

EVENING SITTING
COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Executive Council
Vote 10

The Deputy Chair: — I invite the Premier to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening to you, sir, and all the members of the House. I am pleased to introduce to you, seated at my immediate left, the deputy minister to myself, Dr. Greg Marchildon. Greg's a Saskatchewan boy from Zenon Park who's made various stops along the way and we're very happy to have him come back to Saskatchewan from Johns Hopkins University. Seated to my right is my chief of staff, Miss Judy Samuelson; directly behind me is the director of operations and executive services, Don Wincherauk. Seated to Don's left is the executive assistant to the deputy minister, Mr. Jim Nichol. And the person behind Mr. Wincherauk is the manager of administration, Bonita Heidt.

And of course the cast of hundreds if not thousands waiting in support, aid, and comfort should I need the same.

Item 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I welcome the Premier and his officials here this evening in what I'm sure will be a very valuable exchange of ideas and views about his government's policies and his government's record.

I know in terms of looking at the Premier's record as the Premier of this province, and, I'm sure, as the Leader of the Opposition, I'm sure that he has responded to the Executive Council estimates many, many a time. This being my first opportunity to question the Premier in this role. I'm to say the least slightly nervous here.

I'll be bringing up a number of issues tonight, issues that our caucus has been raising throughout this entire session and issues to which, unfortunately, we've not been given satisfactory answers or explanation.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, there are two very different views of this government's performance and values. One view, coming from the 40 members on that side of the House, is that they can do no wrong and that they are not responsible for anything that's wrong in Saskatchewan today. Anything the least bit negative in Saskatchewan can be and must be attributed to someone else. Anything good that occurs here, of course, is completely their doing.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, that's a view which finds its roots in the arrogance we see in the government — an arrogance that rivals the NDP government in 1982 and an arrogance that reminds me of the Devine government's last sorry days in office.

What those two governments had in common by the end was the attitude that they knew better than anyone else in the province what was good for the people who live here. The people weren't to be listened to because the politicians and the government knew best. So those governments simply stopped listening to the people they governed, the people they worked for, the people who elected them to govern.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, it's that type of attitude that allows for opposition parties to win by-elections in seats they have not held in 50 years and it's that kind of arrogance that always defeats governments. Allan Blakeney learned this; Grant Devine learned this. And this government has already had a taste of it when the member from North Battleford joined us on this side of the House in time for this session, I'm sure much to the chagrin of the Minister of Justice.

So while the members opposite wallow in their own self-importance and perceived infallibility, the people of the province have come to a point of view quite different than the 40 hon. members who sit on the other side of the legislature from ourselves. This is the point of view of the people we're here for: the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, I'm not going to stand here and argue that people aren't glad that the budget is balanced or at least appears to be balanced, thanks to a record high resource revenues and the nearly \$130 million that pours into government coffers each and every year from communities throughout Saskatchewan through video lottery terminals. And, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I'm not going to stand here and say the people of Saskatchewan weren't happy to see the PST drop back to 7 per cent, the very point it was when this government took power. That wouldn't be fair, and it wouldn't be honest.

But — this is a big "but" that the members opposite seem to have blocked out — there are many people in this province today who are suffering as much, if not more, than before this government came to power in 1991. These people, while they're happy that the provincial budget is under control, these are the people who are becoming more and more convinced with each passing day that this government — this NDP Party — has forgotten about how its policies affect the people in the province.

The people in Saskatchewan see that this is a government that is absolutely riddled with hypocrisy. The government's words say one thing, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Their actions show something quite different.

The government opposite is a government that takes offence when anyone dares to question its policies or the motivations behind its policies. And I think we can hear that already tonight from the comments from those members. Whenever anyone on this side of the House raises a question about the wisdom of a certain policy or an initiative, we don't get a clear explanation from the government. What we get from those members opposite, and the Premier, is another defensive political show, the type of show that I'm sure we'll see tonight.

We ask a question about what the government is doing about the problem of child prostitution; they say we're grandstanding. We ask a question about what the government is planning to do to deal with the problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan; they say we're grandstanding. We ask a question about the many Saskatchewan residents who are falling through the cracks in this government's health care system, and they say we're grandstanding.

Over and over they tell us this isn't the forum to raise such concerns on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. They tell us that by raising these issues in this House on a daily basis we're playing cheap politics — something they'd never think of doing of course.

Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I ask you, if you don't have the right to use this House to ask these questions, questions that the citizens of this province are concerned about, then what are we doing here? Is this government so consumed with their own self-importance that they are actually offended that the opposition party has the audacity to call them to account for something on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan? Because if it's the attitude of the members opposite, I have only one thing to say — we don't have to take any lessons about political grandstanding from the members opposite. They were masters of it during the 1980s and they continue to be masters at it.

Whenever an important issue is raised in this province, this government's first reaction is not to seek a solution to the problem. No, that would be too difficult and may actually force them to take some responsibility. No, their first reaction is always political. At the first sign of a problem in the province they go into overdrive to contain their political damage; actually solving the problem that caused the concern is an afterthought if it's actually a thought at all.

They first have to figure out who to slough the blame on so they don't have to deal with the problem themselves. We see absolutely no leadership from the government on the many important issues facing our province and the people who live here.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, it is a government's responsibility to show leadership. We have not seen that from this government. In order to show leadership a government must first be willing to take some responsibility for what's occurring in the province, and continually we see the government and the Premier refuse to take such responsibility to show the type of leadership we need in Saskatchewan. It's not enough to find the nearest political scapegoat. The people of Saskatchewan deserve to hear some answers, to hear some solutions from the members opposite. The blame game may make for good politics but it makes for ineffective, unaccountable, irresponsible government.

Is it too much to ask that this government actually deals with some of the issues the people of Saskatchewan are concerned about? Is it too much to ask to listen to the people and at least hear their concerns? Is it too much to ask that these concerns are dealt with in a serious way? Well, Mr. Deputy Chairman, from what I've seen during the last two sessions from this

government, it seems that it is too much to ask. They simply can't put politics aside for one second; they're totally incapable of it. And in my opinion the people of Saskatchewan deserve better.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, it's not good enough to balance the budget without acknowledging how you did it. That you are taking in nearly \$800 million more in taxes than you did in 1991. That you've closed hospital beds, laid off nurses, and closed hospitals. That you've chopped resources from our schools and our students. That you've drained hundreds of millions of dollars out of communities throughout Saskatchewan through VLTs, without even keeping your promise to return even a small portion of that cash to those same communities. That you've taken a hatchet to local governments, each and every year you've been in power, inflicting vicious cuts year after year after year.

It's simply not good enough to take all the credit for balancing your budget when you're not willing to take the responsibility for the pain you've inflicted on the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Chairman, every member of this House knows that something had to be done after the Conservative government of Grant Devine was finally booted out by the people, who were sick and tired of the waste and corruption. Yes, tough decisions had to be made. Yes, the finances of the province had to be brought under control. And yes, some pain had to be inflicted to get us out of the Conservative-created mess.

But, Mr. Deputy Chairman, it's totally unacceptable for this government to stand before us in this legislature, stand before the people of Saskatchewan, and disavow any responsibility for the cuts that were made, for the pain that was inflicted. And today, Mr. Deputy Chairman, now that the finances of the province are apparently under control — as I said, thanks largely to record resource revenue and new-found wealth in the gambling industry — it's time for this government to stand up and explain its actions of today.

Explain why schools continue to be hard hit. Explain why municipalities have been almost completely cut off from any revenue sharing from this government. Explain why it refuses to share its gambling fortune with the communities where the money comes from. Explain why the hospitals that were downgraded to health centres in 1993 are now being shut down completely.

The people of Saskatchewan want an explanation and deserve an explanation. They deserve a government that is open and accountable, like the NDP promised it would be when it was still in opposition.

I just want to take a few minutes to look back at a few things the current Premier promised in the lead-up to 1991, and some of the things his party promised. Just a bit of a report card — where the NDP told us they were going and where they've gone.

(1915)

In a document entitled *Democratic Reforms for the 1990's*, which I believe was prepared by the New Democratic caucus, several interesting points were made. I'll be the first to admit that on issues such as accountability, perhaps the current government does a better job than the previous Tory government. But I mean really, Mr. Deputy Chairman, who wouldn't do a better job on virtually anything that that government did?

The NDP promised, while in opposition, to table the annual reports of government departments within six months of the close of the fiscal year. Has that happened? No, Mr. Deputy Chairman. During this session we've received the reports for the 1995-96 fiscal year for government departments. We won't see the reports for 1996-97 until next year — 1998.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, the same document also calls on the government to implement a fair and open tendering policy based on getting the best deal for the people of Saskatchewan. What did we get instead, Mr. Deputy Chairman? We got the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, which does nothing but cost the people of Saskatchewan more money. And it was nothing more than a pay-off from this government to its union supporters.

And then there's the Provincial Auditor. During the 1980s, the NDP constantly rushed to the defence of the Provincial Auditor against a government that often treated the office with outright contempt. But again, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the NDP's actions of late speak much louder than their words in the 1980s. Lately we've seen one minister in particular treat the Provincial Auditor with outright disrespect and contempt, with the aid of several back-benchers who took part in a scripted, well planned, well orchestrated attack on the auditor, whose only sin was to raise legitimate concerns on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan about this government's accounting practices.

Again, Mr. Deputy Chairman, the government's members' shocking behaviour in this instance shows how arrogant the government has become. And I have to assume this attack was conducted with the Premier's blessing since I have not heard him disavow himself from the actions of that minister or force that minister to apologize.

The auditor gives an opinion they don't like, so they just go and get another opinion that they like better. That's not the end of it though. A few days later they pass a motion stating in effect that the Workers' Compensation Board shouldn't be accountable to the Provincial Auditor either. These actions show a patent disregard for the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Deputy Chairman, simply because he dares question some of the actions and policies of the government, which is his job.

It's unacceptable and it's unworthy of that party which climbed upon its high horse so often when it was in opposition. But it's the type of hypocrisy and arrogance we've been talking about this session and last.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I don't always agree with

everything the press has to say, but I think a recent column in the *Leader-Post* and *Star-Phoenix* aptly sums up what many people in Saskatchewan are starting to feel about this government. That column, in summing up this session and this government, stated in part:

Instead of coasting through the session, the government has found itself embroiled in a series of controversies that can be attributed, in large measure, to its own arrogance and self-righteous behaviour.

The same column goes on to say, and I quote:

Just as there is no superior race, there is no superior political philosophy. And until some members of the NDP caucus get that through their inflated heads, the Premier's headaches will continue.

Well I'm sure the Premier knows that Tylenol or Advil will take care of his headache. But I think there's a very important lesson to be learned here.

When a government thinks it knows everything, when a government thinks it has all the answers and stops listening to other opinions, it is a government that will soon lose the support of the public. We've already seen this in the North Battleford by-election. And I suspect we'll have ample opportunity to see it more in the next two years.

It's this type of attitude that leads the government to try and cover up the \$16 million loss in the NST fiasco. It's this type of attitude that gets us into Guyana. And it's this type of attitude that leads to outrageous, insensitive, and unacceptable attacks from members on that side of the House on political opponents who aren't even members of this House, whose only sin is that they have different philosophies than those members. Perhaps more humility from those members would lead to fewer apologies.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, if the only side-effect of the arrogance shown by those members were hurt feelings or a few negative headlines, it wouldn't be hard to swallow. However that same arrogance is causing a lot of unnecessary pain for people in this province because the government will not listen to them, will not acknowledge the harm their policies have done to the people and the communities throughout Saskatchewan.

And those are the issues we've raised in this House during this session and last. And it's these type of issues we'll continue to raise because they are the issues the people of Saskatchewan are asking us to raise.

They want to know why their health care system continues to deteriorate even though we're still spending every bit as much as we ever did. They want to know why schools are closed — not because there aren't enough students, but because there isn't enough resources provided by the government. They want to know why their roads aren't safe to drive on and why this government fails to realize that the longer it leaves the problem, the harder it will be to fix.

They want to know why this government refuses to even acknowledge its responsibility in the area of youth crime. They want to know why they're faced with higher and higher utility rates; at the same time the government has apparently decided to purchase a worthless power company in a country most of the members opposite probably couldn't even locate on a map.

These are the questions the people of Saskatchewan want some answers to. I'll be touching on each and every one of them with the Premier tonight. And after I sit down and if he decides to give adequate answers to each and every one of these questions, we may have a short evening. However, if he stands in his place and begins once again to point fingers in all directions other than at himself and his government, we may have a long evening.

So I'll begin my questioning tonight by asking the Premier to explain to the people of Saskatchewan why his government continues to add pain to the lives of the people of this province, particularly the people outside of our larger centres — the people who are now losing their health centres, the people who are seeing their children bussed out of their communities because their school has closed, bussed over highways which continue to crumble and will continue to crumble.

And I'll throw out this challenge to the Premier — explain his government's actions in these areas to the people of Saskatchewan, and at the same time, at least acknowledge that his government has a role to play in these areas.

Will you do that, Mr. Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is correct. I have heard many estimates from many departments and many times as minister in charge of the Executive Council. But I have to tell you this is the first time that I've heard the beginning of estimates with a 24-minute speech, presumably lecturing this government for being too political, and not once even acknowledging that in that 24 minutes, it was probably the most political harangue that this legislature in any estimates of any department has heard, certainly in the 30 years that I've been around.

So I don't think I'll take, with the greatest of respect, too many lessons from the current Leader of the Official Opposition about what is political or what is not political.

I want to make a second point and I think this all members of the House will welcome. The hon. member talked about, very glancingly I might observe, about how it was that we balanced the budget and how we're attacking the debt. And oh yes, sure, we lowered the PST but it wasn't good enough — never is good enough. Didn't even ignore . . . mention — ignored totally — the substantial new funds that we've pumped into the various social programs — I'll say a word about that in a moment. And then he proceeded to try to analyze, proceeded to try to analyze why this is the case.

Well I want to tell you, Mr. Chairman, and all members of the

House, don't buy his analysis. Buy this analysis, buy this analysis: today, Mr. Chairman, the Dominion Bond Rating Service (DBRS) upgraded the province's credit rating from BBB to A.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And with this, Mr. Chairman, Saskatchewan's credit rating now is bracketed by all four major North American agencies in recognition of the province's financial and economic turnaround. And what do they attribute this to? Not to the stated reasons of the Leader of the Opposition. Of course that wouldn't be plausible or possible. In the words of DBRS, they cite both the province's continuing strong economic performance, "its sustainable fiscal program." DBRS noted "the province's demonstrated its commitment to meeting fiscal objectives despite substantial challenges in recent years and fully intends to generate continuing budget surpluses."

