral exploration will reach $33 million, which is a 16 per cent increase from '95. The potash industry of Saskatchewan has posted its third consecutive outstanding year. Saskatchewan became the sole uranium producing province in Canada in 1996 and is currently supplying 30 per cent of the world's total uranium. A near record number of wells and licences were issued for people in the oil and gas sector, Mr. Speaker, and it appears that this coming year will be even better.

Now based on this excellent resource environment, we find that there are other areas that are also doing well. Retail sales were up 8 per cent in the first 11 months of '96, new vehicle sales were up 12 per cent in the first 10 months of '96, and residential housing starts were up a whopping 56 per cent in the first 9 months.

Mr. Speaker, these statistics tell the story in mathematical terms, but I want to also give you some other examples of positive things that are happening in this area.

Locally in Prince Albert, under the leadership and under some extra effort put out by the department of forestry, there have been a record number of permits issued for the cutting of burnt-out forest. As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, we had tremendous forest fires some two years ago. This wood will rot or be wasted within three years. Ordinarily 3 to 4 per cent of the wood is recovered. This year, after making inquiries, and I'm pleased to advise the members of this House that there are over a thousand people right now employed in that industry. They have made an opportunity out of a disaster, Mr. Speaker, and it's government flexibility, extra work on the part of the people within the department for issuing the permits and working on roads and access to the forestry region, that has helped. And it's people like Carrier Lumber and Clearwater who've made investments in the people, made investments into this industry, who are leading the field amongst others, many others, who are in the forests taking this burnt wood.

On the local scene, Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand here a clipping describing what has happened in the co-op, Prince Albert Co-operative last year. It's an announcement that was made to the paper by the general manager, Wayne Pearson, and what he tells here, Mr. Speaker, is that sales in the Prince Albert Co-op increased about $4 million last year or roughly 8 per cent from 1995. And there was a . . . as a result of this increase, Mr. Speaker, there was a decision by the association to pay cash allocations to all its members for the fifth year in a row. These allocations will total $2.1 million which will be recirculated back into the local economy.

Our businesses are not static, Mr. Speaker. In the case of the co-op, they did venture into some new areas. They put up a new service station and they expanded their home and agro centre about a year and a half ago. It's meeting the new market. They are meeting the new market and they are an example of a business who is looking to the future and is joined by other businesses in the province and in the district in their endeavours and helping us with our tremendous recovery.

(1930)

I did keep a few other clippings, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to bring to your attention some of the headlines to show that it's not only happening . . . these things aren't only happening in Prince Albert, but are year round.

I have a clipping here which says, "Tremendous year for Upton Resources," where they indicate what's happening in the oilfield. People in the implement manufacturing field: here's a headline from *The Western Producer*, 1997, "Implement dealers enjoy a big boom." Here is a headline from January 10 of '97 of the *Leader-Post*, and it says here, "The hotel industry is vibrant in the province."

Last fall, following last fall's harvest, the *Leader-Post* had a headline in December 6 and the headline is, "Harvest outstanding." As some of the follow-up, some of the value added that's being done, Mr. Speaker, here is a headline from

the Melville *Advance.* It says, "Ribbon cutting officially launches Big Sky Pork." Mr. Speaker, there are dozens and dozens of examples like this.

These things do not happen by accident. People will open businesses and jobs will be created if they trust the government and if they are confident that the government will not spend in excess, and that the government will spend where the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan are. That is happening right now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention very briefly a little bit about another one of our priorities, and that is the development of an integrated transportation strategy. Our transportation system faces unprecedented pressures. It seems that even though you may have the most miles of highway of any province in the country, and the most grid roads, and at one time perhaps the most railways, things do change. And at this stage, having faced the elimination of the Crow rate, facing the prospect of additional rail line abandonment, and knowing that there will be new inland grain terminals constructed, and there are changes in trade patterns, we know that our transportation system has to be adapted to meet those changes.

And I am pleased that the minister responsible for Highways and Transportation is working now with all the partners to introduce a comprehensive, integrated transportation strategy.

My final comments, Mr. Speaker, will be on the topic of fiscal responsibility. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that provincially our finances are solid. We do not have excesses, but they are solid.

Through hard work we have increased our credit rating. We have not yet attained triple A status but we are going in the right direction. And by the end of the current fiscal year our accumulated debt will be $1.8 billion lower than it was in 1994 and $327 million lower than it was projected in the last budget.

Perhaps a figure that is most telling is, if all goes well, according to our present projections the total debt load for Saskatchewan will drop from a staggering 68 per cent of our GDP, our gross domestic product, to 44 per cent of the GDP. Mr. Speaker, with that kind of drop that will provide us with $100 million more to put into programs rather than into interest, and that I believe to be very, very significant.

Mr. Speaker, I was reminded just a week ago how important it is to have your fiscal house in order when I watched a television program that described what was happening in Washington, D.C. (District of Columbia) right at this very time. Washington, D.C. — something like New York — it has the best in the world, but it also has the worst of some of the things in the world.

