

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present petitions pertaining to the regional telephone exchanges. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

The petitioners are from such places as Glenbain, Wapella, Saltcoats, Yorkton, Stockholm and other communities, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions from citizens in the Speers, Hafford, Blaine Lake, and Krydor communities concerning rural telephone exchanges.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, I too present petitions of concerned citizens pertaining to the development of regional telephone exchange. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

The petitioners are mostly from the Saltcoats and Yorkton area. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens interested in the creation of a regional telephone exchange. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

And those who have signed these petitions are from south-east

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues today to bring forward petitions regarding the creation of regional telephone exchanges. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

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

The people that have signed this . . . or these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from the Glenbain, Aneroid, and Minton areas of the province. I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan regarding rural telephone exchanges.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many people from some communities in my constituency, namely that of Loreburn, Hawarden, Strongfield, and I guess Outlook, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about regional telephone exchanges. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

The people that signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Fertile, Carlyle, Manor, Gainsborough, Storthoaks, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to present petitions from people who are interested in seeing regional telephone exchanges started:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

And the petitioners that have signed this petition are from Saltcoats.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my hon. colleagues to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan with respect to regional telephone exchanges:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to support the creation of regional telephone exchanges in order to enhance economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

The petitioners are from Saltcoats, Leross, Springside, and Kelliher. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy today, Mr. Speaker, to present petitions on behalf of 647 people from around the province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to immediately amend The Non-profit Corporations Act and other legislation in order to protect volunteers from frivolous legal action by prohibiting any legal action against any volunteer unless a court of competent jurisdiction first grants permission.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from all around the province: from Eastend, Saskatchewan; Dollard, Gull Lake, Regina, Swift Current, Kindersley, Big River, Broadview, Limerick, Caronport, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Meyronne, Golden Prairie, Lancer, Burstall — well, there's just too many to mention them all, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to present them today.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present the following petition and I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reduce the PST by two points to 7 per cent in the 1997 provincial budget, and table a long-term plan for further reductions in the PST in the years ahead.

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

These come from Swift Current, Saskatoon, Pennant, Kronau, Regina, generally all over Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure as well to read into the record petitions that have come from across the province, and I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reduce the PST by two points to 7 per cent in the 1997 provincial budget, and table a long-term plan for further reductions in the PST in the years ahead.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by individuals

from . . . a majority from the Saskatoon area; also Martensville, Vonda, and the Swift Current areas. I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reduce the PST by two points to 7 per cent in the 1997 provincial budget, and table a long-term plan for further reductions in the PST in the years ahead.

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

These petitions come from the Regina area, from Craven and Regina, and from my own constituency, towns of Oxbow and Alameda. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased as well to present petitions on behalf of people across Saskatchewan with respect to the provincial sales tax. Mr. Speaker, these petitions come from the Saskatoon and Regina areas of the province, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reduce the PST by two points;

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to change the big game damage compensation program.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and to the members of the Legislative Assembly some very distinguished guests — I think they're very distinguished — who have joined us for the launch of Education Week in Saskatchewan this week.

They're in your gallery. Some of them are waving Saskatchewan flags. Anyone who was in the rotunda a few moments ago will know that I'm talking about the St. Mary's Oskiyak Song and Dance Troupe, which troupe gave us a wonderful demonstration of their culture and their skills and their art.

I want to especially welcome, in addition to the students who are really the performers and the workers, the dance teacher, Delvin Kennedy; St. Mary's staff members, Kevin McLean, Genie Aurmenko, Gail Weenie, Vera Gallagher, and Anna Lee King; and as I say, most of all, the members of the troupe, all of whom are tremendously talented dancers and drummers.

Mr. Speaker, Oskiyak shares the language of its culture through its performances in Saskatchewan schools, festivals, and cultural centres. It's also performed as far away as Toronto and Montreal. Now the troupe is planning to attend the international powwow of indigenous peoples in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I'd like to repeat, on behalf I'm sure of all the members, our very best wishes to them in their fund-raising efforts toward their trip. And I'd like to ask all members of this Assembly to join me in welcoming our distinguished guests and thanking them for their performance here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — M. le président, je voudrais introduire à vous et par vous à tous les députés de cette Assemblée, certaines personnes distinguées de la communauté culturelle francophone.

C'est la semaine d'éducation de cette province, même c'est aussi la semaine nationale de la francophone. Aujourd'hui marque le début de cette semaine. Comme mon collègue, l'député de la Regina Sherwood, parlera pendant les déclarations de députés plus de ça, ces personnes nous honorent par leur présence.

Mr. Speaker, probably as much for the benefit of the French-speaking people, who struggle with my butchering of the language, as the English, I will repeat this . . .

An Hon. Member: — If this is French, I can understand it.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There may have been a modest English accent there.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly certain distinguished persons from the francophone cultural community. It is Education Week and perhaps appropriately enough, it's also the National — across Canada — Francophone Week.

These persons have honoured us by being here today. I assume — I'm not entirely able to see past the clock — but I believe they're all here: M. Roland Pinsonneault, très estimé pionnier de la francophone. Stand please — oh, he's not here.

Denis Magnan, président, Association canadienne-français de Regina; Leon Marchildon et Roland Lebreque, délégué de l'ACFC de Saskatchewan. Merci.

Suzanne Stradecki, présidente, Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan; Mme. Michèle Routier-Leib, délégué de l'Association des parents francophones; M. Jean Liboiron, directeur général de la Commission culturelle francophone; M. Robert Therrien, Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan; M. Florent Bilodeau et Marie Patterson — M. Florent Bilodeau est le directeur général et Marie Patterson et l'agent des communications de la Conseil général des écoles francophones.

M. Roger Lepage, Conseil scolaire francophone de

Saskatchewan; and Mr. Ron Holgerson, director of arts, cultural industries and multiculturalism in the cultural branch; and M. Etienne Alary, représentant de l'Association jeunesse francophone.

Ces personnes contribuent énormément à la communauté culturelle francophone. J'invite tous les députés me joindre à dire bienvenue à cette Assemblée.

(Translation: These people make an enormous contribution to the francophone cultural community. I invite all members to join me in saying welcome to this Assembly.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleague across the floor on behalf of our caucus in welcoming the delegates from the Saskatchewan Francophone community. I'm not going to speak any French. My accent, while a little bit better than the minister's, is not great. But we would like to welcome everyone here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to add the voice of the official opposition to welcome the group that the Premier has welcomed and asked us to join in welcoming, and wish them sincere good wishes on their journeys and their endeavours, and welcome to the delegates from Francophones. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well as being extremely pleased and also wishing to say hello to the distinguished visitors in the Speaker's gallery, I would like to introduce some visitors of my own.

In the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, are 20 students — unfortunately two of them were not able to make the journey — but 20 students from the grade 7 class of St. Luke's School in Saskatoon, in the constituency of Saskatoon Southeast.

I had the great pleasure to meet with them earlier and to field some of their very challenging and probing questions. And I will be meeting with them again after question period and hopefully the questions will be a lot easier then. But judging from the quality and the nature of their questions, I would say that it's a comment on the excellence of the teacher, Michelle Bussière, and their parents. I think they probably are some of the best and brightest in my constituency.

So I welcome them all here to the Legislative Assembly, and I would ask everyone to join with me in making them feel very welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I have the opportunity today to introduce some people from my constituency. Even though it's a long

ways away and the roads were a bit icy, we have a delegation with us from Eastend, Saskatchewan. And so I would like, through you and to you and the rest of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to introduce from Eastend, Saskatchewan, Julie Johnston and Rick Girard who are hoping to meet with the Minister of Justice later this day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's my pleasure today to introduce to the Assembly through you and to all of us, students from Regina Lakeview constituency who are home-schooling students. And as part of their education they are coming here to the legislature to observe the activities, and then spend some time asking me some questions later. And with them are their teachers, Karen Herriot, Tara Semple, and Sylvie Roy. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Education Week

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Education Week in Saskatchewan. Education Week, as is education, is a partnership between the Government of Saskatchewan and the many education partners: the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and teachers, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

The theme this year, Mr. Speaker, is, Saskatchewan: World-Class Education. Our education system is indeed world-class. It is used repeatedly as a blueprint for other education systems throughout the world.

The education system in this province, Mr. Speaker, has undergone many changes. Those changes will enhance quality and promote excellence that will benefit every child. But excellence is only one goal of our education system; the other, Mr. Speaker, is accessibility. The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to an education system where every child has the opportunity to obtain the knowledge and the skills required to lead a successful and productive life. Everyone must have that opportunity regardless of where they live in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all members of this Assembly will join me in recognizing the importance of our education system to the future of this province and the leadership that our educators provide in Saskatchewan, in Canada, and worldwide.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in honour of Education Week we recognize the accomplishments of all the people in the education field, from teachers and support staff to parents and the students themselves, all of whom are committed to providing world-class education in this province. People in the education field have been under tremendous pressure the last several years as they struggle with cut-backs.

But in spite of this they have risen to the occasion and have continued to provide Saskatchewan young people with a fine education system.

This dedication is admirable and critical as we strive to make quality education a continuing priority — a priority that is essential if we are to prepare our young people for the challenges that they'll face in their futures. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in recognition of Education Week in Saskatchewan. The theme of this year's Education Week is, Saskatchewan: World-Class Education. Indeed, as an educator myself, I can attest to that — this is always an appropriate theme for the process of education. With the growing importance of the Internet's distance learning in our education system, our students have an opportunity like never before to share and grow from information from all over the globe.

However, not all students and teachers are fortunate enough to have the most of modern benefits. Teachers in some areas of our province are struggling with fewer resources, a shortage of staff, at times deteriorating facilities — all told, a crumbling infrastructure.

It is important also to recognize the talents of our teachers, the resilience of our educational institutions and the eagerness of our students. With all this talk about modern technology it would be easy to overlook, this year is also the 10th anniversary of the core curriculum. An education system is ultimately no better than the material it presents, and we should all take a moment to reflect on the hard work that has been done.

On behalf of the PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus, I would like to acknowledge Education Week and offer our profound thanks to all the hard-working people and groups in our education system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Francophone Week

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to inform you that the Premier has officially designated the week of March 16 to 22 as National Francophone Week in Saskatchewan.

M. le président, je voudrais annoncer que le premier ministre a officiellement désigné la semaine du 16 mars au 22 mars, Semaine Nationale de la Francophonie au Saskatchewan. Voilà cinq ans que l'Association d'éducation canadienne de langue française organise cette semaine, et je suis heureux de signaler à l'assemblée cette célébration des francophones de la Saskatchewan.

Chaque année, la Semaine Nationale de la Francophonie évoque un nouveau thème relié à sa langue et à sa culture. Cette année, le thème choisi est "La chanson d'expression française." Ce

thème, qui met en valeur la musique francophone, nous donne à penser qu'une communauté se définit beaucoup plus que par sa langue. Ses chansons, ses poèmes, ses contes populaires, ses traditions, s'avèrent tous aussi essentiels à la formation de l'identité d'une communauté.

Cette année, c'est sur la chanson que l'on met l'accent. Durant cette Semaine de la Francophonie, les élèves exploreront la chanson française au Canada et à travers le monde.

Au nom de tous mes jeunes . . . tous mes collègues de l'Assemblée, nous souhaitons une bonne semaine aux tous les fransaskois et fransaskaises.

(Translation: Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the Premier has officially designated the week of March 16 to March 22, National Francophone Week in Saskatchewan.

It is now five years that the national association on francophone education has organized this week and I am happy to point out to the Assembly this celebration of francophone communities in Saskatchewan. Each year National Francophone Week chooses a new theme related to its language and culture. This year the chosen theme is The Song of French Expression.

This theme, which places value on francophone music, causes us to think of a community that defines itself by much more than just its language. Its songs, its poems, its popular tales, its traditions, are all essential contributions to the formation of a community's identity.

This year it is on song that the accent is placed. During this francophone week students will explore French song in Canada and across the world.

On behalf of all my colleagues in the Assembly, we wish a good week to francophone men and women.)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the House on this special occasion, the National Francophone Week that began yesterday, Sunday, March 16, and will close this Saturday, March 22.

Je félicite l'Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française qui a créé cette semaine nationale il y a quatre ans. Je voudrais reconnaître aussi la contribution de l'Association culturelle franco-canadienne pour l'organisation des événements qui nous permettent de nous concentrer sur les contributions avancées par les francophones et en particulier, notre communauté fransaskois.

Ceci nous permet aussi de reconnaître l'impact international que nous donnent les communautés françaises. Une quarantaine pays, comme le Canada, ont le français soit comme une des langues officielles, soit comme une des langues importantes. Alors, il est évident que les personnes qui parlent français et l'anglais peuvent communiquer à beaucoup de personnes dans plusieurs pays. Quelle occasion pour les personnes bilingues!

(Translation: I congratulate the Canadian Association on Francophone Education which has created this national week four years ago. I would like to recognize also the contribution of the French Canadian cultural association for the organization of the events which permit us to focus on the contributions made by francophones and in particular, our fransaskois community.

This also permits us to recognize the international impact of our French communities. A quarantine country like Canada has French both as an official language and as an important language. So it is evident that people who speak French and English can communicate with many people in several countries. What an advantage for bilingual people!

By early April, I will have had the opportunity to participate within my constituency at two official openings of new fransaskois school facilities. One at St. Isidore-de-Belleveue and the other at Vonda. These communities now . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member's time has expired.

St. Patrick's Day

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Irish poet James Stephens once wrote:

Let us sing and dance until
We shall know the final art,
How to banish good and ill
With the laughter of the heart.

Today as we begin such an auspicious week, the whole world knows it's also St. Patrick's Day, the day when people everywhere wish they had my legitimate claim to Irish roots; the day when we celebrate the Irish, their accomplishments, and of course their idiosyncracies.

Their accomplishments are many and timeless. Most notable is the Irish love of language, as the above selection suggests. And their ability to use language is also able to tug at our hearts, enliven our imagination, and move us to tears and laughter, often at the same time. It was once said that all their wars were happy and all their songs sad. And that is not far from the truth.

The idiosyncracies of the Irish, Mr. Speaker, we will ignore, except to say they are undoubtedly overblown as the result of some irresponsible press.

And this is a day in North America when we celebrate the many contributions to our society by people of Irish descent; a day when we remember that these accomplishments began in poverty and discrimination, and were overcome by determination and fortitude. They did it with the laughter of the heart Stephens talks about.

I invite all of us to do the rounds and "wet the Shamrock." Erin go bragh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rider Pride Alive and Well in Saskatchewan

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday last I spoke here about how communities come together. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's now a matter of record. We found out over the weekend, Mr. Speaker, that Rider pride is very much alive and well in the province of Saskatchewan.

On Saturday the Roughriders held a telethon as a last-ditch effort to raise funds to save the team. Although we all knew the team was in a do-or-die situation, the people came through. Thanks to the outpouring of support from the communities, the team scored a major victory and surpassed its goal by selling 215,000 tickets. The people of the province deserve a big round of applause, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing the team's importance to this province and for not letting an 87-year tradition die.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

30th Annual Oilmen's Banquet

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the Minister of Energy and Mines and myself had the pleasure of attending the 30th annual oilmen's banquet which is part of the oilmen's bonspiel held at Lloydminster.