Which leads me, of course, to the specific question the hon. member asks: do we acknowledge that the Government of Saskatchewan has responsibility with respect to roads and highways and social services and the various programs he's identified? Well of course the Government of Saskatchewan acknowledges they have responsibility for it. That's why in this budget we've been able to reduce taxes on sales from 9 to 7 per cent; why we've been able to pump \$57 million more to the base on health care each and every year hereafter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Plus back-filling every penny taken away from us by the federal Liberal government. That is why we've been able to announce the \$2.5 billion, 10-year program for highways without a penny being matched by Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — That's why we've been able to announce an \$8 million more on K to 12 system, \$13 million more to the post-secondary system on education, and back-filling virtually all of what the federal Liberal government has taken away from us; we've been able to announce that. That's why we've been able to announce in this budget \$25 million or double the amount in the children's action plan — double the amount in the children's action plan, an action plan recognized internationally as the outstanding plan of Canada and North America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And that's why we have a program which basically says we invest in people — job creation, education, kids, health system, highway improvement, and the balanced budget. That is our program, our investment in the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to close before I sit down, Mr. Chairman, to say the hon. member talks about — in his mind in any event, imagined as it is, as imagined as his figures were in his opening statement —

that somehow the government here is arrogant. I want to tell you this government, Mr. Chairman, has made mistakes. This government has made mistakes, and I've acknowledged it publicly before; I acknowledge it again. And it is inevitable that we will make mistakes again in the future. We try hard not to.

Where we make mistakes, we seek to learn from them. Where we make mistakes, and when we formulate government policy we seek to consult and to listen to people from all over Saskatchewan, and we do.

And sometimes we may lose by-elections, as we did in the constituency called Regina North West. And somehow it happens that when the general election comes, we always win back those by-elections, as the people of Saskatchewan know that this is exactly where we're headed because of the investment by the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — So, Mr. Speaker, that we have issues to deal with which are complex and important, I acknowledge. Have we solved every problem? No, we have not. Have we reached heaven on earth? No, we have not.

Have we made tremendous progress in six years? Yes we have. Don't take my word for it. Just take today's record-breaking announcement — for the recent time being, in any event, because we were higher at one point — and that is, take the announcement of the Dominion Bond Rating Service, which has taken a look at our books objectively and non-politically, from top to bottom, and says, Saskatchewan is back. We are back to being a social and economic and fiscal leader of all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. Over the last number of years, Mr. Premier, we've heard you report and the Minister of Finance report that indeed the government budget was entering a period of becoming balanced. And we have had three surpluses. I would like to also indicate to you that in 1991-92, the fiscal year for government, the government revenues were \$4.6 billion. Today the government is taking in nearly \$1 billion more than it did when it came into power.

Compare that to what the province has lost in transfers from the federal government. And I'll be very generous here, Mr. Premier, because I think I've heard you use these numbers in the House where you've indicated that \$200 million in transfers has been lost over the last number of years.

Even if you accept that figure, that still puts us ahead by several million dollars each and every year — several hundred million dollars. So excuse me if I say that this government's continual cry of poverty rings very, very hollow. Not that the facts matter to the members opposite — they continue to blame the federal government for the NDP's mismanagement of health care and continual reductions to education and other government services that are a provincial responsibility.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1930)

Mr. Krawetz: — And I expect them to continue to use the federal government as a whipping-boy. They seemed content to fight the last federal election on the floor of this legislature since the day it was called.

And their campaigning has paid off. Alexa McDonough has moved from fifth place to fourth, right past the Bloc, and only 30 or 40 points behind the current government. But I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Chair, I digress. I digress.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, fed bashing has been a tool used by successive provincial governments for many, many years, especially by the NDP who never have to worry about their own federal cousins achieving power. Fed bashing is a convenient way to shirk off explaining their own actions.

But what I find truly maddening, truly frustrating, that all the while the members opposite cry and moan about reductions from the federal government, reductions that hardly make a dent in Saskatchewan record revenues, this provincial government carries on with its own downloading.

And the offloading this government has passed on to local governments makes the federal cut-backs pale in comparison. If Paul Martin had done to the provinces what this government has done to municipalities then you might have reason to cry the blues. But your own cut-backs to our local governments far exceed anything you've had to put up with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — It's become very clear that this government intends to end any form of revenue sharing with the municipalities in the next few years. It just hasn't had the courage to admit it. Instead it continues to whittle away its responsibilities to local ratepayers. Every year local governments have received cuts from this provincial government — this government that decries any offloading it must put up with.

Mr. Premier, my question is related to municipal revenue sharing, both urban and rural, to school boards in terms of the foundation grants that your government provides. How can you consider offloading to that level of government as simply necessary for you to balance the budget and instead hammer on the fact that the feds are downloading a very small portion to your budgets?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I sure hope that the member's confident predictions of the 30-percentage-point lead that his federal kissing cousins have — for his sake, not perhaps for the sake of Canadians — proves to be accurate on the evening of June 2.

Nor would I dare presume to say that he said it with a touch of

arrogance and a touch of super-confidence that even, dare say I, members on this side would not try. But leave that aside; that's just a parenthetical comment.

What I'd like to know from the Liberal opposition is just a square answer to one proposition. Just a moment ago in a preface to this question you say that our economy has grown to the extent that revenues to the coffers to the province of Saskatchewan have grown by about a billion dollars. And yet day after day, day after day — I bet you even during these estimates yet tonight — you'll come up and say the economy's not growing. You're not doing your jobs. The job numbers aren't up there. You should be doing this and you should be doing that.

What is it? What is it? Are we growing or are we shrinking? Are we up a billion dollars or are we down a billion dollars? Get your math right, also correct, if I may. We pay 8 . . . Well I hear your seat mate saying it's the highest-taxed province of Canada and that is an absolute inaccuracy. The \$75,000, the \$75,000 of a family of four on taxes and household charges, there is no province in Canada that has a lower tax rate bar none — bar none — bar none, and you don't even accept that. You won't accept it at all. And not only will you not accept it, not only will you not accept it, not only will you not accept it, member from Saltcoats, you won't accept this, but here's what you're doing.

Here's what you're doing since March 6, 1997 to May 6, 1997, in the period of this session, I have here, documented by you and your colleagues, a total extra cost, annual cost added to the budget of \$1.9 billion. Going from department to department, you people would spend \$1.9 billion each and every year. I have every MLA's name. I have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, no, not every bureaucrat . . . (inaudible) . . . right from *Hansard*. I have the page number; I have the MLA; I have what you promised and I've got the cost on it — \$1.9 billion.

Mr. Chairman, what we're seeing here is a political party in total disarray — a political party that on the one hand says we're not growing the economy; on the other hand says we're growing the economy. A political party that says on the one hand we should not go back into deficit or debt and on the other hand advocates expenditures of \$2 billion.

It's okay, Mr. Chairman, I know you want to intervene, but they get a dose of truth and they react in a very negative and loud way. I totally understand that. They're going to hear some more truth. And what they see is an expenditure . . . (inaudible) . . . of \$2 billion each and every year and then he gets up and he asks us to add another \$20 million more with respect to municipalities, given the situation. Mr. Chairman, what the members opposite in the Liberal Party need is a first-year course in basic math before they come to these estimates.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Premier, last year both urban and rural municipalities were told to expect 25 percent cuts in their revenue-sharing grants for this year. And of course there were protests against such a brutal cut, when the province was raking

in the revenue that I've just indicated to you.

However, when the true figures were revealed this year, we got to see first hand how brutal the government can be. And it's truly incredible just what the province is doing to our local governments, because for many local governments, the cuts were much, much higher than 25 per cent, as unbelievable as that is. Total urban government grants have been slashed by 17 million, while rural grants have been reduced by another \$12 million — \$29 million, Mr. Premier. Now that's brutal.

But the story becomes even more brutal when you look at what's happened to some of the individual municipalities. The RM of Shellbrook, a cut of 61 per cent in conditional grants. The RM of Rosthern, a cut of 65 per cent. RM of Langenburg, a cut of 74 per cent. RM of Meota reduced 66 per cent in unconditional grants. The RM of Meadow Lake, a cut of 91 per cent, and the RM of Golden West, a cut of 95 per cent. And that list goes on, Mr. Premier. It is so entirely hypocritical for those members to decry downloading when they oversee these kinds of savage cuts to local municipalities.

Mr. Premier, can you explain to local taxpayers why cuts handed down by the federal government are the wrong course, while your downloading is the right course?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, the answer to that I think is quite obvious. But before I do, again I get a little bit confused about the Liberals opposite. Here I have the *Melville Advance*, Wednesday, March 26, 1997. And guess what the headline says? "NDP stole budget ideas from Liberals." That's what the headline says. The best ideas in Thursday's budget "were the ones stolen from the Liberal Party, says Melville MLA, Ron Osika" and then goes on to say how good the budget is.

All of a sudden it was the best budget ever introduced and all the ideas came from the Liberal Party — not tonight though. Tonight they're on a different course.

Of course we've seen this before. Doesn't much matter whether they're for privatizing Crown corporations or against privatizing Crown corporations, their story seems to change with every columnist's opinion on how they're doing or how they're not doing in the Legislative Assembly. They got a lesson to learn, but that's not the way they're going to assume office, nor is it the way they're going to maintain the position of the official opposition.

The offloading of the federal government, however, is a very, very different issue. What the federal government is doing nationally is cutting back \$7 billion in three key areas: health, post-secondary education primarily, and in social services — \$7 billion. That means for the province of Saskatchewan a shortfall of about \$110 million each and every year.

This on top of, Mr. Chairman, reductions in, for example, the responsibility out of the constitution to look after status treaty Indians off reserve and the offload there, and the various offloads in various other abandonment of programs, whether it's the Crow rate, to the aspects related to deregulation,

totalling in the approximate amount of about 600 to \$700 million each and every year for this provincial government.

We are not alone in objecting to the Prime Minister. Every premier — Liberal, Conservative, NDP — every premier across this country has been saying to the Prime Minister of the country: you can't cut back on fundamental programs like health and education and social services.

Now what we did was this. Prior to the 1995 election we tabled a budget in April . . . March, April 1995. And we said to the local governments, in this budget year, two years from now, you will receive a reduction. We're giving you two years warning — What? The figure is \$20 million I think it is, if my memory serves . . . Pardon me?

An Hon. Member: — Fifteen.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Fifteen million dollars, which if memory serves me correctly, over the next two years you can accommodate for that and take that into account.

That was the budget, that was the promise, and that's what we implemented. That on a budget of 4.4 billion, using your figures, is an amount by which the vast majority of local governments can manage and can maintain very easily and is of a magnitude of an entirely different order — entirely different order — than the \$7 billion savaging of Canada's national programs which the Liberal Party have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — I guess, Mr. Premier, the reactions by the premiers to the federal downloading are no different than the reactions that we and, I'm sure, you are hearing from the Reeves of municipalities, the mayors of municipalities, the chairpersons of school boards, who are saying that your downloading is no different.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — As this government lets provincial highways fall into further disrepair, more stress is put on municipal roads for which there is less money to maintain them, especially after the government went further in its hit against municipalities and cancelled the futures program.

Of course before it was done away with, the futures program allowed RMs to use more than their annual allocation of funds so they could finance the reconstruction of significant portions of roads over time. With the cancellation of the program, many RMs tell us they'll be lucky to build a kilometre of road per year.

So why is the government doing everything in its power to make the situation of municipal governments, and in particular RMs, untenable?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well we're not, Mr. Chairman. We're

working with the RMs as close as we can. We have working partnerships which are very important. The southwest transportation advisory council — the hon. member from Wood River will know about this as an example of where RMs are working with the provincial government to identify the priorities of the highway system in that particular area.

We're dedicating a 10-year program of \$2.5 billion to build up the roads which need to be built up with the infrastructure program which has been signed, again involving the federal government — to its credit, I give it credit — with the provincial government, is now going to be devoted almost entirely to local governments and almost entirely in the case of RMs to the highways and transportation network.

There's no doubt about it that we should be spending more money on highways if we could afford to be spending more money on highways. But I have said — maybe not to this House, but it's a fact — we have enough taxpayer highways in the province of Saskatchewan to go around the centre of the equator about four and a half times. And 6 per cent of that network is used by 70 per cent of the traffickers — 6 per cent; 94 per cent is used by the remainder.

We've got to use our dollars very, very efficiently. We've got to make sure they're targeted and they've got to be put in case of an economic and social plan. That is what we're doing by working with the RMs and we're turning it around and we're achieving it in a better way each and every day.

(1945)

Mr. Krawetz: — Sadly, Mr. Premier, it's not only municipal governments that have borne the brunt of your government's obsessive cut-backs. Even perhaps more harmful is what the government has done to our public schools. More harmful because we're not just dealing with potholes and/or garbage collection here. We're dealing with the education of our children.

Again we'll hear about the government's commitment to education from the minister and from the Premier, but their words won't be backed up by their actions. Since the 1991-92 fiscal year this government has taken \$328 million out of the K to 12 system in Saskatchewan, \$328 million from our children's education — some commitment for the future.

Grants are now lower than they were in 1991-92 even though operating costs have risen dramatically. The educational development grant has been cut altogether and capital grants are just over a third of what they used to be, Mr. Premier. This is at a time, and I want to keep emphasizing this for the members opposite who might believe their own press releases . . . this from a government who is taking in more revenues than ever before in the history of Saskatchewan — federal cut-backs or no federal cut-backs.

The cuts to the education system has forced some school boards to close schools. And yes, Mr. Deputy Chair, before the members opposite say it, I'll say it for them — schools have been closing in the province for many, many years, but the

closures that are going on now are quite different because many of these closures aren't being driven by a lack of students, as has been the case in other years and during other administrations. These closures are taking place solely because of a lack of funding by the province. In towns that are lucky enough to have businesses move into the area, schools are being shut down simply because the dollars aren't there to run them properly. It makes no difference if there is a greater need for schools in these areas than ever before. There's simply no cash to run them.

In Regina which, the last time I heard, has a growing population, the division board was forced to close schools because of a lack of funding by the province. And in communities that aren't losing schools outright, they are losing some much needed programs.

Mr. Premier, in Prince Albert for instance, we see that education cuts have resulted in the elimination of the Carlton connection, an intervention program for special needs students. This isn't an example of a frivolous program, Mr. Deputy Chairman. It's much needed — so much that parents in Prince Albert launched legal action to try and save it. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

The true commitment that the government has in education of our children can be seen in its share of education funding. A few short years ago, the provincial government picked up 60 per cent of the cost of educating our kids. Today that figure has fallen to 40 per cent, leaving the other 60 per cent to be funded by the property tax base. This is a hit not only on the school system, but once again on local taxpayers.

Mr. Premier, your government's commitment to education seems to be lacking. Can you explain to the people of this province, those people in towns where schools are closing, where there's programs that are being eliminated or all the kinds of things that we've talked about in this session in the field of education, where those things are happening, how can you describe that kind of a situation and then still look at the fact that we have slipped from 60 per cent funding by government to now only 40 per cent? Is there a plan in place to bring us back to that kind of level of funding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, we have indicated to SARM, SUMA, SSTA, STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), to Legislative Assembly, through the Minister of Education, that our objective is to increase from the General Revenue Fund more of the percentage of funds used to finance K to 12. That is our commitment.