And one of the things that are really bad in Washington, D.C. is unemployment, and with unemployment comes a high crime rate. When the police of Washington, D.C. were interviewed on this particular program and asked how come there were so few police cars on the road, their answer was, well we can hardly take the cars on the road if they're in disrepair and if they have no gasoline in them. Policemen in Washington, D.C. were finding that they were having to take money from their own pockets to buy gasoline to go on patrol in a vehicle. And other policemen were finding some of their time being used cannibalizing some of their cars to take parts from it to make other cars operable.

Mr. Speaker, this is what happens when the pressure on the tax dollar is exceeded by the amount the people can pay, and also when people lose trust in paying for their taxes. It comes through using an American system where instead of using a majority of elected members to decide on a program, they have turned to a referendum system.

And in a referendum system, unless everybody is able to take the time to look at all the information available, they will go for the common denominator — they will vote taxes out of existence. And when you vote taxes out of existence in a country, you vote your standard of living out of existence. Mr. Speaker, that is not the path we are taking, and that is not the path we are making.

And I want to quote one more time from the throne speech the statement made by futurist John Schaar, which says: "The future is not some place we are going but one we are creating. Paths are not to be found but made."

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be able to support this throne speech. I believe that it is very positive; I believe it is full of hope. I know that our province is on the move again. We are investing in people, we are investing in jobs, we are investing in our communities, and we are building Saskatchewan together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My remarks this evening will be somewhat brief because, of course, it is a reply to the throne speech. And I guess I'll direct my initial comments on exactly what I see in this throne speech in comparison to other throne speeches.

I think there has been, oh, what? I guess seven or eight throne speeches that I have taken part in in one form or another, and this one was rather short with very little in it. Now we can say, well you know, maybe they're not supposed to be filled with a lot of detail and usually they aren't, but I look at past throne speeches and see what we've gotten from them.

In fact I think it was probably back in 1992, when in that throne speech there was a promise made in that speech — the direction of the government of the day was to do away with child poverty and child hunger. And they were going to do it the first term, Mr. Speaker. And where are we at today with child hunger and child poverty? Well we see more people on welfare — a lot more people with young families on welfare — food banks that are . . . the usage at food banks is at an all-time high.

And I think probably some of the trouble that we find the youths in today are as a result of not just the economy — I don't want to blame everything on the economy — but I think

in that bigger picture with all the troubles that society is in today, and it seems to follow through and flow through into the children.

And so, using that as one example of what we hear to be in a throne speech and what actually happens in government policy, whether it be in that given year or the years that follow, never seems to jibe from, well obviously from an opposition party's point of view.

We've also heard — and this is dating back a few years also — where the care for the elderly, those in need, the pioneers of Saskatchewan, those that built this province and made it what it is today, there was going to be ample monies made available to ensure that their quality of life in their golden years was something that they would cherish. They would feel very comfortable going into their retirement years and their golden years.

But what has happened, and what I hear day after day when we travel throughout these constituencies, especially, Mr. Speaker, when, you know, I spent a couple, three years as the health care critic in the opposition . . . and so it brought me into a lot of communities and a lot of these facilities where the elderly are in fact needing care.

But the fear, the fear in their eyes. They had no idea. Many of these people don't. And it's not good for any politician, government or opposition, to build up those fears and we don't try and do that. Actually what we try and do is, you know, have all our scrapping and our fight in here so that we don't have to go out to those people and actually build on their uncertainty. But to look in their eyes and to see the uncertainty that they have, the fear of their future. Where are they going to be in a year or two or three or four, five years down the road? And they don't know. And they pose those questions to us. And what are the answers?

I mean as people in government we seem to have less of an idea, from our perspective, of where this is going to end. Maybe the government members have a better idea of where it will all end, but if they do, they should pass it on to some of these people because the concern is very real and there is a great deal of fear out there. And I think I'll get into some of that a little later on again when I talk about some health care concerns.

But we also have heard in past throne speeches how the government of the day is going to ensure that there is equality among all Saskatchewan residents, and this is something else that we see the split today from urban to rural. What's happening is, I think . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's getting wider and wider.

Mr. McPherson: — Well you're absolutely right; it's getting wider and wider and it's shameful.

If we take a look at some of the services that we need out in the rural areas, even . . . whether it's bussing. Do you know how many meetings that I've attended in the last year of — and there again it's mostly elderly, rural communities — people that are afraid that they are going to lose their bussing in some of these communities?

And perhaps if you live in a city of a couple hundred thousand, you don't appreciate, you don't appreciate what an STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) bus would mean to your community. It means everything. It means everything if you're 70 or 80 years of age and there is no modes of transportation in and out of that community; you become hostage to the community. And when we see other services that they utilize all the time, health care, dental — I could go on and on and I won't do that — but especially health care services leaving . . . And I may go on and on after awhile, Mr. Speaker. But when they see these services being pulled and being taken away from their community, that bus is the lifeline for them, Mr. Speaker. It is what . . . it is perhaps what makes the difference of whether they can remain in rural Saskatchewan or not. And so we've seen this threatened.