Ninety-six rinks entered in the bonspiel and approximately a thousand oilmen and women attended the banquet.

The highlight of the evening, Mr. Speaker, was the nomination of Howie Cayford as oilman of the year. Mr. Cayford richly deserves this honour, having given years of service and dedication for the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan.

The oil and gas industry is an integral part of the economy of the Lloydminster constituency.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the area received the second highest bonus-bid activity in the province at 3.5 million. However, it is a service industry and the oilmen who work in the rigs that are the backbone of the employment in my area.

I am proud to say that employment in the Lloydminster heavy oil area increased by 12 per cent in 1996 and a whopping land sale revenue increase by 96 per cent.

The oil and gas industry is tremendously important to the economy of the province, Mr. Speaker.

Revenues for '96-97 will exceed 600 million and create or maintain 18,000 jobs. This activity is an example of partnership between government and private business which is creating employment and re-energizing our economy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Industrial Vacancy Rate

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada Safeway Ltd. recently announced that it would be closing its MacDonald's Consolidated warehouse in Regina, affecting 142 employees. This is in addition to some 500 jobs which have been lost in the industry in the past five years.

As a result, Regina now has the dubious distinction of having the highest industrial vacancy rate of eight major cities included in a recent survey, and a vacancy rate which is more than double that of Calgary.

Will the Minister of Economic Development explain his theory on why businesses continue to consolidate outside of Saskatchewan in favour of Alberta or Manitoba when Saskatchewan's geological location makes it the obvious place to centralize?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from the member opposite, given the fact that their Prime Minister, Mr. Chrétien, was . . . recently chose Saskatoon to come to on part of his western tour to look at jobs being created at one of Saskatchewan's important new businesses — Shuttle Craft.

Now obviously he takes great pride in Saskatchewan businesses, something the member opposite has not done once since she was elected to this House. And I say that that is too bad.

The fact of the matter is I have here a list of the new businesses in the province of Saskatchewan, those incorporated in 1996, a number of new businesses — 3,619 — which is a record high since 1981. That's the highest it's ever been, new incorporations in the province of Saskatchewan.

So I say to the member opposite, look at Regina where we have IPSCO, which is expanding, doing new and exciting things in heavy-wall pipe. Look at the upgrader and the new things that are happening there in terms of heavy oil, creating jobs. Look at the Wheat Pool with their new expansion into hog production.

I say to the member opposite, if you'd look at the bright side of life . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I obviously didn't get an answer to the question but that doesn't surprise me.

Mr. Speaker, instead of creating low-paying, part-time jobs, which presently makes up 29 per cent of Saskatchewan's workforce, one must question why this government is not paying more attention to the creation of well-paying jobs that families can survive on.

The official opposition is not alone in questioning how many more warehouses will have to close and how many jobs will be lost before this government begins to address the fact it must improve the business climate in this province. Which one of the obstacles facing Saskatchewan business does the minister believe is causing this terrible atmosphere? Could it be the government's labour legislation, or workmen's compensation rates, or maybe the high utility rates, or really do you believe it's a combination of all of them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite knew the facts about retail sales being the highest in Canada in Saskatchewan — higher than Alberta or Manitoba — she would know that the changes to warehousing have nothing to do with retail sales or in fact the number of jobs.

And the members opposite may, if they were in government — ever happened to be in government — legislate to keep the economy exactly the same as it was back in the 1960s, but the fact of the matter is that warehousing in Canada is changing dramatically. Companies like Canadian Tire, Superstore — which are expanding in Regina — do not need warehouses. Now you may say that you would step in and stop that from happening and keep everything as it was in the 1960s or '70s. Can't be done.

And I say to the member opposite, look at the new jobs being created in information technology — \$20 million in movie industry announced last week. You might even want to read the *Leader-Post* on the front page — all of the jobs that are being created there. Don't be so negative about jobs that you believe you could do something to save, when we all know that the economy is changing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crop Insurance

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when a new crop insurance program was announced several weeks ago, the official opposition suggested that this government would have its work cut out for itself in trying to attract farmers. Because of this government's history in cancelling GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts and taking \$188 million from the GRIP surplus and directing these funds into general revenue, Saskatchewan farmers are suspicious about virtually every government initiative.

Given the fact that today is the final day to register for the crop insurance program, can the Minister of Agriculture tell this House how many producers have actually signed up?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I want to thank the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, for that question. We do not have that figure yet. In fact people can still sign up today. Over the weekend, the Crop Insurance offices were open on Saturday and we're also taking applications today. Next year, it's the intention of Crop

Insurance to end the contract deadline as of March 1 because we want a program, Mr. Speaker, that's good for all the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, not just the ones south of No. 1 or north of No. 1. But we need this to be a program that's for all farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has a great deal of work ahead of it to overcome the lack of trust that the farmers have in this administration. Out of the 16,000 farmers who dropped out of crop insurance between 1991 and 1996, only about 500 had signed new contracts with Crop Insurance as of last Thursday — considerably less than the 5,000 that the Crop Insurance Corporation had planned on; underlines this particular fact.

Given the poor sign-up rate and the need for this government to establish new initiatives to attract more producers to the program, will the minister announce an extension of the crop insurance deadline in this House today?

There's no concern about what happens south of No. 1 Highway. All you have to do is look out the window and see all the snow and the inability for people to even consider going out into the fields. Will the minister announce an extension of the deadline?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I want to thank the member opposite. And I know that the member should know this, but he may not realize it and I'm going to tell him again. This government wrote off \$150 million in crop insurance debt this past year, Mr. Speaker, to try and show the federal government — the federal Liberals — what they should be doing, finally convincing them of at least a portion of the write-off.

But what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we are continuing to take applications today. Next year of course, that deadline will be March 1. But the amount of 39,000 farmers that were in the program last year we believe will be part of the program again this year. We have had good reports on the changes to crop insurance.

We have had a premium reduction, Mr. Speaker, of 23 per cent. And the member opposite sits there and argues about a 23 per cent discount in premiums. I can't understand that, Mr. Speaker.

On the other hand, we have a federal government that's allowing the railways to charge more for freight rates, but he doesn't say nothing about that. I wish he would get in tune with the agricultural concerns out there in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Liability Protection for Volunteers

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my

question today is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, as you are aware, the seven volunteer directors of the Eastend curling — or skating, rather — complex are being personally sued for \$37,000 after a 50/50 draw in their community failed to raise as much money as they originally expected.

Now this could result in a major financial hardship for the men and women involved, none of whom could have ever anticipated this outcome when they put their names forward to serve their community as volunteer directors.

Mr. Minister, I know you can't comment on this specific case while it is before the courts. However, resolutions in support of changes to the legislation have passed both at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention and at the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention. And so in general terms, do you think that volunteer directors of non-profit corporations should be held personally liable if they acted in good faith?

And, Mr. Minister, right after question period I will introduce a private members' Bill that protects volunteers from this kind of action. My question, Minister, is this: will you support the legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not in a position to comment on this particular case, but I know that the legislation in Saskatchewan as it relates to serving in non-profit corporations as directors includes many provisions that relate to this particular issue. And I'd be very happy to receive more information about this particular matter as we try to correct the problem, if there is one.

But I think practically, with insurance for directors, there are remedies to solve the problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Minister, of course the insurance is always an answer. But premiums go up as you collect more and more, and the reality is that these are volunteers who shouldn't have to be buying insurance, nor should their non-profit corporation.

Mr. Minister, this is the kind of case that threatens the very future of volunteerism in Saskatchewan. Already it's impossible to find anyone in Eastend, Saskatchewan, who wants to serve on the rink boards any more. And I'm sure that the same problem will spread to other communities once they start to hear about this particular case.

Mr. Minister, ministers are protected from personal liability. For instance, you can't be held personally responsible for the things that keep going and being screwed up in the Justice department. Why not provide the same protection for volunteers?

Mr. Minister, the people of Eastend would like to meet with you after question period to discuss the issue of personal

liability. And they have some very good arguments why insurance is not the answer. They have promised not to discuss the specifics of their own case. So will you meet with them today, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, thank you for the further question. I would be happy to meet with these people. I know that this is a concern with a number of people in Saskatchewan. We have some legislation that covers most situations, but there are clearly some times when people don't totally understand all of the ways that people can be protected and so I'd be very interested in meeting with these people.

First Nations Taxation

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for whichever minister wants to grab the hot potato of native taxation. Mr. Speaker, a number of reserves have not been submitting provincial taxes for some time now. The Cowessess Reserve has admitted it has been withholding PST (provincial sales tax) for over a year. There's also a report that the Bear Claw Casino on White Bear Reserve is not paying the liquor consumption tax. The government is sending out mixed messages on this issue. The Finance minister says everyone has to pay their taxes, but the liquor minister says the matter is under negotiation.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know of too many people who get a chance to negotiate paying their taxes. Mr. Minister, why the double standard, and why are some Indian bands given preferential treatment in being allowed to withhold provincial taxes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. First of all, as you will understand, I can't comment on specific tax cases because tax information is amongst the most confidential information that a government has. What I will say is that this government's policy is clear. We collect taxes all across the province wherever the taxes are due.

Now as far as sitting down and talking to somebody about their taxes, that also is government policy. We have no desire to drive people out of business. So to have meetings and to sit down and say, do you have a financial problem, can we work out a schedule whereby these taxes are paid, is absolutely standard procedure in collecting taxes.

The bottom line is simple: this government collects its taxes all across the province in a fair and equitable manner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Sales Tax

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are follow-up questions for the Minister of Finance.

Madam Minister, for the second week in a row Saskatchewan is facing a big deadline. On Saturday night the Riders and their fans came through in the final hour and reached their goal. Now Saskatchewan people are waiting to see whether you will come through on Thursday with a cut to the PST that everyone is looking for. Business is demanding it, despite your efforts to say that they weren't last week; thousands of people who signed our petitions are demanding it.

Madam Minister, is this going to happen on Thursday? Are you going to cut the PST, or are taxpayers and businesses going to have to suffer through another losing season thanks to your 9 per cent PST.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. As the member opposite would know, I'm going to make no comments about the budget — he's going to have to wait until Thursday. But what I would like to comment on in the House, because I think the House and the people of Saskatchewan have to be reminded of this, is how ludicrous it is for the Tories to be here talking about tax cuts.

When they were government they raised the sales tax two points; they introduced and increased the flat tax; they increased the high income surtax; they increased the gas tax. Those are some of the taxes they succeeded in increasing. They tried to have a hospitals tax which failed. They tried a used-car tax. They tried to harmonize. And with all of these taxes going up, at the same time they managed to add about a billion dollars a year to the debt of the province.

I'll say one thing to the member opposite. In all matters we will listen to the people of Saskatchewan across the province, but one thing they don't want us to do on matters of finance is listen to the Tories.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I almost forgot to thank the minister. I understand on Friday she compared our party to the Mike Harris Tories in Ontario, and we thank you for that tremendous compliment.

Mr. Speaker, as you will recall, in his first election as leader, Mike Harris ran third. By his second election he campaigned on a platform of tax cuts and his party rose up and crushed the NDP (New Democratic Party).

Madam Minister, is this the only way the people of Saskatchewan are going to see a cut in the PST? Do you have any plan to lower the PST in the next couple of years, or will it only happen after the NDP is defeated in 1999?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. He's going to have to wait for the budget to have all of those issues talked about. And I will say this, what they always forget as well is the record of this government. Besides targeting tax cuts to business, we have provided income tax cuts to everybody across the province who pays income tax. So as I say, wait for the budget.

But again, I'll tell the members opposite what we won't do. We won't do what the Tories did when they said in 1982, let's have a great, big, fat, wonderful tax cut. It feels great. We love it. And then a few years later — a billion dollars a year onto the debt later — they bring that same tax back, but at an even higher rate.

Mr. Speaker, there are only three more sleeps for the members opposite. We will listen to everybody in the province but we won't listen to the Tories.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regional Telephone Exchanges

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for well over a year the official opposition has been impressing on this government how unfair the present telephone exchanges are. As such, I would like to serve notice of the introduction of a private members' Bill entitled the regional telephone districts Act.

The purpose to this Bill would be to expand the size of local calling areas throughout rural Saskatchewan. Instead of postage-stamp-sized local calling regions as we presently have, we would propose larger calling areas which correspond with larger neighbouring communities or regional economic development authorities.

Mr. Speaker, the present boundaries are as antiquated as the days of the regional telephone co-ops. Will the minister in charge of SaskTel indicate whether she and her government feel that the present system is outdated and unfair? And will she support this initiative?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question. And I'm so glad to notice that some members of the opposition were present last week when I addressed the SARM convention and shared with SARM that we had some very advanced work on this exact proposition, at which time I received a standing ovation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I was at SARM convention. Mr. Speaker, I was at SARM . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Now the hon. member of Saltcoats doesn't need help from either side of the House. And I'll ask all the members to allow the hon. member for Saltcoats to be heard.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I happened to be at SARM for a couple of days last week and if they had a standing ovation, it was definitely the only one they got.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said in the past few months about the competition that SaskTel is experiencing from new players in the long-distance market. Expanding our local calling areas

as the regional telephone exchange Act proposes would result in more local calls, which would translate into more revenue for SaskTel and less revenue for long-distance competitors.

Madam Minister, in this new age of competition in the telephone industry, would this not be one of SaskTel's best tools to compete with competition?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I didn't happen to notice whether any of the members opposite who were attending the convention also stood with the rest of the crowd.

But I do want to say that we are aware that the demographics of Saskatchewan are changing. We know that this is a very important issue, communications in rural Saskatchewan. And that's why we have some fairly advanced work on it, and we hope to be making that announcement not too much later this year.

But this is out of our concern for the needs of communication in rural Saskatchewan. And I recall, a little under a year ago, when the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, advocated privatizing SaskTel during the labour dispute. And in private hands I would say that it would be . . . in private hands it would be highly unlikely that the owner of the company would be concerned for the communications needs of people in rural and remote Saskatchewan where we have made significant investment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the minister be careful which way she's aiming her gun; she's got it a bit in the wrong direction here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, this government does not need to be told the cost of doing business outside a major centre is higher, and telephone rates play a significant role. Expanding telephone rate districts would help business to remain and grow more competitive. If this government is truly committed to creating business and employment in rural Saskatchewan, this is one step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, many people I have spoken to about this issue have suggested they are prepared to accept a minor increase in their basic telephone rates to expand local calling areas because this will reduce their long-distance charges. I have collected several hundred names on petitions from people who support this initiative.

Does the minister not agree that this initiative would help to reduce the gap between the cost of doing business in rural and urban Saskatchewan, and will she support rural businesses who are calling for this change?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'll be reviewing *Hansard* tomorrow with great interest since the member opposite has suggested that we should increase local telephone rates.

I also want to remind the members opposite that last year during the task force, the review of the Crown corporations, that the official opposition did make representation to that body recommending privatization.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

911 Service Charges

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before the last provincial election, the government promised that 10 per cent of VLT (video lottery terminal) revenues would go to municipal governments. Just after the last provincial election, this promise was scuttled.