We have been in a situation since 1991 where we have been fighting a deficit, resulting in the good news of today's announcement that we're now, as I describe it, a universal A province which, by the way, will mean material benefits for us right across the piece, including more money for education. There's no doubt about it. We need to increase it and go toward a target that is better than it is at this particular time.

But I want to make two points before I close on this particular question. When the Leader of the Opposition himself was in charge of a school board, school division, there were school closures. He will say of course they weren't occasioned by the lack of funds. They were occasioned by the lack of population . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I said population. He will of course maybe even blame us, maybe he'll say it's our fault entirely. But the reality is there's a change in demographics. And it is a decision which local school boards, a decision making which they're exercising, very responsibly based on their needs. And I dare say the member discharging his duties locally did the same at that particular time.

But here's the fundamental question. He says, when are you going to get back to 60/40? I noted by the way in my Liberal spending proposals document, which I identified a few moments ago, that you first raised this on March 24, 1997, a 60/40 split on K to 12 funding. Do you know how much that would cost a year annually? Well I'll tell you how much it will cost a year annually . . .

An Hon. Member: — It cost 180 million.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Pardon me — 191 million.

An Hon. Member: — I said 180.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Okay, fine. Let's take your 180 — let's take your 180 — and you tell me, if you were in government and you were going to increase it, where are you going to get that 180 million from?

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Premier, I've asked you for a plan, a plan of action for the term of your government. Your minister has indicated that there should be a plan, that we should move to 60/40. The local governments of SARM, SUMA, and SSTA have lobbied your government. And if I recall your words this past spring, you said we must move in that direction. I'm not telling you to do it tomorrow. I'm saying put in place a plan. And I'd like to see your plan. I'd like to see your plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — I think the area of municipal government and education are very good examples of this government's hypocrisy when it comes to pointing fingers at other levels of government for downloading. No one has to take lessons from this government for the evils of downloading because no other government does it better.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I haven't even touched on health care yet or the other issues the New Democrats used to guard jealously as their own private domain — the types of issues this government has seemed to forget about. Nor have I spoken in great detail about the state of the highways in Saskatchewan. But before getting into those areas, I want to hear the Premier on this issue, sir.

How can you stand in this House and tell us over and over again how harmful and counterproductive it is for one level of government to download and not your own government, sir? I

ask you.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I've answered this question. I've answered this question. As a result of the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you'll never accept the answer. Because being a part of a political party that downloads \$7 billion on the backs of Canadians on health care and education and social services, you'll never accept that answer.

I'm telling you that what we engaged in 1991 was a province that was in a very serious state of affairs. This upgrade which I announced today tells us how far the people of the province of Saskatchewan have come. They've come, by working together, to the point now where we can add, on K to 12, \$8 million more, where's there's 18 million more on the capital side. We are expanding. Take a look at your government and our government — deficit for your government federally; no deficit for us. Debt reduction for us; no debt reduction for you people and the Liberal government. We have more money for education; no more money for education from the federal Liberals. More money for health care right here; no more money for health care from the federal people. Money for highways; no more money from the federal people.

You say, how can we justify that? We can justify that because the economy has grown. We've run a balanced government, a fiscal policy which has made sense. It's a fiscal policy which you embrace and it is of a magnitude and of an order in terms of just sheer dollars which cannot even be remotely compared to, which the local officials have had two years to manage; and I want to tell you, notwithstanding your best efforts in this regard, are managing quite well, thank you very much, in spite of your partisan political comments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, welcome to you and your officials this evening. Interesting discussion we have going here this evening with respect to your estimates and holding your government accountable, which is obviously the job of opposition parties to do. And we will endeavour to do some of that here this evening.

Mr. Premier, we haven't received I don't believe, as of yet, your department's global estimate questions. I think I'm hearing from your official there that you may not have received them. I think that is incorrect. It's to my understanding the global questions have been given to your office and we received them from almost each and every department with the exception of yours. And we wonder if you could provide those or at least a commitment to provide them as soon as possible.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I make the commitment. They think they should be ready by late tonight. We'll have them in your hands tonight or first thing tomorrow morning but I just don't have them right now. We did receive the requests and we'll get them to you tonight or tomorrow morning.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Would you provide for us this evening, Mr. Premier, a run-down on all of the trips that you

have made, you and your officials have made — who accompanied you, the expenses, who you met with, that sort of thing, which is the sort of the standard fare.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — We shall do that as part of the global material, if that's possible? Yes, we'll do that.

Mr. Boyd: — With respect to ministerial assistants, Mr. Premier, how many ministerial assistants within your government department will be receiving incremental raises on July 1 of '97?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised by my officials that what the government did a couple of years ago, as the hon. member opposite will know, is we introduced a grid system for ministerial assistants, much as there is in virtually all categories of the regular civil service. And on July 1, I have one ministerial assistant working directly with me. There will be an increase approximating 4 per cent which also may be applicable to the MAs (ministerial assistant) across the piece.

Mr. Boyd: — Last time we visited on this subject, we were aware that ministerial assistants' salaries, benefits, and other expenses within your government department were a total of \$560,000. What is the figure with respect to that today?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, this is how the situation looks. In 1990, the number of MAs in government totalled 159. Annual salary costs totalled \$5.54 million. May 1997, the number of MAs totalled 107 at 4.236 million. Those are the figures.

(2000)

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Premier, I'd like to turn our attention now to issues that are important to the people of Saskatchewan, and the first one we'll start with is in the whole area of taxation, Mr. Premier.

And I think I could offer the views I think, of a lot of people of Saskatchewan with respect to the provincial sales tax who would want to offer thanks to the government for the reducing of the provincial sales tax and the balancing of the budget. As you know, Mr. Premier, as a fiscal conservative, one who believes in a positive bottom line, whether it's within your household, within your farm, within your business, or within government, it is my firm belief that we should be operating with every degree of fiscal integrity we possibly can.

And with respect to the provincial sales tax, as you know, I've been and our party has been on record for a number of years, certainly since I've taken over the leadership of our party, with respect to the reducing of the provincial sales tax, and we are pleased to see that there was a move in that direction with respect to the provincial sales tax.

With respect to the overall budget of Saskatchewan, we still are of the belief that you could have concentrated more on cutting government spending rather than raising taxes over the last five years. We still have a very high tax load in Saskatchewan relative to other jurisdictions.

In Alberta the average family is paying something in the order of \$2,000 less per year in taxes in addition to paying no provincial sales tax. And that takes into account the extra costs of medicare that they pay in premiums and that sort of thing in Alberta. So if you look at it person over person, tax over tax, that sort of thing, we are still lagging behind with respect to the taxes in Saskatchewan relative to other jurisdictions.

So while, Mr. Premier, there is some good news in the budget in terms of reducing the provincial sales tax, and the very fact that the budget has been balanced here in Saskatchewan, I think there is also some concerns that we have to look at with respect to future balancing of budgets in the years down the road here in Saskatchewan.

If you look at the ways that you've done it, we've done it through increased taxes as I've said, and we've been blessed with a number of things that are far from your responsibility. For example, we see record low interest rates in Saskatchewan. We see almost or record highs in terms of oil and gas revenue. We see things in terms of the oil and gas sector doing extremely well. Agriculture's rebounded to the point where there's a considerable amounts of money now coming in from agriculture, rather than going out, as there was in the past.

While, Mr. Premier, there is some good news, I think there's also some clouds on the horizon that we want to keep our eye on with respect to the integrity of the fiscal position of Saskatchewan. And I wonder if you'd care to comment to this point?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well I certainly want to comment favourably concerning the Leader of the Third Party's main concern about the fact that we have to be very vigilant in the years ahead with respect to our budgeting. There is no doubt about it that the province of Saskatchewan, and for that matter the province of Alberta, need to make sure we continue to work at diversification and expand our economic situation and base beyond our primarily resource-driven economies as they are.

I would add, without getting into the debate for the moment, I think we've made great strides — not nearly as much as we should — but we've made great strides over the last several years and we need to do more.

But I guess the two observations that I want to make is the question of taxes. Clearly we need to lower our taxes some more, and if our fiscal picture will permit we will do so. I've indicated to the House in my little exchange with the Leader of the Official Opposition, it's very little difficult to know how you're going to do it. When you total up the Liberal provincial party demands in this session alone for extra expenditures, totalling nearly \$2 billion a year — each and every year — and still be able to provide, as they would believe you that they're going to provide, a tax decrease and no deficit and a debt reduction, I mean that is straight voodoo economics that only the provincial Liberal Party can mount.

So I think we need to be very vigilant, and we need to make sure that our numbers are accurate in this regard. But having said that, when I said earlier, much to the chagrin of the official

Liberal opposition, the 1997 comparison of taxes and household charges are well documented by all provincial governments. A single person at \$25,000 total income pays less in taxes and household charges than any other in any other jurisdiction in Canada.

A person of a family of four at 50,000 total income pays less than any other jurisdiction of any other province in Canada. For a family of four at \$75,000 total income we do not pay the lowest, Calgary has us beaten. But we argue that if any taxation principle is fair, the one taxation principle is the ability to pay, and at \$75,000 there should be an ability to pay. In this consequence there is a higher tax that is paid there.

Now we need to take a look at this in a very careful way so that tax reductions, when they're made, are made for ever. And when tax reductions are made, they're made without jeopardizing the integrity of the budget; and when they're made, they're made in such a way that we buttress our health and education and highways programs, as we have.

So I agree with you; we need to look at more tax reduction. I argue however, we've done it in a balanced approach — one-third roughly for tax reduction; one-third for continued debt reduction — thus tonight's announcement about the Dominion Bond Rating Service A rating; we're A across the board now — and one-third for increased education and health care spending, which is what we've done.

Now the last point that you raise is the question about what kind of a civil service we have in the sense of whether or not it's bloated. And I want to simply quote to you two independent analysts — and I have my disagreements with these people from time to time, but nonetheless this is what they say. In the *Leader-Post* report of May 15, 1997, the headline is: "Sask. fiscal policy praised." Mr. Michael Walker was speaking to a function in Saskatchewan, and he says:

"Saskatchewan has done a great job of controlling its spending." . . .

In fact, the province has decreased spending by 6.5 per cent — an average of \$2,155 per family of four — since 1993-1994.

And then if I take a look at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, their document called *The Taxpayer*, volume 9, no. 2, 1997, the headline says this, analysing the Manitoba government:

The NDP Government of Saskatchewan has shown up the Manitoba provincial government with a budget that cut their provincial sales tax by 2 per cent or \$180 million and retired the provincial debt in '96-97 by 359.5 million. The lacklustre Manitoba budget paled in comparison.

But it also goes on to say that we have been able to contain our costs. We are either the lowest provider, in terms of bodies, of civil service functions of any jurisdiction in Canada or, depending upon how you compare them, second lowest to Alberta.

That's why when the Minister of Social Services, at the wrap-up of his estimates tonight, praised our civil service, he did so with justification. They have really had to tighten their belts. The people out there, outside the civil service in schools, in hospitals, in municipal governments, everywhere, we've had to tighten our belts. And we now have a turnaround budget.

So to answer your question and to conclude in this regard, we've had an overall decrease of our civil service of 16 per cent since 1991 by independent analyses. We have turned it around in this budget. We're going to be watching it very carefully, and we're going to be applying from here on in what I call the one-third, one-third, one-third formula — one-third for tax reduction, one-third to keep lowering that debt, and one-third for making sure that we have the best possible health, education, and highways, and social services programs that we can afford.

I want to stress, lest anybody use this quotation against me somewhere down the road, these are not going to be watertight compartments. They're not going to be watertight compartments, but they will be rough guidelines that we follow in the question of how we budget in order to make sure that we continue to have steady, solid, balanced growth. We have had, as you know in 1996, the highest growth of any province in Canada in 1996, up over 3.3 per cent, and that's a testament to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, with respect to the provincial sales tax, I think what I am looking for here this evening, and I think what a lot of people across Saskatchewan are looking for this evening, is a plan for further reductions.

What we believe, that the government should be looking towards providing a plan to the people of Saskatchewan so that the people of Saskatchewan can plan accordingly their operations, their business, their farm, their household, with respect to how they can arrange their affairs to the maximum benefit that they can.

If you look at . . . incidentally, to get back to a few of the comments you made earlier about the other opposition party providing spending commitments or spending, I guess you'd call them, promises to the people of Saskatchewan in this session, I have to admit I've sat with wide-eyed amazement myself to watch on an almost daily basis, as we see member after member saying spend more, spend more, spend more. And it is I think, Mr. Premier, I think I would have to agree with you, that it is extremely irresponsible to make those kinds of spending commitments and promises when you have absolutely no possible means to accomplish them or are not in a position to accomplish them, Mr. Speaker. And it amazes me to see that happen on a daily basis as we've seen during this session.

And I think, as I said, I think it's irresponsible. I think the electorate sees through those kinds of things more than they've ever seen through those kinds of things in the past. When you people used to do it back in the '80s and leading up to the '91

election campaign, at least you tried to say where you were going to get the money to do it with. We haven't seen any indication from the Liberal opposition at all of where they're going to raise, using your figures, \$1.9 billion. Was that correct, \$1.9 billion of spending promises in the course of — what? — 60 days here, 50 days, something like that?

I think that, Mr. Premier, I think that it shows you the irresponsibility and the desperation of a political party when they see themselves in a position that they are. Mr. Speaker, and I'm hearing lots of comments from the Liberals with respect to that.

But I think the thing that you have to hear — not we want to hear — from the Liberals, is if you will provide us with any kind of rationale, first of all, and any kind of a plan with respect to how you plan on raising \$1.9 billion. Our budget is balanced by — what? — a few hundred million dollars? We'll be in the glue for 1.5 to \$1.7 billion again.

And as a fiscal conservative . . . and as I know and when we speak to many of you privately, you're fiscal conservatives as much as I'm a fiscal conservative. But it always amazes me when we see that kind of activity irresponsibly put forward by opposition parties. It's always easy. As you know, Mr. Premier, when you did it, it was easy. Then it was easy; today, to see a party stand up and just say well, we'll spend more now, solve all the problems, to my knowledge, we have not on one occasion that I can recall stood up and said we're advocating more spending without first of all saying where we think the corresponding reduction in spending on government, on the other hand, would come from.

Where I am not an advocate of spending more, I am not an advocate of government intervening in the economy and thinking that they can fix all that is wrong by simply throwing more money at it. I am not an advocate of that. I am an advocate of good government: one that believes in fiscal responsibility, one that believes in doing what the people of Saskatchewan need and desperately are looking for.