In fact as I speak, in my home town of Shaunavon there's been a few meetings. We've had, well I guess now we'd call him the past president of STC, into the community to, I guess to alleviate some of the fears and concerns. That definitely didn't happen. I can tell that by the amount of articles that are still showing up in our local paper. People are afraid. Now bussing may not mean that much to some but it means everything if you live in a small rural community.

If we look at care homes, well if you're living in a community of a hundred thousand or much less, I guess you could be talking 10, 15,000, a community the size of say Swift Current . . . maybe that's even unfair because they just went through some personal care home battles like no other. But at least there's some opportunity. There's some chance that, if you can't remain in your own home . . . And you agree with many of the other elderly that are your friends that home care is not picking up the slack, picking up those people that are falling through the cracks, well then it's a real concern because if you're living in a community of 200 or 300 or 1,000 and you don't have those kind of services . . . and you don't have the kind of care homes necessary to remain in your own community.

Now some may say, well you can't have everything. You know if you can't have a balanced budget and also at the same time provide everything to all people. But people don't ask everything for all people. There's certain things, Mr. Speaker, that I think people — especially the elderly, especially the people that put their lives into building this province — could and should expect from those that are now in sort of the control of their lives. That is, should they not be able to live their last years among their family and friends?

(1945)

An Hon. Member: — You'd think they'd be treated better.

Mr. McPherson: — Well absolutely. They should be treated better because here we are asking that they remain in their homes longer, asking that their family members take care of them, the community take care of them. But as soon as they

reach that one stage where it becomes impossible to be taken care of easily by family and friends, there's nothing there for them. There's not that step. And that is really putting some fear into the hearts of people. They don't know if they come to Regina if there's going to be a home available here. I don't know that.

Also when we take a look at the difference between urban and rural centres in regards to health care, not just senior care, but health care . . . And I know I've went on and on in other past sessions about health care situations, but it hasn't let up, not a bit, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh I see. I'm sorry; I didn't notice my light was out. Okay, but we have such a discrepancy between the cities and the rural as far as the kind of services that they can expect in health care. And that I'm going to get into in a moment also.

But I think what we have to look at, Mr. Speaker, is not what has been promised in the past throne speeches — and never acted upon or never delivered upon — but what should be in a throne speech. You would think that a government, a government that was being fair to all people, would . . . well they'd put in a throne speech that they were going to provide a quality of life to all citizens, of course to the children. If you're going to promise that you're going to do away with child poverty and child hunger, it can't be that big a problem. I accept what is happening today with the thrust now from the federal government that we better get up and get at this problem.

Now I know this provincial government . . . I see a lot of people starting to look up and wonder, but no, it wasn't the Premier of this province that initiated the federal thrust. Even though you would like to take some credit, it wasn't. Because you had six or seven years to do it since it came out in the throne speech, and you never acted upon it once . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And obviously I see the Minister of Health is more than anxious to get into the debate and I'd love nothing better than to stand and have one with him but . . . Once he stops heckling, Mr. Speaker, we can get on with it.

What we have to look at, you know, what's in a throne speech in the way of strategy to provide a better quality of life to all residents, not just the urban but to the rural as well. We have to look at the strategy that should be there; should have always been there as far as, what do our elderly deserve, what do the kids deserve, the students, all of those in need. And I don't see any of that. I haven't witnessed it in past throne speeches; don't see it in this one. I'm just saying that's what should have been there.

When I take . . . I've listened to some of the speeches in here, especially this evening, and I believe the member — is it the constituency of Biggar? — talking about some of the transportation issues. Well those I find most interesting. And another one, the member from P.A. Carlton, talking about health care issues, health care issues in Prince Albert as though it were something that could be used as a comparison across the province. And he mentions that health care is under stress. What does under stress mean?

I can't help think that perhaps under stress would mean completely underfunded. Because when I take a look at the paper out of the community of Shaunavon — and, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to use this as a prop in any way — but here, about six papers: health facilities threatened with closure; its attempt to recruit new doctor; local physician . . . It's every one of them. So you talk about under stress. Under stress is when every week, every week, there's an article on the front page, of people that are afraid of health care in their own community, health care disappearing.

Who would have ever thought that a community of say 2,000 — 2,200 people — would have these sort of problems in health care. Well now they fully expect it from the government, Mr. Speaker, and it's because it just never seems to end — it never ends.

This has nothing to do with health reform. You can reform health. I guess it takes what, a year or two? Maybe that's what the government thought, that in a year or two the problems would have gone away.

I'm glad to see the Health minister moving a little closer so I can hear his heckling better. But this has gone on now for what, six, seven years that we've had this under-stress health reform? When will it end?

You know what has happened since the last session, since we were in here last debating some of these issues? Well we've witnessed this horrible doctor crisis in the community of Shaunavon. But that's not the only community. I know places such as Coronach have been trying for some time to recruit a new doctor. I mean I've had doctors in from Shaunavon to meet with the Health minister, and I appreciate those kind of meetings to try and alleviate some of the concerns. I'll give him credit. He acted upon it and he's got to do that more and more and more.

It's tough though when it takes for a community to have to know that the way to get into government minister's office to get action done is to know the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and know that he has the ability to get into that office and make the case heard. Not every community has that luxury and I guess that's why there is still this crisis going on out there.