And at that time, Madam Minister advised that it was because the revenues from VLTs would be required to institute a 911 service throughout the province. Now we hear that individual telephone subscribers are to be charged 75 cents a month for 911 service, and municipalities are to be charged \$1.50 per capita per year.

My question of the minister is, will she now advise, if these charges are going to be levied to cover the cost of 911, does this mean that the 10 per cent of VLT revenues will be returned to our communities as initially promised by this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the question that the member opposite asks is about a year tardy. This issue was dealt with a year ago.

And communities accepted and agreed when this . . . SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) and the SARM and SUMA deliberations, the only point that they could agree on was the need for an emergency telephone system in the 911. So part of the money was used for the mapping and for the development of that system.

The charges that the member opposite is speaking of now are of supposition only because there is still two advisory committees, a technical committee, and another advisory committee, working on developing the 911 system which will cover Saskatchewan in a very efficient, cost-effective way. And any individual charges at this point are simply speculation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At approximately 100 million a year for VLT revenues, then the 10 per cent would of course be \$10 million. Now if that is going into the development of a 911 service as the minister claims, then can she confirm that the 911 service will be free from additional charges to subscribers and to municipalities because she's

already got this \$10 million fund with which to pay for it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the member opposite on his acumen in mathematics, that 10 per cent of 100 million is 10 million.

But I say again that the development of the 911 system, the recommendations are now in the hands of two committees on which municipalities are represented both on the technical side and the other, advisory side. At this point no charges or lack thereof have been confirmed because it's still in development.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 201 — The Regional Telephone Districts Act

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Melfort, first reading of a Bill, The Regional Telephone Districts Act.

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

Bill No. 205 — The Non-profit Corporations Amendment Act, 1997 Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés sans but lucratif

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of an Act to amend The Non-profit Corporations Act, 1997.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Mr. Goohsen: — By leave, later this day, Mr. Speaker.

Leave not granted.

The Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 16 — The Occupational Therapists Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, The Occupational Therapists Act, 1997 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 17 — The Dental Disciplines Act

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, The Dental Disciplines Act, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 18 — The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Act

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 19 — The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of Bill No. 19, The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act.

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

(1430)

TABLING OF DOCUMENT

The Speaker: — Hon. members, before orders of the day I wish to table a note to the revised summary report by the Chief Electoral Officer.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the House Leader for the government, I hereby table the answer to question 1, and with leave of the Assembly, in order to save time, I am prepared to table the answers to items 2 through to 10.

The Speaker: — The answer to question no. 1 is tabled — order, order — and the Government Whip has requested leave to simultaneously table the answers to items 2 through 10. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

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.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to continue debate on the throne speech, which has been called by some a mighty fine throne speech.

Now you may remember that on Friday before we adjourned, I included a small story about chickens and that story inspired

one constituent to ask me, why did the Tory and Liberal chicken cross the road, Mr. Speaker? To get to the same side . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well chicken jokes are like that, Mr. Speaker. But I digress.

I want to concentrate today on my remarks on the many strengths of Saskatchewan people and our need to make sure that every person in the province has an opportunity to participate and to benefit. In my remarks Friday, I talked about the importance of community-based solutions and the terrific work being done by community organizations under the umbrella of the child action plan. These joint community and government innovations are being honoured nationally by the Champions for Children award, and these innovations can become the model for a national approach.

In the last couple of years, I've come to believe that there's nothing we can do that's more important than making sure that all pregnant mothers, babies, young families, and children get the nutrition and support they need.

Probably many people in this House have acquaintance with people who have been the victims of abuse or victims of neglect. And if there is one thing that strikes you after many years of talking to people who have that kind of situation, is that the damage does not repair itself easily and that it's perpetuated for a lifetime if the cycle goes unbroken. And part of solving these problems is the proper kind of community supports, but the other part is the proper kind of income support.

So in addition to the child action plan and in keeping with our commitment to children, our Premier aggressively put forward a proposal for a national child benefit program. It's a program to complement the community-based programs by providing families and children with adequate financial resources.

The work that our Premier and other ministers have done at the national level and with the support of other premiers has resulted in the federal government agreeing to support this initiative in their last budget. And I think once again it affirms Saskatchewan people in a leadership position nationwide.

When fully implemented, it'll be the first national social program in 30 years. And I say, well done Saskatchewan, because this mirrors Saskatchewan achievements in medicare.

In their recent budget, the federal budget would have had to put 1.5 billion back into health care to meet what our government has done in Saskatchewan. Their own health commission recommended that their target of 11 billion for Canada is not enough, and that it should be 12.5 billion. So perhaps the members opposite should concentrate less on privatizing health care and creating a two-tier system, and more on ensuring the federal Liberals maintain their commitment to a strong public system.

And only because it was such a good quote, I'll quote again my colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow who commented recently during question period that the Liberals never did understand medicare. And certainly the comments we hear here in the

House every day would cause us to agree with that.

So in keeping with the spirit of medicare we need to build a society where everyone is fairly included in the benefits of economic growth. I thought perhaps when the Liberal opposition is finished playing \$4-a-day games they'll turn their attention to the big picture where federal Liberal policies have hurt millions of people in Canada.

I think if we look even at issues like the CPP (Canada Pension Plan), unfortunately we're going to have to take some leadership from Saskatchewan on this one. Because our Finance minister, over and over again, put forward solutions to the federal Minister of Finance, supported by B.C. (British Columbia), and supported by work done by our Women's Secretariat. And what do we find out when we look at this proposed Liberal plan for CPP reform?

It hits disabled people the most, poor people the most, and frail, elderly women. And I feel bad because the federal Liberal position on CPP was supported by the opposition Liberal member from Humboldt who certainly, as a woman, should understand the need to make sure that elderly women are not the poorest people in our society.

So the federal Liberals, with the support of the Saskatchewan Liberals, are attacking directly the people who are most in need of a safety net in our society. And I think we need to hold them responsible for their support of those kinds of actions.

On a more humorous note though, as we tackle these problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need both diligence and a bit of a sense of humour. Recently there was a comment by the Chair of the Regina Catholic School Teachers Association to a meeting of Regina teachers. And I quote a bit loosely because I don't remember the exact figures he used, but he said that we're living in a society with a hundred problems and only 37 solutions.

But in this regard I want to speak a little bit about part of our community who continues to be creative in their pursuit of solutions, and that's the writers, the visual and performing artists, and the filmmakers that were referenced in the throne speech.

As well as being married to an artist, I have a lifelong interest in the arts that goes back to trips to the art gallery, music festivals, and ballet with my mother. Maybe not quite as enthusiastically when I was younger as now. But experience has taught me that choosing a creative path in life often means choosing poverty for the individuals who decide that this is their life's work. The average yearly wage for an artist is \$8,000.

But in our priority setting, I am proud that our government has not forgotten the arts and is continuing to support the ongoing development of a vital artistic community. Every town in Saskatchewan . . . I think we'd be hard pressed to find a town that doesn't participate in cultural and heritage events, because expressing ourselves and thinking about ourselves has always been popular in Saskatchewan.

Recently the MacKenzie Art Gallery opened a show of works by Saskatchewan artist Art McKay, who was part of the famous Regina Five, including Ronald Bloore, Kenneth Lochhead, Ted Godwin, and Doug Morton. In fact there's a quote from the *Leader-Post* of February 8 that asks, when did this start in Saskatchewan that this became such a priority for us. And he says:

Perhaps 1947, when the newfangled socialist CCF government here formed North America's first arts board.

And I congratulate that previous government for having the wisdom to do that.

More recently, in a conversation with a friend, I was discussing *The Englishman's Boy* which is a book by Guy Vanderhaghe that recently won the Governor General's Award, and she said to me — and I thought it was a particularly thoughtful remark — if we don't tell our story, who will?

And two of the people that I want to recognize today who are telling Saskatchewan's story are Gail Bowen and Steven Onda. The news release mentions a six film deal for Regina producer, a \$20 million project. Local author Gail Bowen, author of the Joanne Kilbourne mystery series, is having five of her novels made into feature TV films. And Steven Onda of Heartland Motion Pictures, along with Shaftesbury Films of Toronto and BBS (Baton Broadcasting System), are behind support for the film with a sixth film based on a novel by Saskatoon writer Rob Forsyth being included.

And people don't understand the employment impact of the film industry, but we'll be able to employ a full crew here of about 170 people that will have ongoing work as a result of the successful contract for these films. So this is again a very exciting industry, to not only be able to tell our story through authors like Gail Bowen but to have it translated into film.

The last book I want to mention under the book awards is the Liberal "red book" which got an award in the best fiction category. And I think many people appreciated that that was a just reward at those book awards.

But to return to our theme, I want to talk about telling our story to the world. Because recently we've seen an upsurge in activity by aboriginal artists that's bringing a new dimension to public arts in Saskatchewan. And as well, we have the diversity expressed in multicultural activities.

Every time I participate in these events, whether it's the power and beauty of the powwow, the enjoyment of the jig, the traditional beauty of the highly stylized Indo-Canada dancers, I am just overwhelmed by the richness of the Saskatchewan culture and our continuing willingness to support these activities in all of Saskatchewan.

Today I attended the opening ceremonies for National Francophone Week, pleased to add my support to the vitality and the work being done by francophone institutions and organizations in Saskatchewan. This work can't help but enrich our children's education and our connectedness to the

continuing unity of Canada.

I want to talk a little bit about how each of us in Saskatchewan, in our own way, have to look to the future and become part of making the changes that'll strengthen us in the 21st century.

Because it's precisely these qualities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have enabled us to buckle down and eliminate our deficit. As we move towards our fourth balanced budget, we need to remind ourselves that it was our common sense of purpose and our sharing of the difficulty and sacrifices that enabled us to achieve this goal.

This was no small thing. I think everyone here experienced the pain and the difficulty of these changes. And now we'll begin to experience the social dividends as we're able to increase our investment in people. But investing in people means we have to take a hard look at Saskatchewan — who lives here and what the needs are.

Our Premier has said, and I quote:

Inequality is no longer just a problem between those who live in developed nations and those who don't. More and more, globalization and the information revolution are marginalizing many working families within developed nations like Canada and the United States. And even as our economy grows, we're in danger of building third world prospects for families in first world nations.

It can't be ignored that we're approaching the same patterns of wealth distributions as in the 1920s in Canada. And my preference would be to read about it in the history books.

The Women's Secretariat has been an exceptional voice in the development of policies affecting 52 per cent of our population who are women. And we try to stay close to the community, co-sponsoring events, educationals, learning workshops.

But recently we published new research on the wage gap so that government policy can be more sensitive to the varying impacts on aboriginal women, disabled women, immigrant women, retired women, rural women, women of varying educational achievements, women in non-traditional occupations and business. Because these policies won't be meaningful unless they actually meet the needs of the individuals who are affected in different ways.

But as we get this more specific information we'll be able to be more sensitive to how these programs should be targeted. And as job creation increases, it's important that everybody be included in those benefits as well.

So I just briefly want to touch on the topic of unequal relations and unequal opportunity. I think it's timely because this is the week set aside for Education Week and March 21 is the kick-off for International Week for the Elimination of Racism.

Coping with the diversity in our society is no longer an option nor a luxury. As we've seen, whether it's in the national debates including Quebec or even in some of the internal problems that

provinces have had, issues of race and ethnicity can have a powerful effect on the Canadian society, in the economy.

(1445)

A society is not viable unless everyone is participating because you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people who are left out become dependent, and this is not a successful way to go. I want to mention Dr. Fraser Mustard who has talked about the need for a civil society to be one in which everyone participates and that those societies are the ones who have the most successful economies. So democracy and participation are important, not just because they're good things to do but they're important because they create successful economies.

Among the Indian and Metis people of Saskatchewan, we're dealing with about hundred years of benign and sometimes wilful neglect that has resulted in damaged and dependent communities. And I think to change this we're going to have to develop a passionate dislike for inequality — an embarrassment that it exists in our midst — and a sense of personal shame that we're not acting individually and collectively to change this circumstance as quickly as possible.

I don't believe the solution is just money. I think it's creating more opportunities to participate in education, employment, business developments, service deliveries, civic affairs and community activities.

There's been many ways that this government has undertaken to do this. We have several agreements with health districts in the province who have signed partnership agreements to address the issues of aboriginal representation in the workplace, and they see it as an important part of community wellness.

We have partnership agreements with unions to improve representation in the workforce and business partnerships that create jobs and economic development opportunities, as well as multi-party training agreements that increase access to jobs.

On another level, we have agreements to work out the elements of practical self-government and enhanced self-determination for first nation and Metis communities, on the premiss that they'll be effective agents of change. It's certain that in the last hundred years we've proven that federal and provincial governments have no magic answers.

So I believe at every level, it's through these stronger relationships and these protocols, enhanced understanding and friendships that will create the change.

I want to mention some things that are being done under the *Partnership for Renewal*. There was an aboriginal tourism strategy completed in spring 1996 and is being implemented in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The creation of a first nations call centre, the first of its kind in Canada, announced in September 1996. The Department of Economic Development has compiled an aboriginal business directory for use in federal and provincial government procurement and Crown procurement activities. Consultations have been conducted with the Metis Nation,

aboriginal training institutions, and other groups as part of the development of a Saskatchewan training strategy which is expected to be announced in the spring.

The Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat has been coordinating Saskatchewan's participation in the 12-year treaty land entitlement process. Twenty-eight claims have been settled as of December 31, '96, involving the transfer of 52,000 — approximately — acres of land to reserve status.

When all of the transfers are done . . . I think it's important for people to understand that prior to going into this process, first nations people had approximately 1 per cent of the land mass of Saskatchewan and after this is completed they will have approximately 2 per cent. And in terms of population they are at about 9 per cent of the population of the province. So this is still a small amount of land in comparison to their representation within the population of Saskatchewan.

The government's framework agreement, also with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) — which I'm going to brag a little bit about — with the casino development, has created in the province around 1,200 new jobs in this year; at least 700 of which are filled by first nations and Metis people. And this is very important because employment and a job is the first step to being able to move out into fuller participation in the economy. So I was very pleased that we were able to sign that very progressive agreement, supported by the members opposite.

I want to, for a minute, talk about all the positives we have as far as our quality of life goes in Saskatchewan. An article January 18 from the *Leader-Post*, a doctor moves back from the U.S. (United States). He says that other pressures south of the border are actually worse than the problems in Canada that he thought he was trying to escape when he left. He said in the United States people didn't come in until they were very ill and that was partly the problem of having to pay each time they made a visit to the doctor. So they came in with problems that were very advanced and very complicated.

He also was concerned about the racist attitudes in the area where he was living. He found out that U.S. doctors had to have about three and a half more staff to handle all the bills from a private billing system, with all the various insurance companies that participate in the health system there. And he also found out that U.S. doctors aren't guaranteed that they'll be paid — they're on their own.

So he says that Saskatchewan is where he now intends to stay. The NDP government has risen a lot in his estimation, and they've handled a difficult situation really well. So this is, I guess, a comment from a doctor who knows and a doctor who's been there — been there and back.

The other article is about a young person. It's from the *Free Press* on January 1 — a young man who wants to come back home. He and his young family moved out of Saskatchewan for what they thought would be an opportunity in another place, but now he believes that Regina has more to offer a young family in terms of safety, outdoor activities, and simplicity.