And with respect to that, Mr. Premier, I think what they are desperately looking for is that further reduction in the provincial sales tax, a plan with respect to future tax reductions here in Saskatchewan, a plan with respect to jobs for the people of Saskatchewan and a plan with respect to economic activity. We've made some headway in those areas, and there's no question about it. But I still think we need to be working a great deal harder and longer with respect to a plan for further reductions in taxes here or jobs here in Saskatchewan and for economic activity here in Saskatchewan.

Because all you have to do is come over, Mr. Premier, to the west side of Saskatchewan and you'll see a picture of young people leaving this province. You'll see a picture of more activity in Alberta, more jobs in Alberta, less jobs in Saskatchewan. Although we are making some headway — and I have to admit that; we're making some headway — I think it's important that we recognize that all the clouds on the horizon are not rain clouds good for agriculture here in Saskatchewan. And I'd ask you to comment, Mr. Premier.

(2015)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the answer that I have to give to the last comment, I think can be best stated, at least I think it was best stated, by Statistics Canada, reported in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* of Saturday, May 17, 1997. And the headline on the financial page simply says “Prairie GDP Growth Top of the Heap.” Saskatchewan leads the way at 3.3 per cent. We can’t argue with that fact.

And notwithstanding . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well what it means to the average person is just exactly what the hon. member has said, but I think incorrectly. It’s meant to the average person that there’s been a good agriculture year. There’s been a tremendous year in oil and natural gas. And by the way, you come from the west-central area so I have to defer to you, but I would say that there’s great activity there and great potential for activity.

The question however that you ask is what is the game plan. The game plan is clear as follows: we have to simply grow the economy more by making sure that we have a targeted, focused, diversified, value added strategy. We’ve got that in the partnership papers which are being revisited.

Secondly, where we can provide tax relief to industry in order to make it grow, like in the manufacturing and processing rebate, the livestock, intensive livestock operations, we want to make it do so. We did that last year with respect to farm implement manufacturing machinery sales and with great success in terms of jobs and the revenues being increased to the province of Saskatchewan.

We want to make sure we control our expenditures, that is to say that we don’t go on a wild binge spending spree, as has been talked about here. This may mean not necessarily hacking or slashing programs — this is where you and I may disagree — but it certainly requires all governments to redesign their programs in health care, education, in a whole variety of areas, to make sure that we have the dollars and we meet the dollars that are available . . . in other words to tailor the suit to match the cloth.

And we’ve got to make sure on top of all of this that we have a firm game plan to proceed. Our firm game plan is what we call investing in people. It’s identified jobs, education, highways, the social program with respect to kids in poverty — and making sure that we never ever, ever surrender the dry ground that we’ve captured from an ocean of red ink.

Now it’s been not easy going. We’ve made our fair share of mistakes, goodness knows. I admit to that.

But on balance, with the help of the people of the province of Saskatchewan . . . And I totally agree with you: the days of making promises totalling \$1.9 billion, which is what the Liberal Party in this province in this legislature — in this Saskatchewan legislature — has done already, those days are all gone. And to do so without telling us where they’re going to get the money from is, I think, just as irresponsible.

So that’s our game plan in broad terms. Let’s see how it works out with everybody rolling up their sleeves and keeping their eye on the ball. I think we’re going to see the next three, four, five years being the best years Saskatchewan’s ever had. I’ve never been as optimistic. I’ve never been as hopeful. I’ve never felt this confident in the province of Saskatchewan in my some 30-odd years in political life as I feel at this particular time.

I don’t take credit for that. This government does not take credit for this. I think it is the total contribution of all of us collectively, together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier. I think if you would look towards a few other things that could be done by this government, I think I might be able to share that optimism. If we could look towards changing your thoughts with respect to things like the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, or successor rights, or irresponsible, in some cases, Crown corporations and the operations of those Crown corporations, I think, Mr. Premier, the people of Saskatchewan might be able to share your optimism if all of those kinds of things were dealt with in terms of the operations of your government.

Mr. Premier, as you know, you are embarking upon a review of the Crown corporations here in Saskatchewan. We understand that that is almost complete or will be completed very shortly, and we wonder, Mr. Premier, within the context of that review of the Crown corporations, have you and your government ruled out of hand, have you and your government ruled out of hand exclusively the potential of privatization within those Crown corporations?

Is that something that is not on the table or is that something that is on the table?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, a few preliminary observations. First of all, with respect to the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) — I don’t want to get derailed on it unless you want to pursue it — I think this amounts to something like 18 per cent this year of the total value of all Crown corporations contracting out.

Now I know you may argue that 18 per cent is very, very important. I don’t mean to minimize it, but let’s not make a big issue out of the dollars which are involved.

On successor rights, as well, I want to make it absolutely clear, the successor rights permits the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board — if you’re talking about the short-lines — allows the LRB (Labour Relations Board) to say in Saskatchewan, look, successor rights don’t apply for these economic reasons. And that is a flexible situation which I think is a reasonable one. But leave that aside because that wasn’t the main thrust of your question. Your main thrust to your question was the Crown review and, is privatization off the table?

Our situation is as follows, Mr. Leader of the Third Opposition Party. We have said . . . I said to the government, look, we have

not had a financial check-up of our Crown corporations to the best of my knowledge for nearly 50 years. This is going to cost 3 to \$4 million. We have engaged outside experts outside of government — outside of Canada in some circumstances.

We have done technological analyses of our Crown corporations, who have tried to forecast into the future what happens with SaskTel, for example, or Power Corporation. We've engaged our financial advisers; we've taken a look at the financial state of the books of the Crown corporations. We've examined the way they're governed — are they governed in a proper manner? Should we be reorganizing the governance levels?

We've looked at the question of whether or not there should be, for example, some form of a LURC (legislative utilities review committee), a legislative review committee, which is your idea, or a PURC, which is a Public Utilities Review Commission. All of this is being amassed now; it is not yet complete. Believe me it's going to be several weeks yet from completion.

It's being amassed by our Crown Investments Corporation people, our central body responsible — our kind of, I call it treasury board; that's not quite the accurate legal description, but our treasury board for our Crown corporations — and they're going to be putting forward to us the best economic, technical case for all of these Crowns on a case-by-case basis.

This may mean joint venturing; this may mean partnering. It may mean involving itself in some outside-of-Canada matters. We've been debating in this House about Guyana. We've been debating in this House about the NST situation or LCL (Leicester Communications Limited) in the English cable experience.

One thing is clear that's coming through now, if the people of Saskatchewan desire — and by the way that seems to be their inclination — that the Crowns should be held in public ownership, mainly by the people of Saskatchewan, one thing is obvious — we can't stand still. We've got to be out there competing. Although we may own them as taxpayers and individuals, we've got to be out there competing with the commercial privates as aggressively and as competently as the commercial privates are out there competing. And so far we're doing a pretty good job.

SaskTel has been engaged in a war with the large, deep-pocket telephone companies — AT&T, Sprint, you name them; they've been here. And the percentage loss of long distance has just been a fracture, so much, just a small fraction. Touch wood that it maintains that way. I think it will because SaskTel provides excellent service; it's technologically at the top of its game and I think people know inherently that it's a home-grown Saskatchewan company owned and operated by Saskatchewan people, and at the end of the day the profits don't go anywhere but stay here in Saskatchewan.

But it faces challenges— wireless technology. It faces a lot of companies like AT&T with huge, deep pockets. All of this we have to try to foresee and forecast as best as possible. It's going to involve a very comprehensive final report to be tabled and to

be made public and to be debated upon before any decision is made by this Legislative Assembly by fall time or earlier . . . or made by the government by fall time or earlier once all the documentation is in.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, I hope we can conclude from that that we will be having a fall session to debate those kinds of issues with respect to that, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, I can't help but jump back a little bit to your arguments with respect to the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, and you dismissed them rather light-handedly by suggesting that it's . . . and cavalierly, by suggesting it's only 18 per cent and that sort of thing. And that successor rights, and they still apply . . . While they still apply, they may be exempted from them from the Labour Relations Board, to things like short-line rail lines.

And unfortunately, Mr. Premier, those are the kinds of things that the business community finds and takes its, sort of, starting point from, in terms of making decisions. They use those kinds of things as a signal as to what this government's intentions are today and into the future.

And when you bring in things like the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, you dismiss it by saying it's only a few million dollars, or 18 per cent, or that sort of thing, it's that kind of attitude, and it's that kind of attitude with respect to successor rights, that says our all-knowing, all-encompassing, all-caring Labour Relations Board will deal with it if it becomes an issue to companies that wanted to look at short-line rail opportunities here in Saskatchewan. It's that kind of attitude and that kind of way of governing that scares the living daylights out of people when they want to start up an operation here in Saskatchewan or look at the opportunities . . . set up the similar operation in other jurisdictions.

It's not necessarily, Mr. Premier, all of the nuts and bolts and the day-to-day operations of the government, or the day-to-day operations of running a business that people look at. They also look at those intangible types of things that governments say and do as a clear example and an indication of what they're likely to do in the future.

And that's what . . . when you're setting up a business, Mr. Premier, as you know, that's an important thing. It's an important thing in terms of running and deciding and making your decision with respect to the operations of that company that you're thinking about. You have to think about, of course, whether you're going to do well; whether you're going to have people that you can employ; whether you can have employees that will know their job and be able to perform to the standard that's necessary.

But you've also got to look at those kinds of indicators of government as to what the future direction of that government is going to be. Just as your Labour Relations Board can come in and say that successor rights don't apply to short rail line operations right now, they can also come back after they start up a few years down the road and say, well we've changed our mind. And that's the problem with all of this, Mr. Premier.

They don't get clear signals from your government with respect to things like taxes, in terms of the PST and the reduction to the PST.

Yes, we've got a signal, and it was a positive one. With respect to balancing budgets, yes, they got a positive one. Then they look at some other intangibles when they're deciding on business opportunities here in Saskatchewan. What has the government said with respect to Crown corporations? What has the government said with respect to Crown Construction Tendering Agreements? Do they, if they're planning on setting up an operation that they'll be building and bidding on government projects here in Saskatchewan, and they're a non-unionized company and want to maintain that status, do they look at this and see this as a positive indicator? And I would argue, no they don't.

And I would say, Mr. Premier, that that is one of the things that is an impediment to business growth here in Saskatchewan, is that kind of attitude from your government that's displayed on an almost constant basis; that says, we know what's best. And if it isn't right, we'll maybe make some modest adjustments to accommodate you at the moment. But in the future, well we'll reserve the right to make further changes that may impact on you positively or negatively, and we'll make that decision in the future.

And it's those kinds of things that are difficult to do with respect to things like successor rights. If you were operating — hypothetically — a short rail line operation in Saskatchewan or giving consideration to doing that here in Saskatchewan and you looked at this and you said, one of the components that is the biggest concern that I have is with respect to my labour costs, respect to the labour agreements that are in place currently and whether or not I'm going to have to live within those agreements or not, when you look at that, Mr. Premier, you can conclude, just as many of the presenters did at the short rail line conference that was held not too long ago here in Regina, you would come to the same conclusion. You would come to the same conclusion. You would say no, because that makes a significant enough dint in the bottom line of your operations that it is unacceptable to you and that you can't see a profit at the end of the line.

And so that's why you don't see short rail line operations clamouring to come into Saskatchewan. That's one of the reasons at least you don't see it. The high diesel fuel costs and other taxes are associated with it as well. But one of the main components of operating a business of that type is the type of cost that you have in terms of your labour costs.

And that's why, Mr. Premier, even in spite of the fact that we are seeing rail lines being abandoned all over Saskatchewan, in spite of the fact that we see tremendous opportunities, I believe, for short rail lines to set up operations and become very successful in Saskatchewan, employing people, spending money here in Saskatchewan and paying taxes to you and your government, that is why we simply don't see that opportunity being exploited here in Saskatchewan. Because they do not see a positive signal from your government with respect to labour legislation and with respect to the Crown Construction

Tendering Agreement.

And, Mr. Premier, they also have some concerns with respect to operations of things like your Crown corporations. We see on a frequent basis from your government . . . and you dismiss them just sort of out of hand and again in a sort of cavalier way of doing it. Well the NST thing, we blew 16 million down on that, but we made money on all of these other investments that we were involved in through SaskTel, and so as a result of that, you know, we have a net positive benefit to Saskatchewan. So what?

(2030)

And with respect to things like the Guyana power deal that you raised . . . and I was going to raise a little bit later anyway; we might as well talk about it now. With respect to things like that, again the business community and people generally I think here in Saskatchewan look at that and they say to themselves, the first question they say is, why? What possible motive can you have to go into Guyana and invest in a power company when there's other suitors looking at that type of thing? And I'm sure you're going to say, because you have to be globally competitive, and you have to go head to head with these commercial privates, as you call them.

But why? I'm not sure I understand the motive behind something like that. Venturing into some risky third-world country, hoping that you may be able to exact some 20, 25 per cent, 30 per cent rate of return on your investment. And the reality is, is the past experiences of companies that have gone into places like Guyana is not good. It's not good, Mr. Premier.

Back in the '70s the current, I believe he's the opposition leader or whatever form of government they've got down there right now, God knows what, after the fact that the president passed away here awhile ago . . . But some of the people who are sitting in office down there today, when they had their last chance to have their hands on the levers of government, nationalized everything in sight. And we are prepared to go into a country like that, invest a whole pot of money, hoping that Jack Messer and his officials . . . and Lord knows the minister doesn't know what he's doing with respect to this. But Jack Messer and his officials go waltzing into this country and are just going to come away with a big fat profit at the end of the day.

Well I hope if you're going to proceed with this thing, Mr. Premier, that you've done the due diligence on this thing. You've looked at not just whether there's a return on investment but whether or not there's going to be any kind of political stability in a country like that.

But getting back to my point, Mr. Premier, it's those kinds of negative signals . . . we've got some positive signals from your government, the business community has I think, here in Saskatchewan. But it's those kind of negative signals that go along with it and always make people wonder about your government. But I suspect privately you harbour some of those same thoughts. And I think you also wonder privately why business does not provide you with a kind of level of support

that you would like to see you get from business.

And I can tell you the reasons why. It is exactly that. On one hand, they see a positive signal. On the other hand, they see what they consider a very negative signal from you, Mr. Premier.

So if you want to draw some attention and draw some support from the business community here in Saskatchewan, those are some of the areas that you might want to look at.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, if I may, speaking to the Guyana situation for a moment, let's please, please again be mindful of the facts. The facts are that there is no agreement to enter into any commercial arrangement with the Guyanese electric company or Guyana. There is nothing except a letter of intent, which is no more, no less than what the lawyers call an invitation to treat, to examine the books, to examine due diligence of the company, to examine the political climate of the circumstances, and to see what opportunities — if any — exist.