I also know that past summer we had another situation on the east side of the Wood River constituency in the communities of Rockglen, Willow Bunch, Mossbank, Assiniboia, Lafleche, Kincaid. They were all attacked pretty much at once because they had a new CEO (chief executive officer) come in and he was going to show the people out there, I guess the country bumpkins, exactly what it's like to run health care. And of course everyone in here would remember him. He's Dale Schmeichel; he used to work for the Premier. But I'll tell you those so-called country bumpkins showed Mr. Schmeichel that he didn't have all his homework done, not by a long shot.

In fact we started, Mr. Speaker, having some meetings out in some of the communities, asking whether or not they were going to support the initiatives of the board, of the South

Country Board of Mr. Schmeichel, which really what it was doing was taking communities, taking communities such as Rockglen and Lafleche . . . well they've got newer facilities and they were going to privatize them. They were going to take the services, the lab services and such out of Kincaid. I think they've written the community off. They were going to downsize and privatize Lafleche, Rockglen. What were they going to do with Mossbank? I can't remember. Oh, take their service as well. And they were going to make large changes at the level 1, level 2 care home in Assiniboia.

What they don't realize is that when you go out to these communities . . . And I challenge the board, and I challenge a lot of government members to do this. Go out to these communities and actually go from room to room to room. See who's in there. They're not just people. Go and read the name tags and such. Talk to them.

You will find that most of them, by and large, are not even level 3. They're level 4 and level 5. Of course they need 24-hour care, and they're going to privatize them into level 1, level 2 care homes. They never could tell the people, never would or could, what they were going to do with the present people in the facilities. I mean the thrust of the government has been to get away from level 1 and level 2. So-called home care was going to take care of all these problems. And yet it's fine to privatize. Well we know that once they are going to be privatized, they could also forget about having the acute-care component of that health centre remaining as well.

The game was simple from the government's point of view. They thought they had the right man in to do the right thing for the board, and we'd all just accept it. The trouble is there was a committee that was formed and happened . . . well I enjoyed, as well as the member from Thunder Creek, of being part of that initial group that got it together. It's called PUSH: People United to Save Healthcare.

And you know, what's interesting is that it's not as though it's Conservatives or Liberals. Nobody talked politics at these meetings. And there is no doubt there was people from all parties. But I'll tell you they all had one goal in mind, and that is to save their health care in their communities. Enough is enough.

And I ask you, if you're ever travelling down 13 . . . and not many of you will take that highway, and we'll get into that in awhile. But if you travel down 13, take a look when you're passing by Lafleche. And it doesn't matter which entrance you use into town. There's a . . . what size are those signs? They must be . . . Oh they're a lot, 8 by 12. They're at least 8 by 12 — People United to Save Healthcare.

What a statement for a government to be seeing these kind of signs put up as a community effort. Now they can't say, well everyone in the community is Liberal. Well it just so happens most of them are down around my area. That has more to do with what you people have done than what anyone else has done. But when you see these kind of signs up in a community, or go down Main Street in Assiniboia when they rented those yellow flashing signs . . . and I think there were six in the community of Assiniboia, going down Main Street and the other main drag, and they were all the same thing — People United to Save Healthcare; stop the Romanow government from killing our hospitals . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member knows that it's improper to use the proper names of members of the House and that members must be referred to by the positions that they hold in the House, unless making a direct quote. And I'm sure the hon. member will . . . being an experienced member, will recognize that and will continue the debate following the rules and proceedings of the House.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I meant it to be a direct quote and I hope it came across . . .

The Speaker: — Now the hon. member will also know that it's improper to be commenting on the Speaker's ruling, and I'll just simply ask that he continue his debate following the rules and proceedings of the House as he normally does.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I guess obviously the point was made, and I think it's been made well, that people, people are uniting. And it doesn't matter of the political stripe; it matters of what they have in their community and it matters to them what exactly it is that they're going to pass on, if anything, if ever, to their children; whether there can be a life out in rural communities.

That's the point that is being well made time and time again at these meetings, whether it's to save their schools, their hospitals, their buses. It never ends.

But I do want to congratulate all those people from the RMs (rural municipality) and the towns affected in the South Country Health District who got together, who banded together to fight for a common good. And it was good to see because all too often we come to the legislature and I sometimes wonder, what is the public good any longer? I think it gets clouded in here, and when you get out into your own communities and you watch people fight for survival, it comes very clear, Mr. Speaker.

One other thing I'd like to touch on tonight is the highways and the roads of this province. And I hear a lot of moaning and groaning already and perhaps that's just some carry-over from days when you've been out travelling in rural Saskatchewan on some of those highways.

An Hon. Member: — Backs hurt.

Mr. McPherson: — Yes, some back pain perhaps?

But, Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at the budget, the budget of this past year, the government's taking in about $430 million. They're going to spend approximately 32 per cent of that money back into the highway and road system – some 168 million.

I think for the longest time people found that somewhat acceptable. They would say well, you know, there's a fiscal

problem that the Conservatives — and it would be great if they were in here tonight, any of them, to partake in the debate, but they're not and . . .