And Bob Reed, who's a labour market information analyst with the Human Resource Centre of Canada, agrees with his theory. He said he has an increase in calls for employment from former Saskatchewan residents. In his opinion, most of the queries are from individuals ranging ages 25 to 44; and correspondingly there's fewer calls from people seeking employment outside the province.

So Selby is certain that these are an indication of things to come. And as the economy improves there's many young people who are quite prepared to move back at the first opportunity because they think this is a great place to live and they're just waiting for their chance to do that.

In closing I want to agree with our Premier in his solution to many of the problems in Saskatchewan. And I quote again:

If we are to prevent a two-tiered society from becoming entrenched in Canada, we need to encourage change at three levels — in our families, in business, (and) in our governments. (And) in all three we need a new ethic of citizenship.

As well we need to embrace the skills and contributions — here I divert from the Premier's comments to my own — of the immigrant and refugee community who have so much energy and talent and goodwill to offer and who face such incredible barriers. I think we really need to work to make sure that all people are welcome and included. Again, especially with all the federal cuts and changes to this particular area, it's having a very negative effect on people's ability to acquire English language skills and also their ability to participate in the workplace independently.

So I just want to say in closing that I believe the throne speech reaffirms our commitment to our children and to each other, and that it recognizes the enormous strength of Saskatchewan people. It's a speech that supports investing in people and it's a speech that's in tune with the times. So for that reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I speak against the amendment and enthusiastically in support of the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to also enter into the debate here today surrounding the throne speech. I want to just start by thanking the people of Kindersley, the constituency of Kindersley that I'm privileged to represent. And also to thank the legislative staff and the new pages here and welcome them to the Assembly, and begin by thanking all of the legislative staff throughout the building.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm pleased to enter the debate here today. However, I believe that we as taxpayers and the people of Saskatchewan as taxpayers could be saving a lot of money by getting right down to the serious business of government rather than concerning themselves with a throne speech such as we've had.

The concerns that plague Saskatchewan families, like soaring youth crime, high taxes, health care problems, education, and

creating jobs in the province of Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan people, are the issues we should be debating. These are the types of things that we are not debating in the throne speech. We're debating the fluffy statements made by the government's throne speech.

Instead of spending several days listening to government MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) pat themselves on the back, we could save taxpayers over a quarter of a million dollars by following the lead of Alberta once again.

In Alberta, the Premier gives a speech outlining the goals of the provincial government and then the MLAs go straight into debating the issues. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'll make very few remarks today about the throne speech, but I'm anxious to get on with debating the real issues.

Besides saving money for taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, we should be limiting our comments because this throne speech is almost the same as last year's and the year before that. Not much has really changed.

The NDP are still trying to figure out just what it takes to create jobs here in the province. After comparing the latest job statistics, it should be clear to members opposite the road to job prosperity has more to do with lower taxes than with any other single measure.

Well the job numbers are up slightly. They certainly are nowhere near the 60,000 jobs that the NDP promised in each and every government throne speech since they formed government in 1991.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while Saskatchewan numbers were up a little bit, Alberta and Manitoba continue to create thousands more jobs each month than the NDP do here. Now most of the reason is because both provinces, I think, are run by Conservative governments which recognize the benefits of smaller government, less regulation for businesses, and importantly, lower taxes. That's their philosophy, Mr. Speaker, and I share that philosophy.

What is the NDP's philosophy here in Saskatchewan? Well the NDP may say they believe in less government, but government has got bigger; it's got more intrusive since the NDP were elected. They may say they believe in less regulation, but government regulations haven't been reduced at all in our province. They may say they believe in lower taxes to spur the economy and create jobs, but the NDP have done nothing but raise taxes for years. This government is collecting over 1.5 billion more dollars in taxes, while our neighbours have done their best to keep taxes down in Alberta and Manitoba.

The NDP say they want to create jobs, but instead they pass pro-labour legislation that impedes job creation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP say a lot of things but their actions speak louder than words, and this government's record speaks for itself.

We desperately need jobs in Saskatchewan and the throne

speech has once again promised that.

We desperately need funds for our education system. Our universities are cutting hundreds of positions, increasing tuition by double digits, dropping colleges — all because of a lack of support from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder where it'll all stop. When the Premier today was in the Leader of the Opposition's position a number of years ago, he said, don't let any government tell you there isn't money for education; the money is there.

Well you have to ask the Premier today, where's the money? Where's the promised support? K to 12 is in no different position than our universities and regional colleges. After all, this government has taken \$20 million directly out of operating grants to our K to 12 system, and they still expect the educators to provide . . . and to be able to provide a quality of education for our children. They still expect our children to be equipped to compete against the children from all across Canada and all across the world.

Not only have the NDP cut operating grants to schools, they've cut capital repairs, they've increased costs through labour legislation, and they shifted the majority of funding education to the property tax base.

But according to the throne speech this year, the NDP say, and I quote, they want to, "Provide better tools to support classroom learning." Well I don't know about you, but most people can't buy tools without the necessary funds.

The same is true with health care. Our communities, especially rural ones, have had health care services hacked and slashed to the point of no return, and health care was the NDP's number one priority, according to their statements when they were in opposition. That was their number one priority.

Now after members opposite have marched into the rural communities, closed hospitals, taken contingency funds raised by local people, forced amalgamations and changes from the top down, now the throne speech pamphlet states the government wants to:

Collaborate with communities to ensure that the health system operates in a balanced, locally responsive manner.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that the promise of that comes a little too late for most communities. The NDP have already skipped the consultation process. They have already skipped to allowing school . . . or local boards the power to make decisions. Mr. Speaker, they have skipped listening to communities for the past several years, and as I said, actions speak louder than words.

(1500)

Another priority in this throne speech is renewing our highways and transportation system. Well, Mr. Speaker, we could start by using more revenue generated through the fuel tax fund toward actually fixing roads in this province. Right now Saskatchewan

has the highest provincial fuel tax of any of our neighbouring provinces. The NDP have increased it by 5 cents per litre — that tax — and that adds up to a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. For every litre of gasoline purchased at the pump, the NDP collect 15 cents. So while the provincial government collects hundreds of millions of dollars, estimated at about \$340 million in 1996, not much of that money goes towards actually building or maintaining highways in this province.

While our government spends little on our highways, Alberta spends one and a half times what it collects in fuel taxes; Manitoba spends over 90 per cent of what it receives in fuel taxes; and Saskatchewan spends . . . spending isn't even at 50 per cent of what it raises in fuel taxes.

It's true that a province can't be competitive without a competitive infrastructure and the lack of commitment to our province's highways has cost each and every one of us.

We also need to be lobbying the federal Liberals, Mr. Speaker, to implement a national highways program similar to the programs in the United States and Germany and several countries. In the U.S., the federal government picks up over 30 per cent of highway costs. You have to wonder why the same isn't being done here in Canada.

I would like to know how much business in Saskatchewan and Canada, in general, is lost because of the well . . . to the well-maintained interstate highway system across the United States. It's probably a significant amount; something we'll never really know.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP across the way should be lobbying the federal Liberals for our federal program, but they should be doing a better job of taking care of our highways themselves right here, now. Mr. Speaker, when the NDP again talk about strengthening our highways and transportation systems, I have to wonder just how new and improved they are going to be.

The long and the short of it is, Mr. Speaker, is that this throne speech doesn't offer the people of Saskatchewan very much at all. A *Star-Phoenix* editorial put it well by stating:

(The province is doing well) . . . but not well enough to expect any major expenditures in needed areas such as improving the deplorable highway system. We are doing well, but not (well) enough to expect any major changes to the way health care operates in this province.

Ditto for almost every other area of public concern, except that the Romanow New Democrats will improve their abysmal job-creation record . . .

This is a time for hope and optimism, according to the throne speech, but don't hope for any reductions in the sky-high sales tax or hold out any optimism about the government taking seriously the auditor's recommendations to make Crown corporations more accountable to the people who own them.

That was an editorial from March 8 of 1997, Mr. Speaker.

Now there are a great deal of other good comments in this same editorial, and I would urge members to read that editorial.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to the steps the NDP members across the way are willing to take, the PC caucus will once again hold this government accountable. We will once again prove that we are the only official opposition here in Saskatchewan. We'll bring forward proactive initiatives to deal with higher taxation, problems within the Workers' Compensation Board, the non-profit organizations Act, and issues to hold cabinet ministers accountable for their worldwide travels, and much, much more, Mr. Speaker.

We'll bring forward a health charter of rights that will ensure Saskatchewan families the medical services they deserve, guidelines for a staff cooling-off period after leaving positions in government, new measures regarding utility rate increases, and further reforms to the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we won't be just bringing forward alternatives to the government's way of doing things. We'll also make sure we hold this government accountable. That's another part of our job. We'll continue to criticize the NDP where it is deserved, but we'll also congratulate them when they make a good decision or policy.

Mr. Speaker, that's what the Saskatchewan people can expect from the PC caucus — the same kind of responsible opposition and representation that I believe they received in the past.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I believe this throne speech has been a failure for the people of Saskatchewan. I don't think it addresses the important concerns that the people of Saskatchewan have brought to our attention — specifically, tax reductions here in the province, and job creation. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we will not be supporting the throne speech.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to take part in this throne speech debate in the second session of this legislature. I am tempted after listening to the Leader of the Third Party make his remarks, to comment at length on what he had to say. But I am not going to do that today other than to say that I was somewhat disappointed in light of the fact of the encouraging things I said about the third party when I spoke in the budget speech debate in the last session; that he fell into that same old trap in his remarks as was the case in the 1980s where the Tories, under the Devine administration, talked consistently, leading up to 1982, about cutting taxes in a big, dramatic way and increasing expenditures in even a bigger dramatic way.

And the people of Saskatchewan know very well what that led to. It led to a situation where we are faced and our children will be faced with a debt which started at \$14 billion and interest charges which are in excess of \$800 million each and every year.

No one in this province, Mr. Speaker, will fall for that kind of an argument, which was the argument that the Liberals made last year and are making again this year. And I was really hoping that the Tories now would get away from that same

argument, but apparently they decided to go back to it. They're fighting for the same ground.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's all I want to say about that. I just want to begin my substantive remarks by saying how proud I am to speak in this debate on behalf of the constituents of Regina Dewdney. It is a constituency with people who provide me with much advice and much counsel about the issues which I have to raise in my caucus and which I have to raise in this House when the opportunity presents itself. I appreciate that very much. I try to stay very closely in touch with my constituents who make a very important input in the development of government policies and legislation.

And prior to this session I made a point of asking my constituents with a brochure and a questionnaire about the government's agenda leading up to this . . . to the next century. And I'm pleased to report to you and this legislature that there was overwhelming support for the direction that our government is taking and has taken.

Now the Speech from the Throne represents very well what my constituents, and I believe the people of Saskatchewan, are saying about what their priorities are. So as I begin my intervention today, I can say that I will not hesitate in supporting the statement . . . this statement of our government's priorities for the future because I am confident that these are the right priorities which reflect the priorities of Saskatchewan people.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my congratulations to the mover and the seconder of His Honour's speech. The members for Swift Current and Saskatoon Southeast presented their remarks well and clearly display an important knowledge of the issues that they spoke about. They are effective and thoughtful members who represent their constituencies well, while never losing sight of the bigger provincial picture and the common good of our whole community and our society.

Mr. Speaker, this will be your second session in the chair. You have shown that the choice made by members when they elected you as Speaker was a wise one. You have carried out your responsibilities with dignity and good judgement.

And when I spoke in the budget debate in the last session, I said that there was a need for this legislature to correct the discredit that it had inflicted upon itself in the 1980s, and to restore public confidence in this important institution of our democracy. And I must say, quite gladly and happily, Mr. Speaker, that progress has been made on this, and the effectiveness in which you have provided leadership in your position has contributed to this achievement. And I want to acknowledge that here today.

Also, as a teacher, I want to comment on some other things which you are doing, Mr. Speaker, which I think are significant and important. And I want to commend you for the considerable time which you have dedicated to visiting with and speaking with students in our classrooms throughout Saskatchewan. It is my view — it's a personal opinion that I

hold — that our school curriculums, as great as they are, do not provide enough time to learning about our parliamentary system of government and the responsibilities of citizenship. And I thank you for helping to fill, at least in some small way, that shortcoming with the things that you are doing.

Now in the period between the last session of the legislature and the one which has just begun, there's been a by-election in the constituency of North Battleford. And I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for North Battleford on his election, and extend to him my best wishes for a rewarding experience as a member of this Assembly. And whether his term is long or whether it is short, a judgement which only, we all know, our constituents can make and should make, he has been given a privilege that only a very few persons in our society experience, and I want to take this opportunity to wish him well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne states that this is, and I quote, "one of the most hopeful times in our province in many years." And this legislative session is about real hope and optimism in our province. It's about setting priorities which are important for families and for students, to our children, the public services such as health care and education, and the creation of jobs. And all of this has not happened by chance or accident. It has been made possible through the determination, the cooperation, the community effort, and the caring of Saskatchewan people acting through their government.

Saskatchewan people have always believed in the important role of government. That belief has not lessened in spite of the attacks made on our democratic institutions by some powerful interests and, sadly, very sadly, even some politicians who would rather pursue their interests without regard for the interests and the well-being of people as a whole.

Through government people are able to achieve together objectives which alone they could not accomplish. And good government is a government that always considers the common good in the decisions made and the priorities that it sets.

Since 1991 Saskatchewan has had such a government. And that is why the throne speech is able to speak of a progressive agenda built on the solid rock of our commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Five years of hard work and sacrifice by the people of this province are now being rewarded, while other provinces and the federal government struggle with serious debt and deficits because of their lack of political will to take action when action was required and because of their control by certain powerful and wealthy interests who fund them and therefore they seem to owe them something in return. And regretfully, the actions that they have taken have resulted in a tax on important services like health care, education, and social services, hurting those people who already were suffering, and hurting them even more.

The Liberal government in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, has been particularly bad in this respect. That government has made no effort to cut expenditures on itself and close many of the huge loopholes which . . . and to correct the unfairness of our tax

system which lets some people who are wealthy and more powerful than the majority, get away with millions of dollars in taxes. But since 1995-96 this federal Liberal government has cut health and social service transfers by almost \$7 billion — almost \$7 billion in Liberal cuts from health, education assistance, and assistance for the poor.

In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, our approach has been different. We have provided a model which has been recognized and praised across Canada. In his *Globe and Mail* article of August 30, 1996, Andrew Cohen wrote the following, and I quote:

Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow has found a kinder, gentler way to bring unruly deficits to heel. Now if only his slash-and-burn peers would take notice.

And he goes on to write that this government, and I quote again:

. . . has rescued Saskatchewan from bankruptcy, eliminated its deficit and lowered its debt, redesigned its social system, reduced the size of government, and restored public trust.

Mr. Speaker, this is being said by a writer in a national newspaper that I'm sure everyone in the House will agree are not partisan New Democrats; anything but. They are said in an objective analysis and comparison of approaches in Saskatchewan with approaches of governments in Ottawa and Ontario and Alberta and other Liberal provinces.