I might remind the hon. members of this House that Saskatchewan isn't alone; there have been at least six other companies of repute on a North American basis that went in there to take a look at this example as well. And the simple matter is that no decision will be made until we are satisfied that due diligence and that the chance of recouping the investment is a real chance and a possible chance. And that's exactly where we stand with respect to the Power Corporation.

But the point is this — I said this in my earlier remarks — and it's an interesting debate because I don't want to put it on a philosophical basis only but it has an element of philosophy to it, if the Power Corporation of Saskatchewan should continue to be owned by the people of the province of Saskatchewan, as I believe the vast majority of Saskatchewan people want it to be owned, then standing still won't work. Whether it's in Guyana or somewhere else, that's another issue.

What the Power Corporation of Saskatchewan has to do is, it's got to get in there and it's got to compete with a lot of very tough competitors which in some areas may have lower costs of generation, may have higher costs of transmission or vice versa, a number of factors which we have to meet. And that involves international arrangements in an internationally expanding and global world. That is very much in keeping with the business philosophy that exists not only in Saskatchewan, but in many parts of North America today.

So Guyana will be looked at and will be looked at diligently. And no decision is made. I repeat: none is made. And no decision to proceed will be made until and unless the documentation and all the facts are before us to justify proceeding on this basis.

I want to make a comment about the CCTA and successors on short-lines very briefly. First, short-lines. We're not standing still on shorts; far from it at all. We're moving in active discussion with southern railway companies and other southern people who are interested in coming to Saskatchewan. And

we're actively working with the citizens' groups who are looking at promoting the short-lines.

And the successor legislation is not the barrier to this at all. It is not. Those who have looked at it deal on questions of economics, not in terms of wages but in terms of how much tonnage is going to be used on a particular short-line that is to be abandoned, whether or not the viability is there; and there are many other complex factors involved, such as where the next condominium grain elevator is going to be built or not going to be built, and how that fits into the short-line operation. We continue to work with them.

On the CCTA — and this is the point that I want to make which brings me to my second-last point if I can — on the CCTA, I think that the Leader of the Third Party has put his finger on a major difference between his party and our party. And that is, we believe in balance. Everything that you talk about here on CCTA or successor rights is what I would call a position which says, from our point of view everything from this legislature should be a pro-business position — full stop, period.

That's basically it. There's no balance. It should not be pro-union. It should be straight pro-business or, if you will, even anti-union. And if you're in government and you seek to balance competing interests, there are as many, if not more, unionized construction companies who want to bid on these business opportunities of the Crown corporations as there are non-union companies. You've got to devise a policy which provides some balance. And the same thing with the successor rights.

You say, what is the attitude of our government when it comes to business. Well I say the attitude of this government to business can be summarized as follows since taking office: reducing the small-business tax rate from 10 to 8 per cent; eliminating E&H taxes on 1 800 telephone calls; eliminating E&H taxes on direct agents used in manufacturing; introducing investment tax credit for M&P (manufacturing and processing) activities in Saskatchewan — I spoke to that issue already speaking to the Liberal leader; reducing the corporate income tax rate on manufacturing and processing profits; reducing the aviation fuel tax. We do not have a payroll tax, as the PCs have in Manitoba. We've refrained from implementing health care premiums of any sort as they have in PC Alberta. And we have recently reduced the sales tax — reduction from 9 to 7 per cent. That is the attitude of this government toward business. That is the direction to which this government is headed when it comes toward business.

And can we do more and should we do more? The answer is yes. The difference between you and me is how. We say in a balanced approach, not in a give-it-all-away approach, or not as the Liberals would have it in a spend-it-all approach, but in a balanced approach. And if I may say so, in closing my answer to this question, unlike you, sir, I do not believe that this is Alabama North. This is Saskatchewan. This is Canada, where people still value workers' rights, honest labour, social programs, medicare, and education, and are prepared in a proper and sensible way in which to support those programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, we thought you'd get there sooner than you did.

But anyway, Mr. Premier, with respect to diversification in the economy of Saskatchewan, we see some positive signs with respect to diversification within our province of our economy. One of those areas that is near and dear to me, as you know, is agriculture and the whole area of agriculture and diversification. And I couldn't help but sit and watch again with wide-eyed amazement and enthusiasm as a few short days ago, Mr. Premier, you rose in a sharp exchange with the Liberals in terms of the monopoly powers of marketing boards within the boundaries of Saskatchewan.

And Lord knows that I'm not a proponent of marketing boards here in Saskatchewan or anywhere else for that matter. I'm a believer in the free enterprise system. I think there is room for monopolies, I think there's room for dual marketing in terms of the operations of our farms, the operations here in Saskatchewan.

But it was, Mr. Premier, a great opportunity for me as a Conservative here in Saskatchewan to watch what for a moment I thought might be Ernie Eisley from Alberta . . . or from Manitoba, pardon me, or Walter Paszkowski from Alberta. Or it looked almost for a moment like some of the past speeches of Ralph Klein that you were giving that day with respect to marketing boards.

And the left-wing within your party must be shuddering at the thought, Mr. Premier, of you of all people — of you of all people — looking towards the elimination of marketing boards. I can't help but think the Minister of Education and her father must have been just running their hands down the blackboard with screeches to think that the kinds of things that must have been going on in terms of the discussion that was happening in caucus the days that you made the decision with respect to the changing of the marketing boards here in Saskatchewan.

But I'll give you credit, Mr. Premier, I'll give you credit — you stuck to it and rammed her through without . . . or over the opposition of all that left-wing bunch that you have to deal with on a regular basis over there.

And it was with great joy that I watched you a few days ago give the Liberals a severe tuning with respect to the whole issue of marketing boards here in Saskatchewan. Because I believe, I think as you do on this subject, Mr. Premier, that if we're going to see diversification in this province, if we're going to see operations in terms of larger-scale hog operations and larger-scale operations in terms of the feather industry, if we're going to be in a competitive position with Alberta and Manitoba and to the provinces . . . or the states to the south of us, we have no choice but to remove the monopoly powers of those operations. So that they can have the veil of socialism lifted from them once and for all in terms of things like the operations of a monopoly and the SPI and things of that nature here in Saskatchewan.

We have to have that kind of diversification in the province and I'm pleased to see that you've made some steps in the right direction with respect to those changes. You have to have that here in Saskatchewan if we are going to be globally competitive and even in spite of the opposition of the member from Thunder Creek over there, I recognize you have to recognize that that is imperative if we're going to see operations flourish here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Premier, now if you could just, just move that same sort of thinking towards things like the Canadian Wheat Board here in Saskatchewan. And I know you wince, you wince with, you wince with feigned pain over there with respect to that whole argument about the Canadian Wheat Board. But I think you would see the same kind of robust changes in the economy of Saskatchewan that will result from changes in the monopoly of powers of hog marketing; the same thing could be unleashed with respect to the operations of the grain farming sector of this economy of Saskatchewan.

Does it ever . . . do you ever stop for a moment and imagine, imagine the kind of diversification and opportunity that there would be here in Saskatchewan? The same as we've seen in terms of things like specialty crops here in Saskatchewan; the same as we've seen in things like canola here in Saskatchewan — given rise to a whole new industry of biotechnology in Saskatoon.

Just think, just think, those are all relatively minor crops with the exception of canola. The specialty crops here in Saskatchewan are all relatively minor crops when you take in terms the overall context of the whole agricultural system that we have in this great province of Saskatchewan.

Unleash, Mr. Premier, those kinds of opportunities to the grain farmers of Saskatchewan. That's what they are asking for — if you go out and ask the future of Saskatchewan farmers. I'm not talking about the 60-year-old farmer here in Saskatchewan that's quite comfortable with where his lot in life is today.

I'm telling you, Mr. Premier, go out and talk to the 30-year-old and the 20-year-old farmer and the farmers who are making all of the changes in terms of diversification; the farmers who are looking towards specialty crops and spices and all of those kinds of things. Go out and ask them what is necessary to diversify the economy of Saskatchewan with respect to agriculture.

And I would say, dare say to you, sir, that one of the first things that they would say is we have to have some loosening of the restrictions of grain marketing here in Canada. That will be one of the first things that they will bring to your attention.

(2045)

And as I said, the Garf Stevensons and the Leroy Larsens and all of those other old fellows that have had their go in agriculture and their day in the sun is diminishing rather quickly. I'll have to say they may not want to see change, Mr. Premier, but I dare say to you that the younger farmers of this province — the people I think I represent here in Saskatchewan

— want those changes. They want to see the diversification opportunities opened up that I think you can't even imagine in terms of pasta marketing, in terms of flour production here in Saskatchewan, in terms of a number of other niche markets that the Canadian Wheat Board just absolutely dismisses out of hand and says that those things are relatively minor and insignificant in terms of the overall operations and the magnitude of the crop that they have to market.

And I think, Mr. Premier, that's one area again that you have to look to if you want to see change. You've made some positive change with respect to one area of agriculture. Now let's take that big second leap. Let's take that big second jump, the second phase, the road to Damascus change that we need from this government, Mr. Premier, the change that we need from this government in terms of marketing of the grain products of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member makes a passionate plea and speech for diversification of the agricultural economy — and his members say in an excellent speech — and I would say in the core of the speech, which said, let's get diversification, who could disagree with that? It's the issue of how you achieve it where I think I draw the line with the Leader of the Conservative Party.

This particular legislation which is before the House, the Leader of the Third Party, the PC Party, has magnified into a piece of legislation representing somehow the beginning of the doomsday of all marketing boards and single-desk marketing concepts. It is not that. This is the reintroduction of a piece of legislation which was on the books back as early as 1990 and had been inadvertently eliminated in the legislation.

Our objective in this particular Bill is to make sure that we can make adjustments to collective bargaining — not collective bargaining, but the marketing boards — in a balanced and reasonable way in concert with the marketing boards and the producers involved in that particular process; because I agree with the Leader of the Third Party, we have a major decision to make in the province of Saskatchewan.

When you have 3 million hogs or 4 million hogs being raised in Manitoba and you've got the same amount potentially around the corner in Alberta and you've got slightly over a million only in Saskatchewan and you've got a meat-packing industry which is rapidly rationalising and economies of scale are taking place, some very, very difficult and important decisions have to be made. And that one peak question has to be answered by us is, are we in the game or are we not in the game? Does Saskatchewan want to be in, for example, in the hog industry right from production straight through to meat packing and in a successful way? And the answer is we do.

But where I disagree with the Leader of the Conservative Party is you cannot logically leap from this Bill to say that we are against the principle of the Canadian Wheat Board or against the principle . . . (inaudible) . . . marketing. We are not. It makes no sense for the Canadian Wheat Board to be

dismantled, as the Reformers and as the Progressive Conservative Party in Saskatchewan would have us want. To be done away with makes no sense whatsoever because it means that the wheat farmer in Sturgis competes as a Canadian against the wheat farmer in Alberta or in Manitoba and the only beneficiary is the buyer over there in Japan or over in China, saying who bids the lowest amount or offers it for the lowest amount. That is where we disagree with you.

We very much are strong defenders of the question of the Canadian Wheat Board and single-desk marketing. You know that. And what we say by this legislation is a very balanced approach; one which takes into account the concerns of the producers, the consumers, the industry itself, to make the necessary changes, we hope in concert and agreement by everybody — which I think will be the case — right down, by the way, from the Wheat Pool, involving people like Leroy Larsen and Garf Stevenson. You'll be surprised about how modern they are in their thinking about this issue — very, very surprised. Right from those people, in concert and support of what we're doing, rather than as the member from Thunder Creek does, namely put his head in the sand and wished that it was back in 1930.

Mr. Boyd: — Well, Mr. Premier, you've got some of it right there, but you didn't get it all right. I've never advocated the destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board, and you know that's not true. The fact of the matter is, is we advocate a dual-marketing situation. And there's all kinds of examples of that.

And I understand the Minister of Agriculture is going to go on a little trip here, probably this fall, to look at the operations of the Canadian . . . or pardon me, the Australian Wheat Board, which has operated in a dual-marketing situation for the past, about a year or two, something in that neighbourhood, maybe even three. And it's doing not that bad I would say, Mr. Premier. It's given farmers in Australia the opportunity to look towards single-desk marketing, or also look towards the marketing of products themselves. And it has done, I think, a pretty good service for their farmers.

It isn't a case of it can't be done, it's a case of you don't have the will to do it. And the federal government doesn't have the will to do it. And that's why they cooked up that cockamamie question in the debate about barley marketing to find out whether the farmers of Saskatchewan, and indeed the Wheat Board jurisdiction, wanted an all or nothing question. And no one . . . I can't recall of anyone in the agriculture circles that was looking for that kind of question to be asked from Mr. Goodale and company.

They were asking for a couple of things. Do you want single-desk marketing? Or do you want to explore the benefits and opportunities associated with dual marketing? That's what the question should have been. And we didn't see that.

And if it had have been asked that, Mr. Premier, the same result that would have come out of the . . . the result would have come out similar to what you're polling came out with — 60 per cent in terms of farmers of Saskatchewan wanted to see changes in

that area.

Mr. Premier, I want to move on to some other areas here this evening that I think are important to the people of Saskatchewan, that I think I will want to raise with you this evening.

While we've always felt as an opposition party that our job is both to oppose; our job is also to present alternatives to you and your government. We've done that on all occasions I think, Mr. Premier. It's not a case of just simply criticizing or promising to spend more. I think that's an irresponsible position. I think the responsible position of an opposition party is to oppose where necessary, but always to point out a different way to do things, an alternative vision; an alternative view.

It's also to provide alternatives in terms of legislation. And in this session again, as in other sessions that I've been involved in, Mr. Premier, as you know, we've come forward with alternatives in terms of legislation. We've come forward with a number of private members' Bills that I think you and your government should have given more seriously a very close look at.

And I think, Mr. Premier, that there are a number of Bills within the . . . that are on the order paper these days that would provide Saskatchewan people with a more responsible and a better form of government; a government that I think provides the people of Saskatchewan with the answers to the questions that they're so desperately looking at. Things like the bill of health care rights and responsibilities that we put forward; a look towards providing some degree of bottom line protection in terms of delivery of health care services.

Free vote legislation, Mr. Premier, a piece of legislation that I think would unshackle the back-benchers who I know in your party who generally are not free thinkers, but nevertheless given the opportunity, might surprise us all someday. They might just rise up and vote the way they felt their constituents would want them to vote, rather than just voting as you tell them to.

I think, Mr. Premier, when you look at the area of successor rights, that was a piece of legislation we brought forward to amend that Act. And I think that that is something that should be looked at, and I hope you will continue to give some thought to that.

The whole area of property rights, Mr. Premier. The whole area of property rights, particularly with respect to things like we see in terms of the whole issue surrounding gun legislation these days in Canada, a very topical issue in terms of the federal election. In terms of things like the cabinet travel accountability and Crown corporation accountability Acts, regulatory reform — again areas that I think business is looking at for direction from your government.