The Speaker: — Now the hon. member will also be well aware that it is improper, in the making of a point in his debate, to refer to the presence or absence of other hon. members. And I'll simply ask him to be attentive to that and to withdraw . . . I won't ask him to withdraw on this occasion, but to restrain himself from repeating that violation of the rules of the House.

(2000)

Mr. McPherson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be much easier to comment on the third party when they are here, there's no question. It's just that I don't have that option often enough.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Now the hon. member will also be aware that he's not permitted, by rules of the House, to . . . Order. Not permitted to do indirectly what he's not permitted to do directly. And having just advised him of the error, in reference to presence or absence of members, and having repeated that, I will ask him to withdraw that remark and continue his debate.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'll withdraw any comment about the absence of the third party.

The Speaker: — Order. I will . . . Order. I'll ask the hon. member just to simply withdraw the remark without any inference and then just continue with the debate.

Mr. McPherson: — All right, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment.

And to go on, we'll talk about the budget. I guess that's where we left off. The 32 per cent of the $430 million that this government raises through fuel taxes and motor vehicle licensing fees . . .

An Hon. Member: — How about the zero per cent that Ottawa puts in?

Mr. McPherson: — And we'll talk about that, Mr. Minister, but when we take a look at what's happened over the past five years, we've got $1.23 billion surplus, monies that they've taken in, plus what they've spent on the highway and road system.

And as I was saying, people were more than prepared to wait while the government got the fiscal situation that they were left in from the former Devine government under control. And everyone did that. They were very patient. I mean there's certain things that we fought for that I don't think can be let go for a year or two — such things as care for the elderly, health care, and such — but other things that we could be more patient on. I think we were. The people of Saskatchewan were. Highways was one of them. And now that the fiscal situation has been taken care of as of a year ago, now it's time for the government to start to direct some of the taxes that it collects in each of these areas, for example fuel taxes, to where they are supposed to be going.

Now some of the members opposite are hollering, well what about the federal government and the fuel taxes they collect? If they would have been paying attention a few weeks ago when we first started to talk about the monies required for our highway and road system, they would have known, noticed, that in fact we made the comments. I made the comments about . . . the people were patient with them while they got their fiscal situation in order, and I think we've got to do the same for the federal government. After all we are all federal taxpayers as well.

In a few years, they will have their budget deficits taken care of. When that's arrived at, then I encourage them to spend the monies from their fuel taxes back into the highway system. I mean in the interim, I was as disappointed as anyone that there wasn't a national highway program at least for those interprovincial highways.

I thought that would have perhaps come. Give it a year. But let's not forget who or which level of government has a Highways minister . . . is this provincial government. They raise a great deal of money: 1.23 billion.

If I take a look at just certain areas of the province — I take a look at the south-west; I'm very familiar with it of course — and look at the amount of money that is raised not just in fuel taxes, Mr. Speaker, but how much money was raised through the sales of land leases to the oil companies? It was hundreds of millions of dollars that were sucked out of south-west Saskatchewan, and they were brought into the general coffers in the government here in Regina. Is that fair?

Now you have to take a look at whose roads are being harmed the worst by having that heavy, oil-truck traffic on the roads. I think it would have only been right that if we — the government, not we — the government would have taken a good percentage of just that money alone and put back into those areas. I mean what has happened here is very unfair because it's as though they don't care at all about the region where they are making the dollars from.

If we also take a look at theses taxes that we talk about, the $430 million mostly of fuel tax, where is it coming from? Is it coming from the communities that are 5 or 6,000 and more? Or is it coming from mostly, I think, the farming population? I know on my farm what I spend for fuel. It's in the thousands and thousands of dollars. It's a lot more than some of the urban members here that would fill up their vehicle maybe every couple of weeks.

So who's really paying the tax? And should that not be broken down and somewhere shouldn't the government be saying, well yes, out of the 430 maybe 300 million is actually coming from rural Saskatchewan. And is it only up to rural Saskatchewan to take those surpluses, take those surpluses . . . maybe of the 1.23 billion, perhaps a billion of that came from rural Saskatchewan. Why is it that we have to do away with the services but we also have to be the ones to pay down the debts and deficits. Because

that's what is becoming apparent to the people that live out there.

And I think it's about time that there is some equality. I would have to ask the government members, and I know I did this last year and the year before, if you're not absolutely certain of what I say, please take me up on an offer. I'll take each and every one of you out into my constituency and we'd take a drive down these highways, whether it be 13 or 18 or 4 — take a drive out on some of these highways and see what it's like. It's absolutely shameful.

I've put that offer to the Minister of Highways only some weeks ago and of course . . . and I appreciate the response that I got, a timely response it was. And in fact I have it right here. The Minister of Highways and Transportation, and I'm going to quote:

> I drive extensively in all areas of Saskatchewan. As a result, I'm fully aware of the condition of most highways in our province. In addition, my officials provide me with updates on road conditions on a regular basis.