(1515)

Now I know that in the nature of the partisan debate, which I have taken part in for some time, speakers feel compelled, opposition speakers feel compelled to speak cynically of gloom and doom. It is regretful that they have not yet learned — some of us have — but it is regretful that they have not yet learned that acknowledging positive developments does not make them less effective as opposition members.

But they cannot honestly — and I emphasize the word honestly, Mr. Speaker — they cannot honestly deny that for the first time in almost a decade, more people are moving into Saskatchewan than are moving out. Saskatchewan has for the first time in nearly a decade, net in-migration.

They cannot deny honestly this year will be the fourth consecutive year in which Saskatchewan will have a balanced budget.

They cannot honestly deny that there are almost 7,000 more people working in Saskatchewan today than at this time last year — the largest year-over-year increase since May 1995. And in February — and I want to make a contrast here, Mr. Speaker — in February, 18,000 jobs were lost across Canada under a federal Liberal government and other jurisdictions, but in Saskatchewan they increased by 7,000. And this is yet another example of the dismal failure of our Liberal government in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, which talks a good line but does nothing to try to put it into practice.

And I say through you, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, that they cannot deny that Saskatchewan has the lowest rate of unemployment month after month, and this while our population is increasing.

They cannot deny that our agricultural industry is diversifying at a pace never before experienced in our history; and that our value added industries like equipment manufacturing and food processing and ag biotech have never been stronger. They may try, Mr. Speaker, but Saskatchewan people know the success that their province has experienced. And in the end, that's all that matters.

Now everyone knows that this province will acknowledge the importance of agriculture to our economy. The modernization and the diversification taking place in agriculture will continue to make this important industry a very paramount contributor to our economy.

And this government's announcement of a new crop insurance system, a major new hog-marketing strategy, an investment in the rural economy through the agri-food development and equity funds, reflect the importance we put on this industry.

But even in this sector, Mr. Speaker, there are those who would destroy those institutions which have allowed our agricultural industry to be one of the most efficient in the world.

The Canadian Wheat Board is under attack by some who think that they can take on the multinational grain companies and the European Economic Community and the American government subsidies single-handedly.

And it's not insignificant that a lot of this criticism and battle is being waged by certain interests in the United States, even some of whom are in the United States Senate and the United States Congress. Let there be no doubt of the position of this New Democratic Party government, Mr. Speaker. As the throne speech has said, we will continue an unyielding defence of a modern, responsive Canadian Wheat Board. Without a doubt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now, Mr. Speaker, it is nothing short of tragic that the federal Liberal government has only given half-hearted support for Canadian Wheat Board in this debate that's taking place.

At least the Conservatives made their position clear — wrong as it might be, but they make it clear. They support changes which would lead to the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The federal Liberal government's commitment to the Canadian Wheat Board is about as firm as the Liberal Party's commitment was to eliminate the GST (goods and services tax) and to protect the Crow benefit, which the Prime Minister promised solemnly, in Saskatoon during the last campaign, to do. Canadians know what happened to those commitments. The GST is still there and the Crow benefit is gone. So much for those commitments, Mr. Speaker.

Now some people will argue — as I know some members in the opposition do on the doorstep and in the coffee shop — that that was never said by the Prime Minister. So I want to put on the record of this House here today clearly what was said, and I quote — 1990, the then prospective prime minister said, quote:

I am opposed to the GST. I have always been opposed to it and I will always be opposed to it. It is a tax that is both regressive and discriminatory.

The Globe and Mail, October 29, 1990. And he repeated it again during the election campaign.

Then in 1994, what did his Finance minister, Mr. Martin, say? I quote very clearly for the record so it cannot be questioned:

It is almost impossible to design a tax that is more costly and more inefficient than the GST.

June 21, 1994.

Now, Mr. Speaker, having said that, what is the result? The result is a drive to harmonize so that even more of that tax load can be pushed from the corporations and the business community onto families and consumers and working people. Their commitment was clear. Their lack of action on it was, in my view, nothing short of a betrayal of a trust.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this whole thing is really a question of trust, and our presence in this legislature is really a matter of trust. Can Saskatchewan people trust a federal Liberal government to look after their interest, is the question that is now before us and will soon be. Well I think that the record speaks for itself. They have broken every promise made on issues of importance to Saskatchewan — issues which are addressed in this throne speech — and they have betrayed the trust that voters put in them.

Mr. Speaker, there will soon be a national election in this country, and I think it's time. And the only government to strongly speak out in support of things like the orderly marketing system — and that's why it's in the throne speech — provided by the Canadian Wheat Board, has been the Government of Saskatchewan. Mention of it in the throne speech, as I have said, emphasizes that.

And the only political party speaking out strongly in support of a modern Canadian Wheat Board is the New Democratic Party. And the only way to keep the Liberal government from doing to the Wheat Board what they did to the Crow benefit and a dependable rail transportation system to haul our grain to the ports, will be to elect New Democratic Party MPs (Member of Parliament) to Parliament in the next election, from Saskatchewan, in large numbers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, on the Friday after the opening of this session there was an important debate in this legislature about grain transportation backlog, and I think it was necessary. And I commend the members of the third party for

raising that issue, which was supported by members of this House.

But, Mr. Speaker, in light of that debate, and in light of what is happening out there in Saskatchewan, it is unacceptable and unforgivable that the railways and the federal government have allowed this situation to develop.

And having had a hand in creating this backlog with its deregulation of grains transportation, it's even more unacceptable for the federal government not to take any action to correct the situation created by them. And it's scandalous that, while their backlog costs farmers \$65 million and growing, the federal Liberal government allows railways to charge an extra \$15 million for hauling grain.

In the face of this the Prime Minister's assurances in Saskatoon recently, that the federal government is putting pressure on the railways, is about as reliable as his assurances that the Crow benefit would not be eliminated. And Saskatchewan people know that.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, as is shown by our commitment in the throne speech, that giving the railways a raise of \$50 million for hauling grain after they have cost farmers \$65 million and more is a new definition of pressure which I find very hard to understand. I don't think there is any doubt that if grain handlers were on slow-down at our ports the federal government would not hesitate one single minute to act quickly, but when their friends in the railways cost farmers \$65 million, they do nothing. In fact they do something; they give them \$50 million as a potential increase in the rates.

And I say to them, Mr. Speaker, your assurances are no longer good enough. Only concrete action will be believed. We have had too many promises and assurances that have been broken.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne spoke of the importance of education to a growing and vibrant economy and today we're beginning the process of Education Week, which I think is important. And we appreciated an entertainment by young students from one of our schools in Saskatoon which once again should remind us about the importance of education and who it is really important for.

And Saskatchewan has been a leader in Canada in developing a quality education system for our students. Our approach has been one of partnership between educator, school boards, and government. And as a result, our curriculum has been updated and modernized on an ongoing basis and not fallen victim to the ad hoc, uncoordinated approach that has taken place in other provinces. We must never stop putting the education of our children high among the priorities of government. The commitment in the Speech from the Throne to provide educators in our schools with better tools to support learning in the classroom is an important commitment to keep with the Saskatchewan tradition of putting an important emphasis on the importance of education.

And I want to take this opportunity also, Mr. Speaker, to commend school divisions for the leadership that has been

shown in school division amalgamation. Locally driven and locally determined restructuring in Saskatchewan is a sharp contrast to the heavy-handed, arbitrary approach taken by governments in provinces like New Brunswick and in Ontario and some other governments in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said in the past five years about health care in Canada and Saskatchewan. And that's the way it should be, because health care is one of the most important services that any people in any society should be able to expect to receive without anything standing in their way. It should be universal. It should be accessible, and it should be affordable. And much of the health care system in Canada — and we should be proud of that — has been modelled on the innovations pioneered and introduced in Saskatchewan. It has been so historically, and it continues to be so today. Saskatchewan is years ahead of other jurisdictions in renewal, as has been said in the Speech from the Throne.

And while others are cutting and slashing, in this province we are focusing on stabilizing and securing our health care system. And I'm proud to be a member of a government that even during Saskatchewan's darkest hours financially, when the bond rating agencies and the bond dealers hovered like vultures over this province on the verge of bankruptcy . . . the commitment to the provision of a quality health care system never wavered.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Instead, health care renewal was introduced and implemented to fit the needs and the realities of new medical technologies and changing demographics. And new emphasis had been put on keeping people healthy, as well as providing care when they become ill.

And when the federal Liberal government slashed almost \$7 billion out of the Canada Health and Social Transfer, this Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government back-filled that Liberal cut in health care every single cent, Mr. Speaker. The priorities in Saskatchewan are right when it comes to health care.

Now we have other political parties who have their views on health care, and I respect that very much. But I think it's important to remind ourselves and to remind Saskatchewan people what those views are. Because when the new Liberal leader was asked about his position on health care with respect to how he would cut funding in government — because he's also talking about huge tax decreases and huge increase in expenditures, and once again I want to quote so that there is no mistake here — here's what was said.

An interviewer from the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) asked this question. I quote: "What efficiencies would you find to make up that \$1.3 billion?" And he talked about \$1.3 billion in deficiencies and inefficiencies in government. I was almost flabbergasted when I found that the Leader of the Liberal Party's response, and I quote, was, "Well, health care." Health care.

(1530)

Now that should send signals to the people of Saskatchewan about where priorities of a Liberal government in Saskatchewan would be. They would be the same as the priorities of a Liberal government in Ottawa, which took \$7 billion out of all of those funds which fund education and health care and social services.

Mr. Speaker, Liberals in Ottawa cut almost \$4 billion from health care alone. But they can find \$2 billion in subsidies for corporations like Bombardier and others. Provincial Liberals would harmonize the GST, shifting \$400 million to the consumer and the worker, but they have their cousins in Ottawa able to provide this kind of money to those same people who would benefit from a shift in that GST.

Mr. Speaker, these priorities are all wrong. And even some people in the corporate world are beginning to worry about the collapse of vital services to people which have been engineered by the federal government and provincial governments like Ontario and Alberta.

These people are beginning to realize that a damaged social safety net is a threat to the market economy. Charles Handy in his book *Reinventing the Future* has written that the process employed in recent years, attacking important social services, is creating a society that is not at ease with itself.

Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of society where one in five children live in poverty while the average salary of chief executive officers in banks and some of our major corporations are over \$900,000, and in some cases as high as \$3 million.

That's the kind of society where the national government has abandoned any effort to find jobs for 1.5 million unemployed Canadians. Mr. Speaker, in the really effective market economy, business people need social harmony as much as workers and consumers need it. Business people are beginning to recognize that, to their credit, and it's time our federal government showed that same understanding.

And the Speech from the Throne outlines this government's commitment and this government's strategy to address child poverty. It is a comprehensive approach ranging from job creation to providing adequate income for the poor and to training and to education.

This government is doing its part in creating a Saskatchewan and a Canada with a society at ease with itself, where people care about each other and work together to provide a better life for everyone, and not just a few.

Mr. Speaker, there are many issues which I'd like to speak about, but I know that others want to take part in this debate. And there will be other opportunities which I shall avail myself of.

But I want to close by saying that this throne speech . . . because this throne speech is about building Saskatchewan together, it's about investing in people, it's about hope, and it's about optimism, and because of that I will be proud to support

the motion presented by the members for Swift Current and Saskatoon Southeast, and I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure today to join in the debate on this throne speech as well.

But before I do that, I would just like to welcome our new viewers that are watching us today, in particular those from the communities of Davidson and Outlook in my constituency. And I know there are many out there.

I also would like to thank the constituents and the voters in Arm River for the opportunity of allowing me to be here today. And as we go over the course of this session, certainly the views that I express will be that of my constituents and make known their concerns and their ideas as well.

Mr. Speaker, over the last week or so I've listened in the House attentively here to many speakers from both sides of the floor, and one thing that I will not be doing today will be trying to run a federal campaign for the federal Liberals. As we have seen, Mr. Speaker, on both sides of the House we have seen the government, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the NDP propping up the NDP Party, and we've seen the Conservatives doing likewise. Mr. Speaker, I'll not be doing that. I will be addressing the issues that pertain to the province and to the provincial parties.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his government have directed many of the remarks over the last number of months to the Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. And don't think that he doesn't appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. But while he understands that he poses a serious threat to that NDP caucus, he, along with myself and my colleagues, are concerned over the fearmongering and the misinformation which is being spread.

As Health critic, Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight. After all, we don't want the people of Saskatchewan to think that this government might mislead them. Our leader is a strong proponent of one-tier health system — universal coverage for all Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker. We do not believe in cash register medicine.

It's obvious that the NDP brand of one-tier means every Saskatchewan resident has equal opportunity to pain, suffering, and long waiting-lists, Mr. Speaker. We believe that a one-tier delivery system is only possible with adequate, sustainable funding. Otherwise you end up with a one-tier, no-choice system with rationed services and equal opportunity to the long waiting-lists that I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker, Canadian medicare means public and private administration of service provision and universal coverage. We're all aware that private clinics or private facilities have always existed and continue to exist in Saskatchewan. Every doctor's office is a private facility providing insured services. Private care homes is another example, Mr. Speaker.

There are the many X-ray labs throughout the province which provide X-ray, ultrasound, barium studies, and fluoroscopy, delivered by private facilities. All of these facilities give residents quality, cost-effective, insured services.

Our leader has said he would repeal The Health Districts Act, Mr. Speaker, and I ask, why not? This is a flawed piece of legislation that has divided the province into 30 fiefdoms with boundaries like lines drawn in the sand — boundaries which are becoming between our communities and our service providers, Mr. Speaker, and all controlled by the Health department watchdogs.

The New Democratic Party has always touted, and was created on, the cooperative model. But now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has set their design on dividing and creating competition for the funds from the one and only source available, the Health department — the very same department which continues to underfund the service providers, and promote more bureaucracy. It is pretty obvious that it is just not possible to build an integrated, coordinated, and cost-effective health care delivery system when the very foundation, The Health Districts Act, is cracked and crumbling, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier says reform to health care is over. Now that's a scary thought for the people of Saskatchewan because now they're left with a rapidly deteriorating system that no amount of band-aid cash injections will fix. An admission of guilt last summer, Mr. Speaker, when the Health minister injected \$40 million into the health system — admission of guilt, that there is a problem. Mr. Speaker, the foundation must be replaced, and quickly. Then and only then will the needed reforms take place.

The New Democrats criticize our leader for his common-sense approach to health care delivery. He wants the district directors to be knowledgeable so they can keep their hired managers accountable for major funding decisions. This can only happen if the district board members are kept informed and understand the process. But, Mr. Speaker, with this government it's not happening.

Our leader recognizes the governing structures must be in place to make our health care system function efficiently. And he points out that successful systems throughout the world exist because of good management based on knowledge and understanding.

These models of health care efficiency include regional corporations with appointed members, local facility boards with appointed members, centralized commissions with appointed members, and several examples of boards where membership is represented by various community groups. These boards are appointed by the people, not necessarily by government.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are many examples of boards where membership is represented by various community groups, all of whom have either elected, nominated, or appointed their representatives.