You made the commitment and you made the promise, Mr. Premier, in your last throne speech and in the 1995 election campaign, that you would work toward business regulation reduction here in Saskatchewan. And we've seen anything but

that. We've seen chapter and verse and more and more regulation coming down from you and your government on a constant basis. We haven't seen reductions, we've seen you adding to it in volumes, Mr. Premier. That's what you've done with respect to that.

So I would ask you, Mr. Premier, if you'd care to comment on those pieces of legislation that we have brought forward, in its entirety, or individually if you choose.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I have to say to the hon. member that indeed it's correct. The Conservative caucus has forwarded a number of specific Bills which in effect amount to an alternative vision, an alternative platform. And I want to say at the outset that because the government has not accepted them this session does not mean that the government rules all of them out for every session. It just simply says that as we take a look at the legislation, and the ramifications and implications of it, we need to be careful before we accept or reject it.

The health care rights concept put down in statutory form, I think is something which I have always been intrigued with. But I also know, if I may, putting on my legal hat, that with statutory provisions, lies buried within those sections, the possibility of legal and political bombshells to do more damage to health care rights than what the authors intended or what all of us as legislators might have intended.

It takes a lawyer or two to take a look at a particular provision, and some decision by a judge, no matter how well-meaning, to blow apart a fundamental concept. And therefore you cannot do something like this, which has some merit, overnight. It needs to be looked at very, very carefully, and we continue to look at it.

(2100)

The question of free vote legislation, I think is something that all legislatures are moving towards. I'm not opposed to taking a look at free vote legislation in some areas. I have to tell you where my biases lie, however. I am not a proponent of plebiscitarian democracy. I believe in the parliamentary form of democracy where MLAs are elected; a government is elected; we stand to be judged by the public at election time whether we did a good job or a bad job.

However, if we can in some way judge the question of plebiscitarian democracy versus more freedom of expression by all MLAs, who could be against that? Not one of us is the possessor of all knowledge. We seek the advice of everybody to make sure the best programs are designed.

Finally on regulatory reform, I want to make a comment. We are committed to subjecting all regs to a sunset clause — all regs to a sunset clause — and taking them off the books after 10 years as a matter of course. Reviewing 10 per cent of all regs in each of the next 10 years, because there's a huge volume of them, passed by your administration, passed by the Liberal administration, passed by our administration, going all the way back to the Blakeney administration. We want to eliminate 25

per cent of all regs in a process, if found to be redundant, outdated, ineffective, or unnecessary.

And that's exactly what we are doing. During '96-97 we are hoping to eliminate 130 regs as redundant and in the process of being repealed. And I have them here, these regs which have been identified for repeal. I'm not sure whether I can table this because it isn't a complete list, but it does have, as the numbers indicate, 142 in total. Maybe it should be more than that, but it is a significant step forward.

And for the first time ever in the Saskatchewan legislature, we are putting regulatory reform initiatives as a priority to try to make the climate for investment and individual freedom one where people have this sense of less oversight by the government. That's a direction we're heading, just like in one of my earlier answers to you, that's a direction we're heading with respect to tax breaks for businesses and the like.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Premier, as you know, we are in the throes of the federal election campaign, and frankly I'm a little surprised that we were able to schedule the estimates this evening, particularly when we've seen that the federal NDP leader, I understand, is in town . . .

An Hon. Member: — And in trouble.

Mr. Boyd: — And in trouble. In town and in trouble here in Saskatchewan, there's no question about that.

And I'm surprised to see that the Saskatchewan campaign manager for the NDP is here this evening, in spite of the fact that the campaign is grounded and being driven into the ground by things that are happening by your government here in Saskatchewan. We see that the campaign is unfolding and things are moving along very well. It appears to me that the NDP, given the latest polling results in *The Globe and Mail* — which I know you follow very carefully — are in the areas of looking towards capturing one seat. You have to wonder who's going to be the lucky one — whether it's going to be Nystrom, or Solomon, or whether Alexa will take it out in Halifax herself.

(2100)

But we, Mr. Premier, as you know, when asked whether or not we would be . . . whether we would be participating in the federal election campaign, I said no, and that we wouldn't be involved in the federal election campaign. We wouldn't be involved in the federal election campaign because our first responsibilities are here to this legislature. And that's why we've asked our members to be involved . . . that's why we've asked our members to contain their activities to the legislature here.

And I have to say . . . and I see the member from Albert South chirping in the background over there. He's done more to damage your campaign, Mr. Premier, in the last few days than anything you've done in your entire life. He's done more to discredit in the last few days . . .

But nevertheless, Mr. Premier, I think that . . . I wish that you

would have come up with a similar policy with respect to the operations and the activities of your members. And I wonder . . . it's probably not too late to restrict them to their activities as related to an MLA, and ask them to confine their activities to their responsibilities that they're elected for.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, my position is that . . . By the way, talking about independence and free votes, individual MLAs are responsible people who have responsibilities and carry them out, I think by and large, responsibly, by exercising individual judgement calls, as are required. And I tell you that the members of this side of the House have decided that they are going to take part, such as they can take part, in federal election campaigns, not on the government time, on the Legislative Assembly time.

For example, you're talking about the Leader of the New Democratic Party, Alexa McDonough, who I think is fighting an excellent campaign for the New Democratic Party. And I would argue this has elevated the debate in Canadian political life to a level that should be elevated. This voice has been long too silent. If she comes to Saskatchewan again before this election is over — I'm hoping that she will — if there should be a pancake breakfast on a Saturday or a Sunday, I'm going to be there. I'm going to be there to show my support for Alexa McDonough and to show my support for the party.

That is what all MLAs of all legislative assemblies and bodies have done throughout the piece. And we should do it; should use it judiciously — that's right, authority, and responsibility — carefully and responsibly. And I believe our MLAs are doing precisely that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Premier, while Alexa may have worked at elevating the debate in this election campaign, a couple of your members have done their very best at lowering the level of debate within this election campaign. And when you spoke of individual judgement calls, Mr. Premier, a couple of them come to mind that I think have done a very, very grave disservice to you and your government as well as the legislature in the whole debate surrounding the operations of how we should conduct ourselves and what we should or shouldn't be saying as MLAs.

Mr. Premier, the intolerant remarks of one of your MLAs, of which he responded to the next day by apologizing to the legislature and to the people involved at that time. I have to say, I think they were a little bit out of character for your government, and I'm pleased to see that it was out of character for your government, but nevertheless it was said. I think it was irresponsible, and I think given the youthful exuberance of that member, I think we can excuse him for that in that we would hope that he's learned a very, very valuable lesson just as we all learn those valuable lessons here in the legislature.

But it still seems, Mr. Premier, that given the continual — or pardon me — the activities of the Justice minister the next day and him having to apologize for the remarks that he made, and more recently the remarks of the Minister of Agriculture, I

think maybe give reason to question whether or not there's a need for some degree, some policy, some protection, that the people that have other political views, other political ideologies, will not be subjected to that kind of thing here in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Premier, given the severity of the reaction that your government has received on this issue, I'm wondering whether you are giving any consideration to coming up with some sort of policy with respect to those kinds of things to provide you with — and this legislature with — some distance from that kind of activity in the future. And on top of that, are you going to be asking the Minister of Agriculture to apologize for the comments that he made?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, in my many years in this Legislative Assembly, I have taken the position that when a member misspeaks himself or herself in a circumstance of this nature, there should be an attempt to make a remedy at an early as possible a date. Look, all I can say with respect to the member from Regina South is he said his remarks were inappropriate. And they were inappropriate. I believe he's actually communicated the same to Mr. Manning. The issue is dead. That's the position that I have.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I will defer to the official opposition and the third party this evening to ask the wide-ranging questions to you, Mr. Premier. But I have but one area to raise and I will do so in the context of some preliminary remarks.

I've had the very good fortune of being on several standing committees, the Rules and Procedures Committee, the Constitutional Affairs Committee, the Crown Corporations Committee, the Board of Internal Economy, and the Public Accounts Committee. I feel very fortunate indeed to have been part of these committees, and particularly pleased to have been able to participate in the Public Accounts Committee since 1991. So one of the things that of course has arisen from that has been the opportunity to watch it year after year.

Now I see a trend developing and what I'm going to be stating as a prelude to this will, I hope, lend itself to the question that I'll be asking you this evening. The mandate of the Public Accounts Committee is to assist our Assembly in holding the government accountable for taxpayers' money and for stewardship over public assets. And to fulfil its functions and meet its responsibilities, the committee undertakes to review, examine, and evaluate the financial and administrative activities of government departments and Crown corporations cited in the *Public Accounts* and in the report of the Provincial Auditor.

The Public Accounts Committee must be able to examine all government organizations in a non-partisan way. And one of the ways that this is done is by having government officials come to it rather than ministers, as in the case of Crown Corporations Committee.

In other words, there is by the very mandate outlined for the Public Accounts Committee, it demonstrates that there's supposed to be an examination of the administration rather than an examination of policy per se.

Now I am very concerned about a particular trend that I've seen unfold. I actually don't know if you're familiar with this and perhaps that's one of the reasons I'm raising this this evening. If you are familiar with it I think that you need to be on public record for the people of Saskatchewan just exactly why it is you would support such a trend. The trend is to refer Crown corporation issues away from the Public Accounts Committee to the Crown Corporations Committee, and as I stated they have two very different mandates and two very different approaches. And I find this trend very disturbing and unfortunate.

Now I'm going to just give you an illustration if I may, and I didn't even bring the verbatim, but I would suggest that you examine the verbatim from not today's meeting but of the last one for Public Accounts. And this is something that has happened more and more frequently, which raises concern for me, and this did not happen in the past, Mr. Premier. Within five to ten minutes of the beginning of a Public Accounts Committee meeting there will be a member from the government side who will state: I will be moving a motion where the following recommendations of the Provincial Auditor's report will be referred to the Crown Corporations Committee.

Now as a provincial . . . pardon me, as a Public Accounts Committee we have not had an opportunity to listen to each other's views, to discuss these in any kind of open debate, to either have some repartee at all, and yet it's been made unequivocal from the beginning that in fact this is simply going to be referred by motion to the Crown Corporations Committee.

Now perhaps it was an illusion in the past that there was going to be any real debate at all that was going to be listened to but at least we went through the motions that this was going to take place. And one really felt as if one could participate in this exercise.

Now it's not only what's happening in the committee. I think we've seen illustrations of what has transpired with the Provincial Auditor's office and even ministers, senior ministers in your cabinet, who have been making public comments, and some would view those as undermining the position of the Provincial Auditor and his office. But given that this has occurred, which seems consistent with what I see unfolding in the Public Accounts Committee, I think that's for real concern.

Now as well, Mr. Premier, what I'd like to do is simply remind you of what really transpired in 1991, 1992, 1993. This was the time of the Gass Commission. It was a time when the Provincial Auditor and his office, the work of his office and his recommendations, were things that were welcomed by your government; were not only welcomed but heartily supported by your government; were seen as extremely important for the well-being of the province. And I would state that because of that support there were extraordinary gains made by this province that have been recognized nationally.

I think the work of the Provincial Auditor's office in the province of Saskatchewan has been recognized nationally for one reason. That is, sir, because not only were his

recommendations made but your government accepted them and implemented many of them.

Now it's on that basis that I pose this to you this evening. Are you as concerned about this trend as I am? Because it most certainly looks as though the action of your government, the actions are to in fact undermine the Provincial Auditor's office or at least, at the very least, it's showing greater disrespect than what I've seen in the past. This will be history repeated in this province if this continues into the future. And I would like your comments on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member raises again a very important question but I have to answer it in these terms. I would need to have an example — I don't mean today, we could do this in correspondence — a specific example where the hon. member believes that in the — or two or three examples — where the hon. member believes that in the consequence the net effect of this kind of a motion somehow has the effect of undermining the role of a Provincial Auditor.

And I'll tell you why I say this. There have been I think, two major developments in the last several years which have taken place certainly in this legislature and maybe other legislatures with respect to provincial auditors. First with respect to our Crown Corporations Committee, the Provincial Auditor now is into Crown Corporations, as we know by the very heated exchange surrounding comments made respecting surcharges on SaskEnergy . . . or SaskPower. And accordingly, very often there will be a matter which could come before Public Accounts Committee which could quite properly be referred over to Crown Corporations without diminishing the Provincial Auditor at all because the statements made by the Provincial Auditor in Crown Corporations, as we witnessed by the debate of this last session, still gets fully and properly aired

(2115)

So the mandate has been changed and the mandate has been changed whereby on a . . . not a case-by-case basis so minutely and finitely determined, but in general terms on a case-by-case basis, the committee will have to make a decision whether it's dealt within the purview and the mandate of Public Accounts or within the purview and mandate of some other committee of the Legislative Assembly.

The other factor which I think must not be lost sight of, is a phenomenon which is an interesting one to which all governments grapple and do not have an easy answer. And that is the insertion of the auditor's belief. I'm not now personalizing anybody. This is now arisen before Mr. Strelloff and has continued on for some years in a number of jurisdictions. I think they call it audit for value or value for audit.

An Hon. Member: — Value for money.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Value for money, value for money audit is what they call it, is the expression. And this is, relatively speaking so far as I can understand, a relatively recent

insertion into what you said in your preliminary remarks, the administrative side of auditing.

Because a traditional auditor will take a look at the dollars in and the dollars out — not to minimize it, I say bean counting — and say this is what it is; it's been properly accounted for.

But when the Provincial Auditor says, but I've got a new role and that new role is in addition to bean counting; I am going to put my judgement call, my value, on whether or not that money was properly spent, then for all governments there's an immediate difficulty. Because at the end of the day, it is the government that makes the judgement calls on the expenditures and whether it's properly . . . and put in the correct areas.

We've had much debate already over many hours this evening where the opposition parties say, hey, you as a government, you've got your priorities all wrong. You're not getting value for your money. You're into Guyana. You're doing this, you're doing this; you're not doing that. And that's where it should be because we are the elected people. We're supposed to do it in a public forum.

And I'm not criticizing the Provincial Auditor — please — for one moment for saying that there is a role for value for money. But once you get into value for money added to the pure administrative side of auditing, you are into of necessity public policy. Public policy which is formulated by a government, formulated by a caucus, formulated in the past in majority vote by a Legislative Assembly — not by a Provincial Auditor, no matter how he or she may be qualified or well intentioned or well motivated. And that's what's happened.

And so on occasion we take the view that if the Provincial Auditor comes in and says, I have done an audit on a particular project or department of government or on a particular Crown corporation, and in my judgement, this has not been money well spent, I have to take that very, very seriously in account.

But at the end of the day, I have to run and get re-elected and he doesn't. At the end of the day I've got to be able to justify that expenditure or I get defeated. He doesn't. That's not to say that he can't make those comments.

But it is to say that a bureaucrat — I use this in the best sense of the word — the technician, the bean counter, now moves from a different area. He moves from the area of bean counting into deciding whether or not that money should be put into, for example, children's action plan, child's action plan, in a number of those areas.