I would love nothing better than to be in on one of those meetings when they come in to update him. Like what could they possibly say? What could they possibly say that would be shocking to say. Oh, I can't believe this. Let's spend some money. And then they wonder why we come up with some of the ideas such as the provincial pothole patrol program. It's not to make light of the highways; it's to bring some awareness from the government of what the people out there are facing. I can only tell you that if that government found as much success in rural Saskatchewan as the provincial pothole patrol program, well I'd like to see the polls immediately after they were to do one of those.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, I happened to listen to the member from, I believe it's from Biggar, out in that area, talk today about transportation issues. And I found it to be somewhat interesting. I guess it's through his perspective on the positions he takes. But I recall a week ago, about a week ago, that there was a motion, emergency motion, brought forward in the House, and different members have spoken here in the last few days about this motion, and how great it was that we could all come together and support the same thing.

Well let's make sure everyone understands that we didn't support the same thing because we brought forward an amendment. And it didn't change the thrust of the motion much, Mr. Speaker, but it did say, let's put some onus on the railroads. Both New Democrats and the Conservative parties said no way, we're not supporting that. Which brings one to wonder how much they get donated to at election time. Like who are the friends of the railroads? And I've heard some members over there . . . I think it was the member from Regina Dewdney, Regina Dewdney, the one that's heckling me now. He was the one that earlier today was talking about railroads and carrying on about railroads. Why didn't he support the amendment? Totally beyond us.

But yet I do want to give credit here this evening to something that I've been fighting for, and we now have an MP (Member of Parliament) from Saskatchewan doing the same. Instead of sticking the farmers with the demurrage, with the costs of grain that is not moving, let's put that charge onto the railroads. And it's not supported by anyone over there, or that third party, or Tory party, or whoever they are; they're never here. And it's not . . . It makes you wonder how much the donations must be. But I do give a lot of credit to Bernie Collins, the MP for Souris-Moose Mountain, for bringing that forward.

It seems to have raised a lot of interest, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that some of the members opposite will really want to join in and tell us what their position is, so I'll leave them have at it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in my place in this great institute and take part in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, firstly I want to join with my colleagues that have spoken before me and welcome the new member from North Battleford.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say thank you for the hard work that's done by my constituency assistants, Joanne, Connie, and Linda. They are the front-line people in my constituency while I'm here in the Legislative Assembly. I also want to say thank you to my wife, Georgina, and family for their support in the past several years.

As the member from Melfort-Tisdale said earlier, being an MLA changes your life drastically, Mr. Speaker. But the event that he talked about earlier on December 1 when he became a grandfather, I certainly can relate to that because on January 12 I also became a grandfather for the first time . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — . . . when a young lady by the name of Rachel Lauran entered the world and joined in for our family. I have a feeling, Mr. Speaker, that there's two very small girls out there, Hayley Dawn and Rachel Lauran, that have two fairly big grandpas wrapped around their little fingers. I would think that they very much control what goes on in our lives and it's kind of nice to be that way. So I certainly welcome Rachel into the family.

I also want to commend you, Mr. Speaker, on the great job that you've been doing in your outreach within the students of Saskatchewan. People will certainly have more respect for us as politicians and for this institute if they understand the workings of it and where it originated from, and certainly I want to thank you for doing what you have been doing in that area, especially in the two high schools that we visited in Last Mountain-Touchwood, Wynyard, and Strasbourg.

As I said earlier, it gives me great pleasure also to stand here, and it does tonight especially, to say hello to the people of Wynyard who are able to watch the proceedings of the

Legislative Assembly for the first time in their own homes on Image Cable, channel 23, which is going into some 500 homes. And I welcome them to their Legislative Chamber. And I say to their Legislative Chamber, Mr. Speaker, because although we are the ones here making the laws and the speeches and governing the province, I believe as an MLA I am but an extension of my constituents.

There was an old fellow in Last Mountain-Touchwood — maybe I shouldn't say that old — was trying to teach me Icelandic so I could speak to the people in Wynyard in their proper language, but bilingualism is not my cup of tea. I'll just stay with the English, anyway.

I also want to congratulate the mover, the member from Swift Current, and the seconder, the member from Saskatoon Southeast, on a job well done. Mr. Speaker, it is a special privilege for me to speak on a throne speech that starts with lines as, and I quote, "one of the most hopeful times in our province in many years." And another line, "Today, through co-operation, community, and shared effort, Saskatchewan is back on its feet."

Mr. Speaker, a speech that also talks of hope and opportunity for the future — opportunity for our farmers, for the workers, for our students which are our future leaders, for the children who live in poverty and for people who need the health care system. And I want to take a few minutes to talk on each one of those.

(2015)

This government's top priority is jobs — jobs for all people in Saskatchewan — good, secure jobs so that people can plan for the future; so they can buy a house, buy a car, raise a family and be productive members of society.