What did the NDP do? They appointed all the original health members, using the need for expertise as an excuse, as New

Democratic political expertise. They then run elections with many board positions going uncontested. And in most cases voter turnout is very low — somewhere between 10 and 20 per cent. That, Mr. Speaker, is what the members opposite call a successful model.

Well the people of Saskatchewan don't agree. The Liberal leader has criticized the NDP district board model because it does not address the reality of health care delivery. The whole idea ignores the founding principle of medicare, and that is, any system must be acceptable to those providing the services and those receiving the services.

Our leader has simply stated, Mr. Speaker, that the provision of health care in Saskatchewan is a provincial obligation, meaning the provincial government is responsible for ensuring that whatever board structure for overseeing service delivery is created, it has to be accountable to the people, representative of the community, has to be cost-effective, and they must provide the necessary tools to adequately govern the workings of the respective service providers. This is a principle that would be applied to a Liberal government's health care delivery system.

Mr. Speaker, in moving the motion to adopt the throne speech, the government member from Swift Current indicated that our leader had said he would re-create 500 local health boards. I want to make it perfectly clear that his perception is incorrect. I ask the members opposite to tell us where and when this supposed comment was made by the Leader of the Liberal Party.

The facts are simple. Our leader has stated that between 4 and 500 local boards, comprised of active community leaders, approximately 4 to 5,000 committed volunteers were replaced by a large number of New Democratic appointees. These are paid board members who in some instances have become far too removed from community decision making — these individuals who have created a bureaucratic nightmare.

What we have, Mr. Speaker, is layer upon layer of expensive managers — CEOs (chief executive officer) to presidents to vice-presidents to directors to managers. So much bureaucracy in fact, that they had to close beds to open offices. In other jurisdictions, the population base and service delivery system options are so limited that it cannot possibly justify an expensive paid board, paid management structure.

Simply said, it means the former government structure was more cost-effective, more decentralized, and more locally accountable. It's funny only because it's exactly what the Premier and his government promised the new structure would do. Now we find ourselves in a situation where we can't return to the previous structure, mainly because it is not desirable in a rapidly changing health care environment.

Mr. Speaker, a Liberal government would respect the principle of community accountability and create a sustainable, cost-effective health care system — a system which would carefully develop an appropriate number of health care boards.

I also want to tell the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, that at no

time did our leader say that he would cut 1.3 billion from the Saskatchewan health care budget. In fact in the 1995 election he made it very clear that 1.6 billion was enough to create an exemplary health care scheme for the residents of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the government clearly misrepresented the facts. In a CBC interview last November, when the Liberal leader had stated the New Democratic government had increased taxes, tariffs, and utility rates of \$1.3 billion since taking office, nowhere did our leader say he would chop 1.3 billion from the provincial health care system. But he indicated that the current efficiencies in our administration would address part of this goal. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that a Liberal government will fund a first-rate and cost-effective medical system.

Another thing which is misleading in a claim on the Internet in a December 1996 NDP caucus report, which said our leader was in favour of American style medicine scheme. It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that the wellness approach to the U.S. style of medicare grew out of California in the 1970s. And it appears that it is the NDP who have Americanized our health system.

(1545)

The New Democratic government went for the whole package. Not to maximize profits for corporations, but to ration health care services and to maximize the government's bottom line. The NDP Health department has become the Kaiser permanente, U.S. style managed care. It's the capital of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Getting back to the member from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, he stated in *Hansard* that our leader is opposed to province-wide computerized health data. I challenge that member opposite to state where and when the statement was made. He can't because he knows it is not true, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say that the Leader of the Liberal Party believes that accurate, timely information transfer is essential to any modern health care system. What we want answered, Mr. Speaker, is will the NDP proposal for Saskatchewan health information network, address this concern, and at what cost?

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in closing, as you can see all is not well in the health care system in Saskatchewan. The merchants of misery across the floor would have us believe that it is, but it is not. There is only one part of Saskatchewan where we have problems, Mr. Speaker, and I would move that the members across the floor would support the amendment and not the Speech from the Throne. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would first of all like to thank the members opposite for giving me this opportunity in the rotation ahead of time in recognition to the cold that I've developed over the last few days. And unlike the members opposite though, I will not blame the federal government for this cold. And although I am tempted, I

will also not blame the provincial government for this cold. It's just one of those things that happens from time to time, Mr. Speaker, and try as we may we can't always just get rid of them. I know there's going to be an opportunity to comment and say, well it's probably a result of the cut-backs in the health care delivery system that I am blessed with this cold, but I can't even do that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by making a few short remarks on behalf of my constituency and welcome them to the network that now sees this proceedings of the House live and in colour. I also want to tell them, as my first opportunity to address them directly, not to believe everything that they hear in the House, and that their member will always be very much consistent with the principles that they know to be true, that I will not steer them wrong.

Mr. Speaker, and also in acknowledging some changes I've made over the course of the last year, I would like to thank you and your participation at the Rotary occasion in Melfort where there were people from all over the world really who gathered in Melfort for the Rotary students. And Mr. Speaker and the minister from Carrot River Valley and myself participated in giving these students from around the world a bit of a feel of what Saskatchewan parliamentary democracy is all about. And I think it was a very great occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I would also especially like at this time again to make mention to my very best friend, my wife Carole. And in doing so, I would like to acknowledge not only my wife and the role she has played in our family, but also all spouses in the House. And I would like to think that, Mr. Speaker, they suffer a special suffering these days.

Not very long ago, I heard the Premier comment on the current rash of charges against the Tory Party in this province. And he commented in saying that, I believe I roughly paraphrase it, that he takes no pleasure or joy in this. That it doesn't do any of us any good to have this happen, and that all members end up being shadowed by a cloud that this Tory administration has put over all of us. And I think that that is true. And as an elected member, I have to live with that reality.

But the thing that I don't think anybody recognizes or realizes is how much spouses bear in a special way the hurt of having accusations and aspersions made against hon. members who are trying to conduct their affairs in a very honourable way. And so the scandal that has hurt this province and hurt all members of this legislature has in a special way I believe, Mr. Speaker, hurt our spouses and our families. And I want to thank them for being there for us through these times, and I thank Carole particularly in that regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I also want to take the opportunity, for the public record, to say that while politics changes one's life in large measure, I have to say that on December 1, becoming a grandfather changed my life much more than politics I think ever will or ever can.

And so I welcome into our family Hayley Dawn McKerracher, the newest edition who brings light to our life. And I'm sure for all grandparents in this Assembly, and I know there are many, they would share my joy when I say that my life will be for ever changed because of Hayley Dawn.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be an MLA, in spite of the cynical times. It dawns on you slowly I think, Mr. Speaker. And as we move into our second year of being new MLAs, many of us, it gradually creeps up on you what a singular honour it is to be an MLA.

When I think of the many people that have gone before in my constituency, I know that they have done their very, very best on either side of this House and all political stripes to represent the people of Melfort-Tisdale. And I certainly want to do the very same thing. And the people are what makes it all important and makes it all worthwhile, Mr. Speaker.

You know, when you have time when the House isn't sitting, to be back in your community, it is the very best time for an MLA that there possibly can be, in my opinion. Because when I look back on the summer and the fall and the early wintertime, where you're able to be back with your people, where you're able to reconnect with the vibrancy and the excitement and the energy and the dynamism of what a constituency is all about, you realize that the people is what makes it all worthwhile for you.

And when you get tired and cynical and you worry about the fact that Murray Mandryk will never get anything right in the press and you worry that you will never get a break, you know that the people understand that Murray Mandryk isn't the issue, the people are the issue. And so we have to keep connecting to the realities that face us.

Mr. Speaker, I look back on the summer where you attend sports days and ball tournaments and 4-H shows, and you go and you visit in the glorious days of summer, people in their yards and in their field. It's a great time to be an MLA.

And I want to also acknowledge that while every MLA in this Assembly feel that their constituency is the very best in this province, in the very best province of this very best country in the world, I have to say that I honestly and truly believe that I could debate at great length that the Melfort-Tisdale constituency is indeed the very best constituency in the province of Saskatchewan. And I would like to . . . and it's seconded by the member from Lloydminster, I hear.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — I would like to acknowledge some special events that happened over the course of the year that lead me to believe that this constituency is indeed the very best constituency in the province. I bragged at great length, and I know that all members were very excited to watch and participate in the Royal Bank Cup that was held last spring in Melfort, and that Melfort almost went all the way.

And it is a great disappointment to me that we're not doing quite so well this year, but I know that the ground was laid for a tremendous event, a national event that we had the great privilege of hosting.

We followed it in the spring by the Canadian junior ladies golf championships that were done very well as well, in the community of Melfort. And shortly after that, the Premier and I participated in the Melfort & Unit Composite Collegiate in a youth leadership conference that was a provincial event. And that was very well done.

Those of you who are into country music will have to acknowledge that our local radio station, radio CJVR, won the 1996 Canadian Country Music Station of the Year Award for Canada and was also named as Melfort's business of the year. Northern Steel in Tisdale was nominated for the ABEX (Awards of Business Excellence) provincial award and named the business of the year by the Tisdale Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. John Shewchuk of Tisdale was named the 1996 family physician of the year. Naber Seeds is undergoing a major expansion in the lentil and that whole area in Melfort as well, and it's becoming a very hot centre for the whole lentil industry in my constituency.

The town of Star City hosted the 75th anniversary of their incorporation in July. There's a \$6 billion expansion to the Wheat Pool in Melfort, and Farm World in Kinistino is expanding with a 12,000 square foot shop expansion.

And the thing is, is that in all of these things, including the success that Bourgault Industries has been having over the years, it's not because of this government; it's in spite of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, lest people think that everything is sunshine and light in the Melfort-Tisdale constituency, there certainly are some areas of concern, not the least of which was the weather last year. We had a very cold and late spring. We had a promising summer and a very wet fall, to the extent that just north of my constituency and in some areas of the constituency as much as a third of the crop is still in the field as we speak, Mr. Speaker. And with the very heavy snowfall and the fear of a late spring, a lot of our people are very concerned about getting the crop in, getting the land prepared for seeding, and to have a decent crop in for this new year.

Despite what the government says about how rosy the economics are, many of our farmers are very, very concerned about the fact that their profits and their livelihood are still out in the field, and the very high costs of inputs are not going down. And so, Mr. Speaker, we all are very sensitive about what is happening in the weather.

Mr. Speaker, weather is not the only thing that people in my constituency are concerned about, and I could go through a whole litany of what they are. And I know that members

opposite will be so delighted that I will forfeit at this stage from going through all of the things that they're concerned about — the concern about jobs, about the high taxes, about the health care delivery, about our highways, about the education system. But I do have the opportunity and the great privilege to be able to rise this week later, in reply to the budget speech, and to talk about a great many of those issues, Mr. Speaker. And so I will forgo that at this time.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity of indulging me, with my cold, to give my presentation, and to thank members opposite and suggest to them that they can look forward to the reply to the budget, and at which time that we'll talk more about the realities of this government's imposition on the province of Saskatchewan and what's going wrong. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure as well to rise in this debate on the throne speech. And first of all, like the other hon. members, I'd first of all like to send out some acknowledgements. First of all, to the new member for North Battleford, it's nice to have you here. It's nice to have had some exchanges with you already, and I wish you the best as the session goes on.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to thank you for your visit to my constituency in . . . I think the end of January it was, your visit to St. Mary's School. That was a day very well spent and very interesting for the students. I must commend you for the work that you are doing in that regard. Although you were in my school, the school that you were at that day was right on the border with two other constituencies — my colleagues from Regina Elphinstone and Regina Coronation Park. And I must tell you that on behalf of all of us, we enjoyed your visit and the wisdom you passed on to the students that day.

(1600)

I also wish to say hello again to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and Clerk Assistant and to the new pages and to our Sergeant-at-Arms. I also, Mr. Speaker, cannot forget the people of *Hansard*. I promise this session, Mr. Speaker . . . I think last year I did members' statements in French, German, and Polish, and earlier today I did one in French. And I promise that this year I will provide transcripts of these so that the people in *Hansard* don't have to chase me down afterwards, should that occasion arise again.

I also wish, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate my bench mate, my colleague from Swift Current constituency, for his moving of the throne speech debate, and to my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatchewan Southeast, on the seconding of this very optimistic, very promising, very informative throne speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Last of all, and certainly by no means least, Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge my constituents of Regina Sherwood. As a result of the last redistribution the constituency

of Regina Sherwood was created from three former areas . . . three former constituencies — Regina Rosemont, Regina Albert North, and Regina Northwest.

Right now, my constituency, I'm surrounded by three other constituencies — Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, Regina Coronation Park, and Regina Elphinstone. And I wish at this time to publicly thank the members of those constituencies, who are veteran members of this legislature, for their help, guidance and assistance for me in the work that I've done in my first year as the member for Regina Sherwood.

It's nice, Mr. Speaker, to have neighbours like that that are members of the party. I should add that I could also have called upon people from all the city of Regina, as it is nice to have members from this side of the House who represent all the constituencies in the city of Regina.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be here again. Regina Sherwood, as I started to explain, is an entirely residential constituency. Our only shopping area is the Normanview Shopping Centre and a small strip mall, so basically I represent a residential neighbourhood. I represent a constituency which is a microcosm of an urban constituency here in the city of . . . here in Saskatchewan.

The constituents of Regina Sherwood embody the traits of cooperation, community and volunteerism that are so typical amongst all our citizens here in this province. Traditionally, Regina Sherwood has been a predominantly working-class area, a working-class and middle-class area, but today boasts a significant number of small-business people.

Regina Sherwood, Mr. Speaker, takes in a number wonderful neighbourhoods, and these neighbourhoods have taken pride in working hard to achieve a better quality of life for all our residents.

For many years I served these residents as a community recreation volunteer and a sports volunteer, and I'm now most honoured, as I indicated a year ago, to be their political representative.

The areas that I talk about, Mr. Speaker, include Walsh Acres, Sherwood, McCarthy Park, Prairie View community, Normanview, Normanview West, Mount Royal, and Dieppe communities.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents of Regina Sherwood have also demonstrated astute political judgement over the years.

Except for the period 1982 to 1986 my constituency, or the areas involved, have always been represented by CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and NDP members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, I also at this time, in speaking of our community, wish to acknowledge a situation which just took place, actually the end of last week. The immediate neighbourhood that I live in, which is Normanview, where my

wife and family, we've resided for over 22 years, we lost our local school on that day — Al Pickard School. And I would be remiss today if I did not this afternoon . . . I acknowledge the very hard work of the local parents' community association for all the work that they did in presenting their arguments on the reasons for keeping Al Pickard School open. They fought a good, hard fight, presented a very good case. It's unfortunate that the demographics and the changing patterns of our neighbourhood did not allow the Regina Board of Education to feel that they could keep this school open any longer.

My sympathies and best wishes go out to all my friends, neighbours, and associates that have been affected by this school closing.

Mr. Speaker, at my nomination convention, or nomination meeting in May 1995, I said in my address at the meeting at that time, and I'd like to quote from that address:

I am excited because Saskatchewan is again on the threshold of substantial improvement of its economic and fiscal situation. We stood on this same threshold in the early 1980s. Unfortunately, adverse economic conditions, coupled with nine years of Conservative government fiscal mismanagement brought us to the edge of economic and financial ruin. Yet in three and a half short years since the re-election of our party in 1991, Saskatchewan has experienced a drastic and substantial turnaround.