And so I will close, and I'm sorry for being long-winded but I think this is a very important question. I give my answer by saying that I would need to know by one or two or three examples — and you've referred me to one matter on the record, perhaps one or two others will do it — to see whether or not there's some sort of a systematic approach.

There is no policy of this government for a systematic approach to getting it out of Public Accounts and into Crown Corporations. I'm only saying that the mandate of Crown

Corporations has changed and the mandate of the Provincial Auditor has changed for value-for-money, resulting in both for that office and for this Assembly, some areas of grey and confusion, which is quite understandable. And we should be able to agree to disagree and be able to do it civilly, and to do it in a way which still gets the expenditure issue out before the public for proper debate.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Premier, I beg to differ. I am absolutely astonished, Mr. Premier, that you would suggest that the mandate of the Provincial Auditor has changed. It has not changed for decades, nor should it change. I don't know where you get this idea that he's doing value-for-money audit comments. His report has not substantially changed in its . . . in the way in which it has been presented. In fact any modifications have come as a direct result of agreed-to changes, often national in nature, by auditors . . . the Canadian auditing guidelines.

And I find it very interesting, if you're wanting a significant example I will give to you a significant example — Workers' Compensation Board, where your government has called upon lawyers to give a legal opinion, not only from the Department of Justice but elsewhere, in order to state that the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) should not come before the Public Accounts Committee, that it should be in front of the Crown Corporations Committee. And I'd like you to know, sir, that I've gone back and looked at the statutes. Since 1907 the Workers' Compensation Board has been mandated to be in front of the Public Accounts Committee.

So this is very confusing. If you don't consider this to be a substantive change, a different trend, then I don't know what is. It's of great concern to me. And all that I'm stating . . . I don't have the years and years and years of experience in this House as you do. I have but a small window of experience and I am telling you that I see a change, a significant change, a trend that has begun in the last two years, and it is becoming troublesome. And I most certainly hope that this is something that you would see important enough to look into because very often when people are sitting inside the jar, they don't know what's going on at all. If you're sitting outside the jar you can see how many beans are inside. And I really do hope that this is something that your government will take seriously because it most certainly is a different tenor in the Public Accounts Committee from anything I have experienced in the past.

Now the member from Kindersley raised something that I thought was very important. And that was an alternative vision, the fact that the role of opposition is to not simply oppose and criticize but to offer alternatives. And I too placed before the House three private members' Bills this session; one, I think as you know because you've made comment on, regarding session dates, where I most certainly believe we can benefit from having a three-week fall session where the most controversial Bills are placed before this House, allowing members of the opposition and members of the Legislative Assembly at large to go to various constituents and stakeholders to determine what impact these Bills would have on them.

As well it would call for a shorter session after Christmas. It

most certainly I think would be beneficial to all to have predictable session dates. I know we do not agree on this, but there have been many, many people who have made comment that they don't know when the sessions are taking place in Saskatchewan. I think predictability is good for people. I most certainly think that it's something that would allow various groups to be able to deal with all of us better, and I think it would allow us to deal with our constituents better.

There are other benefits to it as well, but that aside and the other Bill that dealt with set election dates aside, I have one Bill that is very, I think cogent to the debate at hand, and that is about allowing the Provincial Auditor to come to the bar of this Chamber and speak to all of us since he is mandated to report to the Legislative Assembly. People think that it's simply good enough for him to table his report. They may think it's simply good enough that he calls a news conference and gives the most important points to the media, whereby we pick up from them what we think the important points are, or we take it upon ourselves to read page by page, dozens and dozens, and hundreds of pages of the Provincial Auditor's report. Methinks that if 58 members of this Assembly do this, we should all be given great credit.

Not everyone is a member of the Public Accounts Committee and does this, but I most certainly think that it would be of great value to all of us as individual members in this House to have the Provincial Auditor come to this Chamber and give his report to 58 out of 58 elected members of the Legislative Assembly. What he is mandated to be able to do, we should put into action so he can come and speak to us directly.

I'm wondering what your views are on that. I don't believe for a moment you would be supporting it, but I most certainly am interested in your views.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You shouldn't judge me so quickly, but I do want to say that, first, about the Workers' Compensation Board, if I can . . . Actually I'll have to back up.

With respect, during the member's time of distinguished service in this House, it is correct to say that what she has seen the Provincial Auditor do on the value-for-money concept is what has been going on. I don't mean to say this arose one year ago or two years ago. In fact I recall, when I was a part of the Blakeney government in the mid-70s, where this issue was emerging. I even remember when I retired from politics with the consent of the majority of the voters in Saskatoon Riversdale in 1982, attending a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association seminar — I think it was in Toronto — where this very topic was on the table. It is a new development, which is what's involved in it.

Now let me just elaborate on what I'm saying. If you take a look at the auditor's mission statement himself, he writes, the auditor writes, the office writes:

Our office serves the people of Saskatchewan through the Legislative Assembly. We encourage accountability and effective management in government operations through our independent examinations, advice, and reports on the

management of public resources entrusted to government.

Accountability and effective management. I argue however that the words there that I've read — you have them before you — do not have words to the effect: and to comment on the priorities of government in question or to comment on whether or not programs are of proper value in question.

And again this is so . . . I mean I don't want to get into this because there's no use me wishing that things were otherwise. That's not my point. My only point is that they are emerging continually, expansively, in all legislative assemblies, along that line.

The Workers' Compensation Board example is an interesting one. I think I am correct in saying there is not a single penny of taxpayers' money in the Workers' Compensation Board — not a single penny. This board is independent by law. It is independent by statute. It is employers' employees' money, if I can put it that way.

Now the Provincial Auditor says he wants to see whether or not money which is not even taxpayers' money, not within the statement that I can see, at least the statement that I read . . . that it should be looked at.

Well maybe it should be looked at; maybe it shouldn't be looked at. But what I think we as a government have a right to do is to at least have answered for us in this circumstance where there is no taxpayers' money, is this a proper way — not a proper way — is this within the mandate of the Provincial Auditor? We can do that without attacking the Provincial Auditor. He doesn't assume this to be an attack. No problems in this regard at all. I think it's an issue which needs to be addressed and is properly before us now and in due course will be addressed.

Now leading specifically to your question about the three Bills. I have to make a comment on the fixed-dates concept. This again I think is an intriguing idea, and I've debated this in my own mind and with others on a number of occasions.

I remember, if I may be permitted to take up just a few more extra minutes of the House, Mr. Chairman, some several months ago of an example in the United States of America, in the state legislature of Texas — it's a true story. In Texas, Governor Connally was seeking the Republican nomination. He was the Connally of Kennedy's fame, had switched parties from Democrat to Republican and was attempting to enact in the state legislature a particular piece of legislation which was viewed at the time as being very much a boost for his campaign for the Republican nomination for president.

(2130)

Six Democrat state senators decided to break the quorum requirements of the state legislature — I think it was six; I'm going by memory now — and they simply vacated the state legislature. Actually they got the nickname of the Texas killer bees, because they were killing Connally's great legislative move to get a jump on the presidency nomination for the

Republican Party in the United States.

And what the state governor did was he issued the state troopers to find and to arrest those legislators. Now why do I tell this story? Because in Texas . . .

An Hon. Member: — Lord only knows.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well Lord knows you may not, but I'll tell you, you may not but the good Lord does know — because in Texas they have a fixed period for the legislature, a fixed start and a fixed closing. And those six Texas killer bees knew that if they could go to 121 days — end of the session, end of Bill.

And that is not Texas; it permeates the entire United States of America. It permeates it right from the presidencies. The beauty of the parliamentary system is this House does not recognize political parties. The beauty of the parliamentary system is, at least in theory — I know it doesn't happen in practice — but in theory we could break down party lines on any grey issue. Let's say a national unity crisis — God forbid — should come up after June 2. We could break down on non-party basis in order to make some decisions. The great beauty of the parliamentary system is to be able to convene a session when required. The great beauty of the parliamentary system is that you can call an election.

I often hark back to the days of Woodrow Lloyd and Tommy Douglas, were stuck when Liberals and Conservatives ganged up on the CCF to form the KOD (Keep Our Doctors) to kill the medicare Bill. I recall full well the late premier Ross Thatcher — he wasn't premier at the time — kicking at the doors of the legislature, kicking the door of the legislature to get in. I recall full well how the doctors went on strike 18 days, thanks to the Liberals and the Conservatives.

And I tell you, I was here as a young student, volunteering my time to try and get medicare through this whole battle. And that's why, if I may just get off on another topic, I smile when I see some of those people . . . not you, ma'am, I'm not talking to you as an individual, but some get up, who today are the great defenders of medicare who were at the doorsteps of this legislative buildings trying to kill medicare. And Woodrow Lloyd was I'm sure, contemplating that there was a democratic impasse, and he was two years into his term, and maybe the one thing that he could do to solve the democratic impasse was to say in the parliamentary system, we're calling the election.

He didn't. He didn't. He had the guts and the strength and the vision and the wisdom, and we got medicare, and he died six, seven years later, I'm sure, through all the stress and the strain that went through that operation.

That's the beauty of the parliamentary system. What about the Provincial Auditor to come to speak to the bar?

I've actually had that experience. I had a person by the name of Hewitt Helmsing . . . I think some members in this House will know who Mr. Hewitt Helmsing is. One of the Conservatives got up in this legislature and said that things were so terrible in

health care in the 1970s that they couldn't even paint the hospital rooms. That was the allegation, that there was filth everywhere. And Mr. Hewitt Helmsing was the head of the predecessor of SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) at the time, and we called him to the bar here of the legislature, and he spent the hours in the legislature under oath, under cross-examination, under new rules to tell his side of the story. And I tell you, he did very well. I disagree with Mr. Helmsing's political beliefs, and I sure as heck disagree with his political machinations, which I don't need to tell the hon. member about. But nonetheless he was at this bar, and it didn't work. It did not work.

The Provincial Auditor's forums are the most important forums that he has. They're written. They're detailed. They're documented. They're audited. They're put forward by accountants. They're put forward by experts. They're tabled. They're explained to the press. They're explained to the journalists. We answer questions for good or for bad in this House, even as we do today in this estimate system. Nothing prohibits them from expanding that report or contracting it or going into value-added-for-money audits, however he wants to describe it.

It is a great system. To me, I think that we ought to rejoice in what has been a pretty good system which albeit has tensions; I acknowledge that. It can't help but have tensions. But please, everybody should give respect to each other — the government on its priorities, the Provincial Auditor for his management and accountability of government operations approach. And we may from time to time agree to disagree. Why not? It's always been that way in the past, and it will be, I guarantee you, long after I'm gone from this legislature, from future governments as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Premier, you'll be so delighted to know that there is no set date for ending a session in my private members' Bill that will never see the light of day. And many, many parliaments actually have set session dates. This is not something where one has to conjure up some story from Texas south, and potential abuses of people's freedoms and so forth. I mean there are parliaments in Canada that have set session dates.

And people may wonder why it is that there is any importance at all about setting this in law, and I would like to recall a story myself. One Laurence Decore in Alberta, had a book on reform of the legislature. And what he did was to go to one Ralph Klein, and he sat with him and he said: listen, why can't we just agree to certain specific things that would change the way that our House would work. And there were some gives and some takes, and they arrived at a certain number of things. Some things that in fact that Mr. Klein didn't particularly want, but he ended up agreeing to.

And even though there are parliamentary systems across Canada that have set session dates, one of them that was not set in law was in Alberta. And guess what happened? People very much appreciated having three weeks in the fall where all of the

controversial Bills were tabled. In fact all-party committees went out and would work on some of these with the public. There are as many private members' Bills that are ever tabled — in some cases, more in Alberta — than the government tables, and all-party committees go out and work on those. Some very innovative and creative ways of doing things.

But aha, what happened with the set session dates in Alberta? They were done, not just with a handshake, they were written down, but they weren't in law. Laurence Decore is dust and a second election comes along, and guess what? The arrangement between Mr. Klein and Mr. Decore doesn't exist any more. And I think it's unfortunate. But there are lots of places in this country that have benefited from set session dates, and they very much enjoy them. In fact the predictability that arises from this allows for people to do their jobs better. And I don't know why it is we have to be threatened by something like this.

Now if indeed there was a presentation in this House by someone who came in and, as you stated, did a good job, illuminated on the problems in health care of the day, or at least put to rest some of them, as far as the government is concerned — that's great. Although the members of the opposition or let's say the government members — I don't know what year this was — were not in agreement. So what? At least people had an opportunity to hear it and hear it firsthand.

I would like to think that we would all be better off to hear things not filtered, but directly. And I agree that it's great that we have the Provincial Auditor in Public Accounts; it's great that he now sits in Crown Corporations; it's wonderful that he sets out all of his reports; it's great that he'll call a news conference, and we can get it filtered through the journalists. But I don't happen to think that it's good enough.

And I'm disappointed that we don't see eye to eye on this. But I most certainly would like to see us at least reach a little bit for trying to do things differently that could in fact enhance the workings of the Legislative Assembly, rather than seeing any change at all as a threat.

And my questions to you this evening, Mr. Premier — and I do appreciate the opposition parties allowing me to pose questions to you tonight — my questions are finished. And I thank you and your officials very much.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much. And I just simply want to say that I don't view them as a threat at all. You may not believe this, but I don't view them as a threat. What I do view them as is a question of practical application.

And by the way, I want to close my remarks by saying in response to your questioning, to me in my experience — I mentioned this to one of the people over on the opposition side the other day — what makes this place work is not the formal rules. What makes it really work are the informal rules. And we may need to elevate some informal rules into formal rules. But essentially it is the arrangements that we arrive at through civilized discourse which make the place as effective as it is.

And every one of these Bills that you've tabled — I say this

quite genuinely and sincerely — merit serious consideration. But I would ask you to at least accept that with them, when I say they merit serious consideration, they also have with them some serious debits too, at least as I've tried to explain them to you.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Premier, I'd like to ask a couple of specific questions to some of the areas that I alluded to earlier on in the time. And as you've indicated, time has passed by rather quickly tonight.

Mr. Premier, we sat here a couple of months ago and we listened to the Minister of Finance deliver her budget, a budget that contains some good news in the form of a sales tax reduction that took us back to the point we were at in 1991. I found it ironic that on the same day, the Premier took it upon himself to criticize the Devine government's brand of tax reductions. And, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I thought it valid criticism.

Since the Premier is so fond of reading from old quotes, perhaps I'll take the opportunity to do the same. And this one isn't that old, Mr. Premier; in fact it's from March 20 *Hansard*. In question period on that day, which of course was the day of the budget, the Premier said this in response to a question regarding the provincial sales tax. He said to the member of the third party, and I quote:

You'll remember how your taxation policies were: (meaning the Tories) you put on a tax on lotteries, then you took it off and you said there's a tax break. You put on a tax on used cars, then you took it off and you said there was a tax break.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, I couldn't agree with the Premier more. It's simply not fair, nor is it honest to take credit for lowering taxes when it was you who put them up in the first place.