We all know that Saskatchewan's economy has been very reliant on our agricultural sector, not only in the growing of the produce, including all grains for export, but we have come to realize that we are losing dollars, and more importantly jobs, Mr. Speaker, by simply being exporters of raw goods. When we export our grains and produce, we leave the processing and the manufacturing to someone else. And this is a part of the food chain that provides the most jobs.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we all know, and we know all too well the challenges that we face are to reduce the reliance we have on raw commodities and natural resources if we are ever to compete in the 21st century. We see a great deal of evidence throughout our province that people are making the shift from home-grown, value added, food processing companies to international agro-biotech firms, from farm implement manufacturers to software developers. We are seeing a rapid growth in Saskatchewan's grain power industries and along with it new ways of employing our God-given blessings for the benefit of more and more people.

To show that it is working, Mr. Speaker, I want to show a few statistics. And these figures are as of October 1996 as compared to the same period in 1995, and the figures show: retail sales up nearly 8 per cent, making this the fourth consecutive year of impressive growth in the retail sector; new vehicle sales up nearly 12 per cent; housing starts are up more than 56 per cent, fairly even distributed amongst rural and urban centres. And the best of all of this is that these jobs are being created across the province in both urban and rural. Since 1992, 11,000 new jobs have been created in this province.

Is it enough? Well never, Mr. Speaker, and if you're the one person out there that's still walking the street looking for a job, there's never enough until you find that job. We know it's not enough and that's why we are committed to the targets set out in the *Partnership for Growth* strategy because, Mr. Speaker, we believe in investing in people.

Mr. Speaker, in order to prepare the people of Saskatchewan to fill the jobs being created, we have to provide them with the best education and training at every level that we can. In elementary and secondary education we have to provide educators in our schools with better schools to support learning in the classroom, and we will do that. We have to encourage school divisions' restructuring as the needs are locally determined, to improve the efficiency and quality of our education system. And we will do that. We will invest in people's education and future.

Mr. Speaker, the next point I want to talk about is something very dear to me. Not that the rest aren't, but child poverty should hit home to everyone. And as the member from Saskatoon Sutherland and from Saskatoon Northwest spoke about earlier, in 1995 the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said this:

> To think that almost one Canadian child in five lives in poverty in one of the richest societies in the world . . . in the world history is nothing less than a damning indictment of the present socio-economic order.

Mr. Speaker, we have all heard that Canada was rated number one in the world in which to live. And that according to a standard-of-living yardstick, number one by the United Nations. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe that if one child goes to bed hungry, not of his or her own doing, in this country of so many riches and opportunities, it is shameful. It is shameful that the federal government puts the interests of large corporations ahead of our future leaders.

What was needed? Well, Mr. Speaker, an action plan for children. And what happened? This government put forth an action plan for children that was recognized nationally and internationally, and I applaud our Premier and our Minster of Social Services for this initiative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Flavel: — We need to continue to target child poverty by investing in child care in inner-city neighbourhoods, rural communities, and the North. We need to continue to strengthen child nutrition programs that, along with the best possible education and training and with jobs for everyone, will ensure that no child will ever go hungry in this country again.

Mr. Speaker, the blueprint for welfare reform builds on the success of the action plan by advocating, among other things, a new child benefit, a break for working-poor families which, in effect, will move most children off of welfare. Hopefully the federal government will make this a national priority. If successful this will be a major step towards reducing child and family poverty. Once again, Mr. Speaker, investing in people.

Mr. Speaker, for some five years we've been working very hard to change the direction of our health care system, because I totally agree with the Premier when he says what we had was an illness system. We waited for people to take ill and then sent them to buildings and repaired them. What we need to do is to prevent every family from becoming ill in the first place, because no matter how much money was put into the old system, there was never any changes — people still got ill, people still had operations and they went to hospitals and got treated. The only difference that I can see, was that they were operated on in bigger and better hospitals.

So one has to ask, why would we not put more resources into keeping people out of hospitals, keeping them at home even if they've had some type of operation. They still continue to want to be at home amongst their loved ones with some professional help coming in on a daily basis. Better for the people, less costly for the system — win-win situation.

We still have some improving yet to do, and we still have to work to improve our services and health security for our seniors. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work to strengthen partnerships with health professionals, communities and health boards, to build a better model of care, and ensure a stable, secure health system in a locally responsible way.

As communities either grow or diminish, or change in demographics in relationship to age, wealth, and other forms, communities all over Saskatchewan are increasingly using the new health system for what it is meant to be used for — to stay well. It has not been easy to change people's directions. The people are agreeing that we are on the right track — to end up with a caring, stable, secure health system, there when people need it — once again, investing in people and preparing for the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing in the future to build a strong Saskatchewan for the 21st century. We must never forget the desperate province we inherited from the Devine Tories, nor should we ever forget the hard work and sacrifice on everyone's part which has helped restore that same province to a leader in economic, social, and caring for all people.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan the future is not where we are going — it is what we are creating.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to use an old parable about an old blind woman, renowned for her wisdom, and a young boy who decided to play a trick on her. The young boy went out and he captured a small bird, and he cupped it in his hands and said to her, if you are so wise tell me if this bird is alive or dead. If she said dead, he planned to set it free and prove her wrong. If she said alive, he planned to quickly crush the life from the bird and again prove her wrong. She thought for a moment and her answer was, the answer is in your hands.