Our government, with the support and sacrifice of the people of Saskatchewan, all of the people of Saskatchewan, has once again achieved for our province a degree of financial independence which should allow us to rebuild our province in a way that was inconceivable just four short years ago. The challenge to New Democrats at this stage is the establishment of priorities for the future development of Saskatchewan, priorities which reflect our fundamental philosophy as opposed to that of our political opponents, and priorities which reflect, (Mr. Speaker), the priorities of all the people of Saskatchewan.

That was part of my address when I was nominated in May of 1995, and I perhaps might have been a little premature on some of my optimism at the time. But I certainly think, Mr. Speaker, that this throne speech debate marking the second session, the opening session of the second session of the twenty-third legislature, is not premature. I think that optimism which I had is certainly in this speech, and I think the speech and what is happening in our province speaks for itself.

We should note that, as has been pointed out by other speakers, retail sales have increased by about 8 per cent during the first 10 months of 1996 to \$5.7 billion — a rate higher than Manitoba's and higher than Alberta's — this according to our friends at the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Mr. Speaker, housing starts were up by 56 per cent in the first nine months of last year. Oil sales have increased by almost 25 per cent in the first nine months of 1996. And as a further sign of the buoyancy of our economy in this particular sector, the February sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights

brought a total for the fiscal year to \$140.8 million, the second highest total ever in the history of our province.

There's more, Mr. Speaker. Our farmers harvested nearly 29 million tonnes of major grains; sales of recreational and motor vehicles increased by 21 per cent; uranium sales were up 64 per cent; and manufacturing shipments rose by 8 per cent. This growth, Mr. Speaker, has been achieved by Saskatchewan people working in Saskatchewan jobs.

And because people are working to make the economy grow, the number of Saskatchewan people is growing as well. As has been pointed out by my colleague, the hon. member for Swift Current, our population now is over one million and it's staying that way. It's just over the one million and twenty thousand mark.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is one of hope and optimism for the people of Saskatchewan. The speech outlines the priorities of our government, priorities that have been worked out in consultation with all Saskatchewan residents, priorities which we have used the theme, Investing in People, to describe.

The priorities of our government in the years ahead under the slogan, Investing for People are six priorities which have been worked out in consultation with the people of Saskatchewan.

The first priority under our program — first and foremost — is jobs, Mr. Speaker. We are blessed with great natural resources — agriculture, oil, natural gas, forestry, potash, and uranium. And the greatest blessing of all is that we have the hardest-working and most innovative people in the world, Mr. Speaker. These gifts must be protected and preserved. We have made a lot of progress.

As I said earlier, our population is well over 1 million and is hitting the 1.022 million figure — 6,000 higher than it was a year ago. Job numbers are up since our job strategy was announced in 1992. Unemployment in Saskatchewan, as we point out regularly, remains the lowest in the country. We are well on the way to achieving our 30,000 job target by the year 2000, Mr. Speaker.

In the area of jobs, in the area of jobs, our government also plans to encourage the expansion of the trade sector; promote the expansion and diversification of our rural economy; renew Saskatchewan's Crown corporations; work to improve access to capital; pursue key strategic projects, economic projects; promote tourism and the hospitality industry, which is one of our fastest growing areas; foster northern economic development and growth; and participate in an extended national infrastructure plan, Mr. Speaker.

Investing in People. Our second area in this is investing in education and training. Our goal here is to preserve and improve the quality of public education to make sure our education system fits with the new 21st century economy, Mr. Speaker, capable of training and retraining our workforce and to keep up with new information and technology.

Over the past few months we have been hard at work gathering ideas on how to best qualify the education for our children and to make sure our teachers are the best that they can be in terms of training in this new technology. Our goal is to support and build a strong public education system, something which is capable of taking us into the new jobs of the 21st century.

The government also plans to provide better tools to support classroom learning; encourage school division restructuring on a needs basis, to be determined locally; to implement a made-in-Saskatchewan training system; and to work with universities in the implementation of some of the recommendations of the MacKay report.

Our third major plank in the Investing for People strategy is investing in social reform. This is a very important area, Mr. Speaker, as has been pointed out by many of my colleagues on this side of the House. We want to get people off welfare by providing them with incentives to work, incentives that are fair and compassionate and balanced with a good, well-reasoned, and a proper skills training program. We plan to continue to work on a child benefit plan to help poor families feed, clothe, house, educate and care for their children. Our goal is to respect all people, to tackle poverty, and to provide hope, and practice compassion.

Mr. Speaker, in this area we will work energetically to implement a national child benefit — the first new national program in Canada in over 30 years, as has been pointed out. We work to strengthen our . . . we will work to strengthen our action plan for children by enhancing support and prevention services. We will work on a Saskatchewan employment supplement and begin to implement a Youth Futures program and a provincial training allowance. Mr. Speaker, these are important, important programs which have been worked out in conjunction and consultation with Saskatchewan citizens.

The fourth area of our investing in Saskatchewan people is health care. We are continuing to provide Saskatchewan people with the best quality health care that the government can possibly afford, within the principles of medicare outlined by the founders — Douglas, Lloyd and Blakeney — and the men and women of this province who worked so hard to get a national medicare program established.

Our first step is to remove money as a major obstacle to the provision of good medicare. Secondly, we hope to . . . Pardon me. Secondly, we are still . . . We are wanting to . . . The second step which we are still waiting to be addressed, which we wanted to address in 1991, was to reorganize and revamp the delivery system and to introduce the notion of wellness and prevention in our health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Speaker, investing in health care also means to work to improve services and health care security services for our seniors. We also want to work to partner with health professionals and to work with people to provide better models of health care.

We also plan to collaborate with communities to ensure that our health care system operates in a balanced and locally responsive manner. These, Mr. Speaker, I think are areas that we have shown great improvement on and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

(1615)

Our fifth major strategy area in the Investing in People strategy is our transportation sector. Mr. Speaker, our government is working extremely hard on the development of a comprehensive transportation policy. And this is certainly very timely given the ravages that have taken place with the rail line abandonment in our province, with the abandonment of the Crow rate, and with the great burden that has been put on our Saskatchewan highways. This area, Mr. Speaker, we'll be having a comprehensive program announced later this spring.

Our sixth area in the investing for people strategy is financial integrity. Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Regina Sherwood, and I think all the people of Saskatchewan, are with us when they say, no more deficits. It is important that we manage these programs and this strategy and at the same time keep the fiscal integrity that this government has worked so hard — with the sweat and blood of Saskatchewan people — to attain in these last few years. This is something we can't lose sight of and we must work diligently within a balanced budget and financial . . . and good government scenario with balanced budgets.

Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to this path and I am very proud to stand here this afternoon and to support the throne speech, the motion on the throne speech debate. I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you very much.

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased today, Mr. Speaker, to participate in the debate on the throne speech and very pleased to be one of the members that will be supporting such a good throne speech today.

I want to comment our movers and seconders, the mover from . . . the member from Swift Current and the seconder, the member from Saskatoon north-east or Southeast, I should say, by setting the tone for this throne speech debate and setting out, in terms of this Chamber, the kind of a subject that we deal with within the Chamber.

I also want to say to you, welcome in terms of back again for yourself to preside over this group of people — the members of the House. I also want to say also that I've been thinking about what I should talk about in terms of the throne speech, and the many things that are going on around us with . . . around the world and such at the same time. And I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to hear yourself and I think the Speaker from Ontario and a former Speaker of the House of Commons being interviewed one day on CBC radio talking about your role in terms of what you do within this House.

And you talked about yourself in terms of what we do here in relation, I guess to other countries in terms of how they deal with government.

And you call this Chamber a war of words. Far better than we look today in modern times where decisions are being made by a gun. And that this war of words was a place where this could take place in a civilized manner — maybe not a perfect manner in the eyes of the public, but a civilized manner.

And I look back, Mr. Speaker, when we had the opening of the throne speech and the Lieutenant Governor come in and speak and read the speech, and the ceremony that went along with that and the tradition that fits in with what we're doing in terms of this institution.

And that's why I digress a bit today, not talking about the subject matter of the throne speech *per se*, but more for saying in terms of the question of democracy itself within this Chamber and how it applies to other places in the world. I think we're very lucky in terms of where we are, in terms of what I said and what you had said, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the war of words.

Last year I was selected to attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting in Hong Kong. When we look at where we have gone in terms of democracy, and we are able to talk about such things as the throne speech, I see there a colony that was just struggling to become a democracy. The first fledge elections took place in 1995. It was the first time in the colony's history they had the opportunity to vote, that all members could vote for those people in their Legislative Assembly.

And when I was there I had the opportunity to talk to these members, and the pride that they had in terms of what they were doing. And they were grasping for new things to do in terms of trying to understand how other systems work, like our own Chamber, and how they could make things for the better.

But at the same time as I looked at that community, and a community, Mr. Speaker, that would maybe be half the size of Regina in terms of geographic area, and six and a half million people live, and the concentration itself is mind-boggling, is that they were struggling for democracy but at the same time in sadness with this too, is that on July 1, 1997 they will lose that struggle for democracy. That struggle for democracy will disappear with the colony being reverted back to mainland China.

And as much as people didn't talk about fear of what would happen, there was certainly a resident belief that they would be unable to talk as we do, as we do freely in this Chamber and as they are doing right now in their Chamber; they would lose that opportunity to talk and have that discussion. That kind of discussion would take place outside a Chamber, and somewhat I think in fear by which they would have those kind of conversations.

And that's why I say we need to be very proud of just the concept alone in terms of having the discussion on a throne speech, Mr. Speaker. The opportunity to talk about those things in a partisan way, but not in fear — not in fear of a discussion. And these are things we have to remember, Mr. Speaker, in terms in what we have in this institution. That's why I also pay

credit to you, Mr. Speaker, in your role of going around the province and talking about this Chamber, because a great deal of society do not know what goes on in this Chamber. And they have to understand that this system is far better in what I'd seen in terms of Hong Kong, what we see in Bosnia, what we see right now in Albania.

Even where the democracies . . . you know where democracy is very difficult. A gentleman I met from Ghana talked about democracy. He says we are on a time line. We have three years to make democracy work in our African country, or else it will disappear and there will be another dictatorship; the military will take over. It's a very strange time line to be under, Mr. Speaker.

But as I say, that's why I take a great deal pride today to have that opportunity to speak but also to represent the people of Saskatoon Northwest. And it's a pride that I think every member, no matter what political stripe, takes a great honour in participating in. And these are things that all members have to remember in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about the throne speech and the direction the government is taking, and I'm always as a member that stands, always wants to engage in partisan discussion at the same time, and this is an opportunity to do that in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker. So now I do digress from the talk of worldly ideas of democracy, and talk about what's going on in this province, and what forces outside this province are creating some great deal of difficulty out there particularly in the area of grain transportation, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity to go to my home town on the weekend and talked to some farmers, talking about the difficulty of moving grain — the inability to move grain. And they want to know, whose fault is it? Whose fault is it? And I asked the other members of the Chamber, whose fault is it that we can't move this grain? But members say they know the answer.

I think we can clearly point at the federal government and their policy of deregulation of the grain transportation system. They promised, with deregulation and the removal of the Crow benefit by which then is paid producers, we would have a better system. Mr. Speaker, the system has got worse. The system is not moving grain, Mr. Speaker.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that . . . And I will say under the former Tory government under Brian Mulroney, but I will pay credit here, that we had an agency in Winnipeg that dealt specifically with grain transportation — the Western Grain Transportation Authority, Mr. Speaker. And it dealt directly with the concept of moving grain for prairie farmers. It is gone, Mr. Speaker, with deregulation.

What they did is centralized it in Ottawa and took it out of Winnipeg. And we lost that control, Mr. Speaker. There was not a connection to the grain industry in terms of the Canadian Wheat Board and other people in this country in terms of moving grain. And, Mr. Speaker, this is really sad in terms of what's going on out there, in terms of what's moving in terms of grain.

And the members opposite laugh. I can't believe it, Mr. Speaker. They laugh about the question of farmers' livelihood on moving grain. I know the difficulty in terms of southern Saskatchewan. I know that the problem that exists in terms of where the member's from and the member of Wood River and the difficulty to move grain, Mr. Speaker.

And they laugh. And they say nothing about . . . in terms of what the federal government has now offered the railways. More money, Mr. Speaker. More money for a job they have not performed.

So now it becomes a question, Mr. Speaker, and Ottawa will have to make the decision. Does grain transportation become more deregulated as the Liberal government is calling for? Or does it become more regulated that we have some kind of control?

We had a member opposite, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago talk about branch lines, that the provincial government should take over the abandoned branch lines that are coming forward. Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of branch lines in this province and across western Canada have that of the federal government. We've had guarantees that ensured branch lines in this province, Mr. Speaker — that ensured branch lines to the year 2000. Which government lifted the freeze on the branch lines, Mr. Speaker? The federal Liberals. They took away the protection.

Now we have a grain handling system that will be unable to handle all the grain in the system as we get rid of the branch lines, Mr. Speaker. I can't understand, Mr. Speaker; it must be the same question as when the Minister of Agriculture was talking about the issue the other day. He said, the question is when you use the right stick, the dog barks. And truly, Mr. Speaker, the dogs are barking across the way, Mr. Speaker, because they know exactly what the truth is. All they have to do is go talk to their farmer friends and talk to them about the question of grain handling. Talk about them the difficulty in terms of receiving a livelihood right now because of that.

But they fail to recognize . . . And I give them credit the other day when the Prime Minister was in Saskatchewan, that the official opposition did stand with the other parties in this province to speak up against the federal government's transportation policy.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting when one speaks a certain subject, all of a sudden you hear this chirping across the way, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker. I guess the truth hurts, Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now all hon. members . . . Order. All hon. members will know that there is opportunity to put their remarks on the record and it is not necessary to get their remarks informally by shouting them across the floor. And hon. members will know that on both sides of the House. And I'll ask the hon. member for Saskatoon Northwest to continue.

(1630)

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, the enthusiasm even on this side in terms of helping me with the subject matter that I need to speak about when it comes to grain transportation. You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we have progressed in the area of agriculture that I am very proud of is in the area of a new crop insurance program, Mr. Speaker, a new crop insurance program. A program that is 25 per cent lower in cost to producers, that provides very good coverage to producers, and I'm very proud to be a government . . . that we've been able to institute that.

And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, this government has taken the process to underwrite the debt of crop insurance, a debt that was incurred under the Devine Tories, Mr. Speaker. We're now making crop insurance a workable program for producers, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about my community of Saskatoon and what's going on there in terms of that city, Mr. Speaker. This is a city where, in terms of the economy in Canada . . . is booming. We have a housing market that is extremely strong. They use the term "hot" in terms of the way houses move.

I had a friend of mine sell a house in early summer, Mr. Speaker, in my own riding. He advertised this house in the Friday morning on a colour brochure called "The Home Showcase." By 9:30 — this publication came out at 9 o'clock — by 9:30 he had someone outside the door waiting to look at the house. By noon he had showed the house six times, and by 2:30 in the afternoon the house was sold. This was typical in terms of the economy within my riding of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, and generally the housing market in Saskatoon.