No sooner had the Premier made these statements than his Finance minister stood up and told the people of Saskatchewan, that through the goodness of her own heart, she was lowering the sales tax to 7 per cent. And like the Tories in the '80s, she called it a tax break. They put it up; they take it down; and it's a tax break.

I'm certainly beginning to see why some members of the third party voted for the budget. It follows the strategy of Grant Devine to a T, as the Premier so kindly pointed out on March 20 with his own words prior to the introduction of the budget.

Mr. Premier, can you tell the people of Saskatchewan how you arrived at this tax reduction plan versus the needs to address the provisions of services to the people of the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I say, with the greatest of respect to the Leader of the Opposition, sometimes it's difficult to answer his questions tonight because — it's probably my fault — the logic is very, very, very difficult to

follow.

We increased the taxes on the sales tax from 7 to 9. Why? Why? Because we were facing a deficit of \$850 million. And how would you find the \$850 million deficit to eliminate it? You're already criticizing us on health care and highways, take \$850 million of those programs, you have absolutely nothing left. We were forced to increase.

Now we have a turnaround budget and we're able to reduce it. Somehow in your logic that parallels a situation where, under the former administration, out of the clear blue there's a tax reduction which they make you believe that it's for ever, and then all of a sudden it's back on again, when it's not for ever. That's what I was speaking to. And how the two can be made comparable — perhaps it's not your logic track, maybe it's my logic track — but I have to tell you with the greatest respect, I simply cannot follow that.

(2145)

But the substance of your question is: how did you decide on this? And the substance of the question needs to be answered in this substantive way. We have taken the point of view that as a general principle, a general direction, when we are in surplus — we campaigned this way in 1995 — one-third of the surplus, roughly, would go to tax reduction; one-third to program enhancements; one-third to debt reduction so that everybody benefits. I repeat again, not in watertight compartments, but depending upon where the needs are.

Thus we were able to, given the surplus and the tremendous turnaround by the people of Saskatchewan, provide \$180 million relief on taxes, provide all the money that we did for the social programs that I talked about, from health care to education, and also pay down the debt. That is what is going to guide us.

By the way, I hear something similar from the federal Liberal party in this election campaign. Only they don't have one-third, one-third, one-third. Lo and behold, what do the federal Liberals have? — one-half, one-half. One-half is debt and tax reduction and the other half is for program reduction.

So as Yogi Berra says, you know, how do you want your pizza, in four slices or eight? He says, I only want it in four because I don't think I can eat eight. It's the same situation. Cut your pie however you want it: one-half, one-half; one-third, one-third, one-third. That's roughly our line and that's what we did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. At this stage of the game maybe we prefer saskatoon pie versus pizza.

Question, Mr. Premier, regarding health reform. And a number of people in Saskatchewan, not only in my constituency but throughout Saskatchewan, have raised concerns about health reform. And as you know from being present in the House, whenever we've asked questions of the Minister of Health, the three answers that I think we received were: first of all, it's the

federal government's fault; secondly it's the former Saskatchewan government's fault; or thirdly, it's the district health care's fault. I mean there was an excuse for every season.

Mr. Premier, we've heard the Health minister throughout this session state that this government is doing its job on the health care front. And he backs up his contention by saying that the government still spends every bit as much on health care in Saskatchewan as it ever did. And, Mr. Deputy Chairman, there's no denying that.

But I submit to you, sir, that this fact doesn't offer a defence for your health care reforms. Far from it. Because while you contend that everything is just fine with the health care system in Saskatchewan, many people here are having to make do with less and less service with each passing year.

We've seen communities lose all of their acute care services. We've seen hospitals converted to health centres. Then they've subsequently closed. We've heard from nurses who say they are short-staffed and overstressed because of lay-offs. We constantly hear from Saskatchewan residents who are unable to access nursing homes for their elderly parents.

We've seen this government, who say they are so committed to universal medicare, move to de-insure many important services. Since coming to power, this government, the self-proclaimed defenders of medicare, not only failed to restore children's dental program as it promised, they ended it all together.

They did not restore Saskatchewan Drug Plan as they had promised. They gutted it completely.

Since coming to power this government has de-insured eye examinations; they've de-insured chiropractic services; they've put higher charges on ambulance services.

They've virtually embraced the concept of pay-as-you-go private nursing homes, having abdicated their own responsibility to the elderly citizens who built this province.

All this and we spend just as much as we always did.

So the question this government has to answer, and it hasn't done it yet, is just where is the money going. Is it simply disappearing? Because it's not getting to where it's needed.

People throughout Saskatchewan are telling you they aren't happy with the service you're providing. These are the people who aren't impressed by the fact you're spending every bit as much on the system as you ever did because they've been left out of your reformed health care system.

Mr. Premier, will you admit that the wellness model is not doing well and how will you address the concerns of so many citizens across this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Thank you for that question.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — My colleague says that I should start off by saying thank you for that question. And indeed, I'm going to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question: thank you for that question.

I'm going to take a few moments to answer it. First the hon. member says where is this money going? Well in the 97-98 budget, 1.63 billion is the expenditure and it is an increase of \$57 million on the base for district health boards. By the way, if we take into account the 2 mill levy and the public health contributions, the total increase is more like 70.8 million. But that's fair enough. You may not want to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Fine, don't accept that figure. But tell me if you can accept the 56.5 million? Well of course you can't accept that. Of this the district health boards get an increase of 51.3 or nearly a 5.5 per cent increase over the 1996-97 budget.

And where does the money go? The money increases, funding increases go 38.8 million to secure and sustain hospitals and nursing homes; 3 million to improve emergency services; 8.5 to strengthen rural and northern health services; 6.3 to enhance home care and community services. I know it's never . . . not enough for you folks, you great defenders of medicare who are at the door; you were trying to kill it just a few years ago.

Other initiatives go all the way from the Health Services Utilization Commission, to the child benefit program, to capital improvements including an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) for Regina, the Calder Centre, and I could go on and on with respect to the specific programs of where this money goes. There is where the money goes.

Now let's just talk a little bit about where you come from in health care. Let's just hear a little bit about this. Now here's the situation, Mr. Chairman, which I am going to tell the people of Saskatchewan over and over and over and over again. I have in front of me a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) TV 6 p.m. interview by Costa Maragos, dated November 25, 1996. And this is an interview after Mr. Melenchuk was chosen the Leader of the Liberal Party. And I'm going to read the transcript, which goes like this, Mr. Chairman:

Melenchuk: I was thinking that Saskatchewan people have done a tremendous job because their taxes, utilities, and tariff rates have been increased 1.3 billion since 1992, and that balancing occurs at a direct transfer from their bank accounts to the bank account of the Saskatchewan government.

Maragos: What inefficiencies would you find to make up that \$1.3 billion?

Melenchuk: Well, health care . . .

Maragos: How much would you save there? Give me a number.

Note the figure was 1.3 billion.

Melenchuk: I don't know, because I haven't seen the numbers. I'll have to look at the numbers.

This is the leader of your party.

Maragos: If you don't know, then how can you say that?

Maragos asked the question, if you don't know how can you say it?

Melenchuk: Because I know that there are inefficiencies in the system (and get this, Mr. Leader of the Opposition) and I understand health care reform, (the Leader of the Liberal Party says, and I'll tell you how he understands it in a moment) and I understand health care systems, and I know that there are inefficiencies in the system right now.

Note those words. I know there are inefficiencies in the system right now. You please will get up and tell this Legislative Assembly where those inefficiencies are. Where do you and your leader say those inefficiencies totalling \$1.3 billion are? The budget's only 1.6 so you tell us where the inefficiencies are. Well, Maragos says . . .

An Hon. Member: — More salaries incurred?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: —

Well what other inefficiencies do you see then if you think you can make up this \$1.3 billion?

Melenchuk: You have to look at the whole strategy. You have to look at the big picture in terms of how we meet our financial commitments as a government. What we have is a situation where our businesses are stifled in terms of opportunity that they have here, because of repressive actions and there are other things too.

There's your answer. There is a medical doctor — the good doctor — says, he knows that there are \$1.3 billion of inefficiencies. He won't tell us where. You, sir, won't tell us where. All that you tell us is that we've got to look at the big picture. We've got to look at the whole picture.

And you have the audacity to get up in this Legislative Assembly and accuse us when I gave you the breakdown of where the money goes. I'm not giving money to health care. How dare you can do that. Shame on the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan for pulling this kind of a fraudulent position on health care on the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Well I tell you, maybe the good doctor won't tell Costa Maragos where he's going, but you know he has told other people where he's going.

Just before he got elected leader, maybe it was election day — in fact it was election day, you will remember this, Mr. Leader of the Opposition — Saturday, November 23, 1996, had some pretty good numbers going right into final ballot. You know what he says? This is the new leader, November 23, 1996 quote, the 43-year-old Regina native said: the first act — get this — the first act of a Melenchuk government would be to

pass legislation that disbands the provinces 30 district health boards and replaces them with local, unelected boards that are independent of government.

How does that work? Who does the appointments? Who is going to appoint unelected boards and make them independent of government? And do away with them. No, no . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Details, mere details my colleague says. Maybe we should look at the whole picture. That whole, big old picture.

Well you know, then on November 27, right after he got a hold of the leadership, he gives another interview to the *Leader-Post* and you know what the *Leader-Post* says? "Melenchuk sees private clinics as a safety valve."

"Private surgical clinics should be permitted to open in the province in order to reduce hospital waiting-lists," says Liberal leader Jim Melenchuk.

That's what he says he should do.

By the way, this is not a new idea for the good doctor — not a new idea — because way back in 1994, guess what? Here's what the Regina *Leader-Post* has — another headline: "Doctor believes private clinics are inevitable."

Who was the doctor? Jim Melenchuk. He was president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association. He says:

Pointing to Calgary and pointing to North Dakota, he said that's why the province should allow private clinics here where practitioners bill medicare for providing treatment and bill customers for the costs associated with providing the treatment. One solution the doctors have proposed is to open up a private clinic in which they would perform surgery for their usual fee and charge the patient a fee to recover the costs.

That's what your doctor says. That's what your leader of the Liberal Party says — private clinics.

Well not enough to do that. He repeats it again in 1995. He says the MDs (medical doctors) are the last defence against poor health care. SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) Jim Melenchuk attacked what he called the new religion of population health. Again, he's back onto private clinics.

Then on May 2, 1996, he's still on private clinics, quote: "Allowing private services would augment the publicly funded ones," he says.

And then lo and behold, what do we have in the legislature? The member from Arm River and the right-hand man to the election of Jim Melenchuk as Leader of the Liberal Party; the right-hand man seated behind you right there. The member from Arm River, the right-hand man, he says, if the people are prepared to pay, then I think we should let them pay. He too is in favour of private care, two-tier — member from Arm River — and private clinics.

That's only part of the story, only part of the story — \$1.3 billion he's going to find from inefficiencies. And you've got the audacity to tell us . . . criticize us.

You're not going to get away with this. You're not going to get away with this. In the next two to three years, you're going to tell the people of Saskatchewan where you're going to find that 1.3 billion and whether or not you stand up for private clinics.

(2200)

I tell you the confusion of the Liberal Party. You never supported the medicare scheme. You don't now and you never will. You're seeing in Ottawa with a tax on our transfer payments, no wonder the Canadian Medical Association in its own *CMA* (Canadian Medical Association) *News* — *CMA News*, April 1997. You know what the headline says, Mr. Chairman? "Ottawa fails to protect medicare." The Canadian Medical Association.

Liberals. Liberals at home, Liberals in Ottawa, Liberals, Liberals, Liberals everywhere, opposed to medicare and health care. Mr. Chairman, let nobody be mistaken about this. There is only one party that is in defence of medicare, in making it the best possible plan for the 21st century, and that's this party right here, on this side of the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. I knew that you were fond of quotes, and I wanted you to have that opportunity to use that entire file that you had brought with you. I think I asked the question, I believe I asked the question, about the concerns of the people of Saskatchewan right now. And at no time did I indicate to you that you were spending less. In fact I said that you were spending the same amount, and that it is \$1.6 billion.

My question, Mr. Premier, was around the issue of what are you going to do? How are you going to answer to people who talk about the fact that they travel hundreds of miles to get to a system in Regina? How are you going to answer the question about people who now are reporting to us that indeed they're sitting on a 18-month waiting-list for something like hip replacement that needs to be done now because they are in pain? Those are the concerns that we had, Mr. Premier.

The other couple of points I want to close with, Mr. Premier, is around two things. Yes, November 23, 1996, what was indeed a good day for the Liberal Party in terms of a very sound convention and some very, very keen ideas that were proposed. But I also want to remind you, Mr. Premier, that even though you've been here for 31 years, and you may recall the incident at the front door to the legislature, most of us don't.

And this is a new era, and we're moving into the 21st century. And we want to be part of the development of Saskatchewan, not the hindering and the dragging down of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — So with those closing remarks I want to thank you. I know that you've endured the questions for three hours. And indeed, maybe my approach has been different. And I want to thank you for your sincerity and your comments in terms of dealing with my questions, even though you may have thought that at times my preamble may have been a bit long. I apologize for that. I want to thank your officials for being present to this late hour. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition on what I think was an admirable job in questioning the estimates. I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party and the member from Greystone. The debate was lively and on important topics. And if I may say so, the time was used very efficiently.

I accept the thanks on behalf of my officials, who — I want to repeat in the closing words of the member from Social Services — throughout entire government have really done a yeoman's job under great pressure. We owe a lot to them . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . A yeoperson's job or a yeoman's job? The Women's Secretariat minister is not liking my language. You've done a wonderful job for the people of Saskatchewan. And I think we all owe a debt of gratitude to them all.

Thank you all for your questions tonight.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just want to add my voice of thanks to the Premier and his officials for their estimates this evening. I think it's been a lively exchange of views here this evening. And I think we've all been able to lay on the table what our thoughts are with respect to the future of Saskatchewan. So I thank you, sir, for your attention this evening.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Item 8 — authorized by law.

Vote 10 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Executive Council
Electoral Expenses
Vote 34**

Item 1 — authorized by law.

Motions for Supply

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: —

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997, the sum

of \$206,842,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

p.m. and that Routine Proceedings shall commence at 1:30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, the sum of \$3,368,083,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I move:

That Bill No. 76, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Years ending respectively on March 31, 1997, and on March 31, 1998, be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a first time.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — By leave of the Assembly and under rule 55(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would request leave of the Assembly to make a motion which would set the hours of sitting for tomorrow.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly, that:

Notwithstanding rule 3, this Assembly shall sit on Wednesday, May 21, 1997, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and further, this Assembly shall recess from 12 p.m. until 1:30

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