Mr. Speaker, our financial house is in order. We have a great deal of experience in dealing with change and coming out on top. I am confident that by continuing to cultivate partnerships to work together for the common good — the purpose of every government — we shall lay a firm foundation for stronger communities and a stronger, better Saskatchewan in the coming century by investing in people. What kind of future are we creating, Mr. Speaker? The answer is in our hands.

I am looking ahead with hope and opportunity, as the throne speech speaks about, and it will be of great pleasure that I will not support the amendment but I will be standing in my place to support the throne speech. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 8:26 p.m. until 8:27 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

McPherson	Gantefoer	Draude
Osika	Bjornerud	Hillson
Aldridge		

Nays — 22

Flavel	Shillington	Mitchell
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Goulet	Upshall	Kowalsky
Renaud	Calvert	Koenker
Trew	Teichrob	Nilson
Cline	Stanger	Murray
Kasperski	Sonntag	Jess
Murrell		

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. I'm going to make a few comments and then I will ask the House to adjourn the debate and I'll make most of my comments tomorrow.

I'm not sure how far I'm going to get on this line of comment. But it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that a pattern which developed in the last session is being repeated in this one. And that is there are . . . it seems to be only the official opposition and the government present for these votes.

The Speaker: — Well it almost does not require a comment from the Speaker. The member, being a seasoned member and the Government House Leader, and predicting the response of the Speaker, he's fully aware that he's violated a reference that's not permitted in the rules of the Assembly. And given the context, I would ask that the hon. member withdraw that remark and proceed with his debate.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I withdraw the comments.

I want to bring greetings on behalf of the constituents of Regina

Northeast. Parts of this constituency I have represented since 1975, parts of it I have represented since 1991, and part of it was new in the last session. In all parts of this constituency I have very much appreciated the support of the public and I must say it has been a real pleasure to represent them.

(2030)

Parts of the riding are under fairly severe stress and I talk now of the downtown area which is the area I have represented continuously since 1975. There is a good deal to be said for the common sense and the shrewdness of those people. One of the things I might say is, it is an accurate statement that those people have been voting CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and NDP (New Democratic Party) for over 60 years continuously, since 1934. They have never committed the grievous sin that other parts of the province have. It is sort of unfortunate that notwithstanding their . . . this remarkable streak of good sense, remarkably long streak of uninterrupted good sense, they've had to suffer along with everybody else.

Parts of that area in the downtown is under real stress. And I am concerned about it and we have attempted to do what we can to assist them in dealing with the community problems — many of which, to be fair, do not really come under the jurisdiction of the provincial government but they tend to look to us for the solution to these things.

I want to, before going on, congratulate the member from North Battleford on his election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I spent — during the by-election — I spent eight days in the riding campaigning. That might well have contributed to the election, I don't know. I did make one observation when I was there which I want to repeat. And that was, my impression, that the vote on election day reflected not so much a judgement about the performance of the two political parties, the NDP and the Liberals, as it was a personal vote for the member who enjoyed, I think, a very good reputation in this community. So I congratulate you on your election and the reputation which led to that election.

I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on the outreach which you have done. Many members have commented on this and I want to do so as well. I had the privilege of being present for one of those in a very unique setting, actually. We were in the Assembly. Students — grade 7 and 8 students of St. Gregory — were in the Assembly sitting in these seats. I was accorded my traditional seat but the rest were filled by some relatively new members.

I want to say what other members have said, Mr. Speaker. I found your address thoughtful. I thought it was tuned to the age group. I thought they could understand it and I thought they left with a good impression of the workings of the Assembly and the workings of democratic government, and that is very important. It is very important that these young people understand the intrinsic worth of that which they have, which is this institution. Too often we take it for granted. So to the extent that you have contributed to a much better understanding I want to congratulate you and hope that you will keep up the good work in the years to come so long as you are Speaker.

I want to congratulate as well the mover and seconder of the motion. I thought their speeches were excellent. Indeed I thought, Mr. Speaker, the quality of the debate this year has been really good. I think it's been a credit to the members who have participated. It is not . . .

An Hon. Member: — On both sides.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well yes, on both sides actually. The member from the opposition says, from both sides. I think that's accurate. I think the debate has been a high quality. I think it reflects well on the members and on the Assembly. Without being too partisan and certainly not wanting to speak ill of those who are absent, the low estate . . . I think I did it again didn't I? Well at least I won't ask you this time if you think it's in order.

The whole estate of politics fell into disrepute during the '80s due to the activities of the government in office in Regina and the government office in Ottawa, and it really did. The reputation, standing, of politicians really sank to a new low during that period. It is like anything else. You can lose reputation very quickly. It's very hard to win it back, but slowly but surely I'd like to think we're doing that. I'd like to think we're doing that by the manner in which members conduct themselves towards each other. We have very sharp disagreements between us. There is, I think however, no occasion for personal exchanges and I think that's been absent to a greater degree — never completely absent — but I think it's been absent to a greater degree in this session and in the last session than was the case in the past. I'd hope that continues because we really need to do something about the low estate in which our profession finds itself. And I want to congratulate members.

I think with those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to beg leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

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