We've seen a very strong commitment in terms of the business community in Saskatoon, in terms of how they're revitalizing the economy in Saskatoon. I'm very proud to say I have Flexi-coil in my riding, an example of a very good agricultural manufacturer in Canada . . . and not just in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity to talk to a gentleman from Australia, who's acquainted with two Canadian products: Versatile tractors — or Ford now, Ford New Holland — but Versatile tractors and Flexi-coil air seeders. We are leaders in the area in terms of air seeding equipment in North America, if not the world. Not just Flexi-coil, but Bourgault Industries as well is doing very well in this industry. We have a number of other industries throughout Saskatchewan, in terms of short-line manufacturers, that are doing very well in terms of the technology they are providing to the industry, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing expansion, as many members have talked about, in terms of ag bio-tech. Not just ag bio-tech, Mr. Speaker, but we're seeing a number of farm chemical companies relocating either head offices or certain portions in the research facilities in Saskatoon. They see the viability of what's going on there and how important it is and how Saskatoon is a centre of excellence in the area of ag-biotech, Mr. Speaker. These are very important things that are going on. They are exciting

things that are going on in the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker — exciting things.

We see in terms of the growth of the retail industry in Saskatoon and how we have a very vibrant small business community in terms of retail sales. And the expansion that takes place, almost on a daily business, of new businesses in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud of these people that are taking the commitment to go out and be the push for economic development in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we need to be very proud, and I think the government could take a great deal of credit with that, by making the climate that is very encouraging for business, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister of Economic Development could take a great deal of pride in terms of the program that he's put out in *Partnership for Renewal*, in terms of what we're doing in terms of the economy of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, a great deal of pride.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what it is, Mr. Speaker, when I stand up . . . I can stand up and be silent, and I will hear comments across the way, and I don't understand why. I just don't understand why, when I stand up, suddenly the voices rise in the other side . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well it's important for an MLA to have a broad base in terms of interest in what's going on, Mr. Speaker.

An issue that's also very important in terms of the performance of this government — it's important to the people of my riding — is fiscal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to talk to many people in my riding, and the one thing they talk about with a great deal of pride is the question of the fiscal responsibility of this government: our ability to deliver balanced budgets, our ability to deliver a balanced approach in terms of fiscal responsibility. They do not want to see a system that is taking place in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

People in my riding and people across Saskatchewan have said that they do not want the Harris approach in terms of government; it doesn't work. They don't want the Klein approach because they're afraid, in terms of what services would disappear. And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, as our people know, it has been difficult to deliver that fiscal responsibility. They are very glad that we are there now.

They know what it's like to meet the question of trying to pay your mortgage, trying to put your kids through school, trying to do those basic things and knowing that you cannot do it if the dollar isn't there. And that kind of realization, Mr. Speaker, makes me proud to be a New Democratic MLA, and I was very pleased that they did return me to the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other area that I want to talk about, in terms of the community of Saskatoon, is health care, Mr. Speaker. We're very pleased and proud of the health care community in Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Health Board and how it's worked with difficult times. But it's coming together to deliver services, not just for the City of Saskatoon, but for many people in the Province of Saskatchewan.

There was concern raised earlier that maybe they would have to look at closing a hospital. But they were looking at all the options in terms of how to best spend the dollar. They went to the employees, talked to them about that. They went to the community and worked very hard. And they came up with a plan, Mr. Speaker, by which they feel confident they can operate all the hospitals in Saskatoon and provide the services for the people of Saskatoon and the people of Saskatchewan.

Very proud too of the Royal University Hospital which is one of the best teaching hospitals in all of Canada and very proud to have that within the structure. But the health board is doing new and exciting things in terms of community work, in terms of bringing programs out into the people that we need to see. And these kinds of things are very important too.

It changes the structure in terms of health care, Mr. Speaker, which is the cornerstone of the health reform process. It's the question of wellness. And to get the concept that health doesn't revolve just around the institutions but it revolves around the wellness of the people outside the institutions and how best to get the people outside to deal with them in the area of home care, Mr. Speaker . . . those kinds of things are very forward thinking ideas.

I think about what was said by a gentleman connected with the health board in Lloydminster who had the opportunity to see the difference between the Alberta side and the Saskatchewan side. And he put it very simply, Mr. Speaker. He said Saskatchewan has a plan to health reform; Alberta does not have a plan for health reform. And I think that clearly sends the message of where we're going in terms of health reform in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've covered several areas to date in terms of what's going on in terms of the economy of Saskatoon — what's going on there and how it relates to the question of jobs — within the throne speech on that theme . . . the question of health care, the question of grain transportation, which I say certainly woke up the official opposition, Mr. Speaker.

But the one area that requires more action, Mr. Speaker, one area that we have not dealt with as a government to an adequate degree . . . and we are trying to develop a new system by which we can take children off Paul's poverty, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — We desperately need a national child welfare program or child benefit program by which we can get kids off the welfare rolls, by which we can break the mould.

I give some credit to the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Paul Martin, by recognizing the problem, and as our Premier has said, has made a down payment on that issue. The problem is the down payment comes next year and not this year. We're willing to participate now in such a program. We are committed to this program.

And, Mr. Speaker, if people don't know across this nation, it was this government that initiated the idea. It was our Premier

who took it to the first ministers' conference and said this is a priority. This is a priority. No other premier did that. Our Premier did. He started the initiative which set the wheels in motion for a national child benefit program.

These are things which, once it comes to fruition, we shall be very proud of in Saskatchewan. As this was the birth of medicare, Mr. Speaker, we will be the birth of this new social program, the first new social program in 30 years . . . which is shameful to say, Mr. Speaker, that it takes 30 years to do it, as medicare took from 1944 to 1962, until the rest of the country finally accepted it.

So, Mr. Speaker, he's very proud to be part of a government and a province that's very progressive and leaders . . . That we are strengthening at the same time our action plan for children, Mr. Speaker, developing as we can slowly, not with enough progress, but trying to do it as quickly as we can. Dealing as best we can with those that are less protected in society and that being the children, Mr. Speaker. So again I'm very pleased to be part of that program, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker. I didn't even tell a joke today. I'm not very good at telling jokes. And again the official opposition is laughing, and I'm trying to determine why. Are they laughing on the subject that I talked about: democracy? Are they laughing on the subject where I talked about grain transportation? Are they laughing on the question of jobs and a good economy? Are they laughing on the question of child poverty?

What are they laughing about, Mr. Speaker? These are very serious issues that I talk about. And they make jokes. They think it's funny. I can't believe it, Mr. Speaker. And this is the official opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan would be very interested to know how the official opposition are reacting to these subjects because I can't remember . . . Do the members here remember me telling a joke at all that was funny? Did I talk about anything that was funny? I don't understand.

I hear somebody say about the question, the government that cares. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the members opposite, I can assure the people of Saskatchewan, I can assure the people of Canada, that this forward-looking government does care. This forward-looking government does care about its people; does care about its less fortunate in this province and hopes to do that across Canada; does care where this province is going into the 21st century — not the 20th century. This province will, with a caring government, go with strength to enter the 21st century; go with the power and the imagination of its people to do even more than it has done since its inception in 1905, Mr. Speaker.

(1645)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — The Minister of Economic Development makes mention of on Friday when the Prime Minister came to

Saskatchewan to see economic development in progress in terms of the company of Shuttle Craft, Mr. Speaker, a forward-going company that . . . it just continues to move and move and find new facilities because it is expanding to an ever-growing market, Mr. Speaker.

The only thing I find sad about that day is that I know that the Saskatchewan River is not froze. I wish they would've taken the opportunity to take the Prime Minister on a ride in the South Saskatchewan in a shuttle craft, so he could experience the modern technology that's taking place within Saskatoon and the entrepreneurs that are pushing that technology, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, my time is I think . . . came to an end. I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to participate in the throne speech today. I'm very pleased that the subjects that I talk about were of interest to our members, and were particularly of an interest to our members opposite.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the mover, the member from Swift Current, and the seconder, the member from Saskatoon Southeast, on their moving and seconding this wonderful motion and I will be voting in favour of it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Having gone through a lot of planning prior to this address from the throne, Mr. Speaker, and having listened to a lot of my colleagues and their remarks in response to His Honour's speech, and having listened to my constituents over the weekend and hearing their reactions, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I am more enthused about the direction of our government, about the future of the province, and about politics in general than I ever have been.

Mr. Speaker, my internal excitement comes from the knowledge that we are embarking on a new journey. It's a new journey for this government and a new journey for this province. And this new journey upon which we are embarking, Mr. Speaker, this new path, is characterized by the theme that was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne: we will be investing in people.

Since 1991 the people of Saskatchewan, in partnership with this New Democratic government, have worked hard and we've looked for savings and we've looked for ways to increase production and ways to make up for gaps that had arrived, so that we could have something to invest in people, invest in the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are embarking on a journey to a future that has not borrowed and it is not haphazard. And there is no ready prescription or instruction booklet for our new direction. We must forge our own way, Mr. Speaker. We must develop our own plan. But that plan must be suitable for our province as we prepare to enter the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, we must build

our own path, and really that's what makes this journey exciting, makes it challenging, and makes it worthwhile. In the words of the futurist John Schaar, and taken directly from the speech to the throne, and I quote:

The future is not some place (where) we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made.

Mr. Speaker, we must make our own path; and ours is not the path of Alberta, nor is it the path of Ontario, nor the path of U.S. of A (United States of America), nor the path of British Columbia. We can see what these other provinces are doing and we should adapt the ideas which they have used which may be of value to us, but we should be equally adamant, Mr. Speaker, about rejecting some of the most controversial of their programs because they are not investing in people; they are favouring the elite.

Ours is not the path of Alberta or Manitoba when it comes to health and education. Mr. Klein, the Premier of Alberta, followed the polls rather than principle, and he cut educators' salaries by more than 5 per cent. Mr. Filmon of Manitoba forced educators to take two days less pay per year. No principle there, Mr. Speaker, just opinion polls and politics.

In oil-rich Alberta, the Conservative government aims for a 15 per cent reduction in their health budget. As a result there was a daily barrage of horror stories in the Alberta press. Not better health care, not even a better principle, just better for the polls and politics. And then just before the election, Mr. Klein reversed his rhetoric. That is not our path, Mr. Speaker. That is not the direction that we are creating.

When we were elected, Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did was to tell the people exactly as it was. We acknowledged to the people of Saskatchewan that their province had been driven to the verge of bankruptcy and we asked everybody to help us set our priorities. And most people said this: they said, get the financial picture in order and minimize — when you're doing it — minimize the program disruption, especially in health and education.

Second, Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of our people had totally embraced the medicare system and our education system. They said, do what you must do but preserve medicare for our future generations, and make sure our population has a future through education, is what they told us.

So despite what Alberta was doing, what Mike Harris of Ontario was doing to his health budget, and despite the massive reductions in federal revenue sharing from the Liberal government — supported by the Liberals opposite — we kept our health budget content at about \$1.5 billion, the same as it was in 1991. To keep it at that level, we had to fill the hole left by the federal government.

The provincial taxpayer had to put in an extra \$40 million last year, and approximately \$50 million this year, to fill the amount cut by the federal government. But we kept our commitment to the public, Mr. Speaker. And today I am proud to say that our

health system is more stable than it ever was. Certainly more stable than it was in 1991. And more importantly than that, Mr. Speaker, it is sustainable into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — This is what I call investing in people. In this year's throne speech health care is named as one of six priorities. I want to congratulate the Minister of Health and his predecessors and the Premier for the path they are building in health care. Mr. Speaker, nowhere in Saskatchewan is the new path for health care more visible, or more advanced, or more appreciated than in my own constituency in Prince Albert. Good things in politics don't come easily, Mr. Speaker. They must be fought for. But when implemented and when endorsed by the public they will last, as does our medicare.

Mr. Speaker, we are going through a major restructuring and reorganizing and redeploying of resources in health care. And as mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, home care nursing services in Prince Albert have tripled since 1991, and other home care services have doubled. And that's because it's appreciated and because the people of Prince Albert trust the home care workers who provide an excellent service.

Those are record-breaking stats, Mr. Speaker, but nothing makes a greater impression than direct experience with the system. Mr. Speaker, a long-time friend of mine suffered a stroke some five or six years ago. And after being treated in our hospital he was taken home, and he received regular bi-monthly visits at home from the home care nurse and other home care providers as needed.

And when he started to lose the functioning of his feet, the home care unit was called in. They reassessed and his services were enhanced. And they helped, first of all, by providing him a walker when it was needed, and then a wheelchair. Then they provided sturdy floor-to-ceiling supports so that he was able to walk from room to room.

And then lately when he lost his ability to walk, home care supplied his home with a hospital bed and a portable sling. Home care services were increased to four visits daily, Mr. Speaker. And they were there to help with exercise and to help with personal hygiene. Mr. Speaker, it was my friend's wish not to be institutionalized, not to be hospitalized — only in the case of emergency — and through that home care system provided in Prince Albert, the services they provided efficiently and I must say lovingly, my friend was able to be cared for by his wife in his very own home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — He passed away in dignity at the age of 92 and was laid to rest this morning, Mr. Speaker. I am thankful that the tremendous program of medicare, brought to us first by the Douglas government, has been enhanced and developed to make lives of people like my friend comfortable and dignified in times of failing health. This investment in people's health care pays dividend, Mr. Speaker, far beyond fiscal accountability; it can only be measured by the heart.

It's not only home care that has helped people's health in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker; we are living longer for other reasons as well. Credit must go to our physicians who saw a long time ago that we needed to consolidate to one acute facility in Prince Albert. This is nearly complete. This winter several acute care-givers moved into new quarters, a most modern and well-equipped facility. The unit is built so that nurses and doctors can maintain visual, in addition to electronic, contact of the patients under their care directly from the nursing station. And for purposes of privacy, curtains can be drawn in front of the glass windows. It is spacious; it is efficient. This is the type of modern facility that attracts specialists to a city the size of ours. And we are proud of it.

Mr. Speaker, kidney dialysis is also being administered through the Victoria Union Hospital in Prince Albert, thus saving many hours of driving as well as the expense of making regular trips to Prince Albert . . . from Prince Albert to Saskatoon. Many people are grateful for that investment in people, Mr. Speaker.

And we are very interested in the investment government is making for a new CT scanner in our city of Prince Albert. I expect this new unit to be in service this fall, Mr. Speaker. This diagnostic tool will help to save lives, especially in cases of trauma, and will also ease the demand on the Saskatoon CT scan services.

Another investment in people that we appreciate in Prince Albert is the construction of the Mount St. Joseph's 120-bed long-term care facility. Investment into this facility was both federal and provincial, with the local share of two and a half million being raised locally. And it is . . . the fund-raising is near completion.

Mr. Speaker, when people work together, great things are accomplished. And I know that families of head injured and families of people who cannot any longer stay in their own homes are very grateful to see this modern new structure being built close to Carlton and Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, it is getting close to 5 o'clock. I have several more comments I wish to make, but at this time I would like to move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — It now being near the hour of 5 o'clock, the House will stand recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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