

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition today to do with night hunting. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Montmartre, Candiac, Kendal, and Englot. I so present.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present to the Assembly and it reads, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the Montmartre, Kendal, Regina areas of the province. I so present.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.

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

This petition comes from the Kamsack and Togo area, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present a petition as well this afternoon. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to make a commitment to develop a long-term plan with respect to the Saskatchewan film library, ensuring that under no circumstances will any more films be destroyed; rather that films be given away to schools, sold, or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from Regina residents — all of them here this afternoon — and we'd be pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring this petition forward today on behalf of Saskatchewan residents. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to enact legislation to completely ban the practice of night hunting in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are from the Melfort, Preeceville areas. I guess that would be in the Melfort and Canora-Pelly riding. I so present.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I also present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned for life, safety, and preservation of our wildlife. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to enact legislation to completely ban the practice of night hunting in Saskatchewan.

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

And the signatures on these petitions are mostly from Melfort, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition from the citizens of the Kamsack area.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to enact legislation to completely ban the practice of night hunting in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I so present.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today to present on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to enact legislation to completely ban the practice of night hunting in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks at Imperial and Liberty.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding

dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1, and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1 rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Frontier, they're from Halkirk, Alberta; from Shaunavon, and from Medicine Hat as well. And I so present.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition concerning Highway No. 1 and the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1, and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program toward double-laning Highway No. 1 rather than allocating these funds toward capital construction projects in the province.

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

And those who've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from communities such as Swift Current, Shaunavon, and Simmie. I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning with respect to the Saskatchewan film library, the ending of the practice of night hunting, the banning of night hunting, and the allocation of funding toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Ridgedale Resident Marks 100th Birthday

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Bonnie Wassen who is celebrating her 100th birthday on January 1, 1998. Mrs. Wassen moved to Ridgedale from Arkansas, U.S.A. (United States of America) in 1924 where she and her husband farmed for many years and Mr. Wassen operated as a machinist; Mrs. Wassen too, wherever she was needed to work as a midwife, until she assisted with her last delivery of twins.

Her volunteer work also included many hours with the Red Cross, especially during the war years. Her family said she was always ready and willing to help anyone in need. She had eight children of her own and is proud of her 22 grandchildren, 43 great-grandchildren, and 7 great-great grandchildren. She now resides with her daughter Bernie and son-in-law Joe Gress of

Melfort.

Please join with me today in extending our very best wishes for continued health and happiness to Mrs. Bonnie Wassen on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Praise for Saskatchewan Health Care

**Mr. Pringle:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we of course know that in Saskatchewan we have the best health care system in the world. However, it is not often that our system is recognized by those associated with American health care because many have a vested interest in keeping treatment private, inaccessible, and expensive, much like the Saskatchewan Party in this province.

This summer though, as Dr. Richard Hoech from Santa Ana, California said when he was on a fishing holiday north of La Ronge at Pickerel Bay Cabins operated by Ray Twedt, when Dr. Hoech became seriously ill with pulmonary edema and was evacuated to the La Ronge hospital where he was stabilized and taken by air ambulance to the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon — Dr. Hoech wrote a letter to the La Ronge paper which I quote in part, quote:

I know the difference between a smooth rescue and a not-so-smooth rescue . . . I cannot speak highly enough of Mr. Twedt's professionalism and competence . . . I was accompanied by a physician who was more than competent in assessment.

Then he praises the air ambulance personnel, the University hospital staff, and finally says, and I quote: "I received excellent care from the time I became ill, and I cannot speak highly enough about my treatment in Saskatchewan."

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, it takes an outsider to let us know just what we have here in the province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Plains Health Centre

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals moved a resolution to save the Plains Health Centre. Today I am pleased to announce that the Liberal caucus is launching a new petition drive to save the Plains Health Centre.

The Plains Health Centre provides health care services for the people of southern Saskatchewan with ready access right off the Trans-Canada Highway. And do you know what else, Mr. Speaker? Miracles happen at the Plains Health Centre: miracles like Kenji Chen, miracles like Karlee Kosolofski, the frozen little girl who was revived. The lives of these people were saved at the Plains and our medical specialists, the people who helped make these miracles happen, have said loudly and clearly that closing the Plains is a terrible mistake. It's a scandal.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? The Liberal opposition is not going to let that happen. Starting today we will be collecting

signatures on our new petition from people from right across Saskatchewan. If you think you're going to have the last word on the Plains, Mr. Premier, you're sadly mistaken. You ain't seen nothing yet.

Today, December 18, 1997, I am calling on the people right across this great province of ours to join with the Liberals in this historic campaign. Let's save the Plains.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Child Care Centre Improvements**

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always appropriate to improve the lives of children. What more appropriate time than right now, in the middle of this holy season, to highlight some real action that improves the lives of children?

Nearly \$25 million has been aimed through the Saskatchewan action plan for children at programs to benefit children and families. This year close to \$1 million has gone to 64 child care centres for capital improvements: improvements to brighten, improvements to expand floor space, and improvements to outdoor play spaces.

Last week, 12 child care centres and the children who use them in Regina benefited by \$170,389. The Regency Day Care Co-operative in north Regina received \$25,000 to expand its space per child.

It is one example. There are 11 more examples in Regina and 52 other child care centres across Saskatchewan that have their own happy story about the improvements they are making to their child care centres.

There are a total of 64 child care centres making improvements to the lives of Saskatchewan children with the very real help and the real money provided through the Saskatchewan action plan for children.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Welcome to Saskatchewan Youth Parliament Participants**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most members probably think that tomorrow will be the last day of parliamentary activity in this building before the new year. Well you're wrong. Next week just after Christmas, a bunch of eager young parliamentarians will be gathering here for this year's session of the Saskatchewan Youth Parliament.

This organization provides excellent training in debating and public awareness for our province's young people. The proof of the value of this organization can be seen right here in this Assembly. Members of our staff, members of this legislature, and even former premiers have been graduates of the youth parliament program.

I think we as MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) owe these parliamentarians of the future our full support as they head into their new session. And I would urge all members to make this building a welcoming and productive place for them by opening our doors to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Green Program Saves \$400,000**

**Mr. Koenker:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've all heard the slogan, "Think globally. Act locally." And I'd like to commend the Saskatoon (West) School Division for doing just that in the last three years with its partnership with the Saskatchewan Environmental Society's destination conservation program.

Working together these two organizations have reduced natural gas consumption by 11 per cent, and electrical use by 25 per cent — a considerable savings for both our environment but also for the school district. Saskatoon (West) School Division has saved \$112,000 by participating in this program — money that can be used for students instead of energy.

Saskatoon (West) is one of ten schools . . . districts involved in this program, and last year the city of North Battleford saved \$18,000 — this year \$44,000 — as their reward for being more environmentally conscious.

So collectively the destination conservation program has saved participating organizations almost \$400,000 and prevented 3,300 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere. I offer congratulations and appreciation to the Environmental Society, Saskatoon (West) School Division, and all participants in destination conservation.

#### **Channel Lake Petroleum**

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And before I commence my statement, may I be allowed to say how much I appreciate the fact that so many members opposite look so good in their red, Liberal attire today.

Mr. Speaker, the dark and dirty waters of Channel Lake took their toll in this House yesterday. As I catalogue the sad and murky tale of conflict of interest, untendered sale, lost money, privatization without authorization, and other unsavoury details about a government which has lost its moral bearings in this swamp, the Deputy Premier appeared overcome with the odour of it all.

Mr. Speaker, while we disagree with the Deputy Premier's waste and extravagance in raising utility rates here at home so he can take our money with him on his frequent junkets around the world to invest wherever, we certainly do not — at this time of year especially — wish any harm to his person.

When I saw him hold his nose yesterday and gasp for air, I became concerned. My colleague, the member from Melville, has purchased this morning a better-smelling Channel product called Allure, which we hope will leave a more pleasant odour in the House than was the case yesterday, and we will be delivering this to the Deputy Premier. Thanks.

#### **Surgery Waiting-lists**

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just when we thought this government had demonstrated how out of touch . . . and what little compassion they have, they have topped themselves.

On Tuesday in this House, I questioned the Premier about his promise to personally find out why a 79-year-old woman waited six agonizing days for surgery to repair a broken hip.

It was bad enough that the Premier forgot about his promise; however the Minister of Health now says he's satisfied, and I quote: "the system worked (well) for this individual," adding: "At the end of the day, there may be an occasion where an individual has to wait a day or two or three . . ." "Mr. Minister, Hope Sawin did not wait a day or two or three, she waited six agonizing days for surgery. And if you were satisfied the system worked when someone was forced to wait six days with a broken hip . . ."

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Now I want to remind the hon. member that it is the routine procedure in the House that debate is through the Chair and it is improper, by rule 28, to direct comments directly to . . . Order. And I will ask the hon. member to make his comments properly through the Chair.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Hope Sawin did not wait a day or two or three, she waited six agonizing days for her surgery. If you were satisfied the system worked when someone was forced to wait six days with a broken hip, you and your government have either completely lost touch with the health care needs of Saskatchewan people or you've completely lost any sense of compassion. Which is it?

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Teacher Contract Negotiations

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are to the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, we have just learned that you have stripped the taxpayers of this province of their voice in any negotiations in teacher contracts. You have thrown out the protocol agreement that put the people who pay the bills — the school boards — and the teachers on even ground. The Premier has criticized the federal government for setting policy, and at the same time cutting back funds. You're doing the exact same thing.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Madam Minister, you know exactly what this will mean. School division boards will have no choice but to turn to property taxpayers for increases, again. It's impossible for you to do this and hold the line on property taxes, Madam Minister. Will you tell the people of Saskatchewan — the parents, teachers, trustees, ratepayers, and most importantly the students — what your plan really is?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question, a question I fully expected.

Mr. Speaker, it's always been our intention as the Government of Saskatchewan to negotiate a fair, responsible, and reasonable collective agreement with the teachers of our province, along with the protocol agreement with the Saskatchewan School

Trustees Association.

Mr. Speaker, we have had numerous meetings with the trustees in order to reach a common position. In fact we had nine meetings in the past two months. Those meetings have been frank and cordial and thorough. And at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it became clear that there were differences between us that could not be resolved.

I had the opportunity to meet with the trustees this morning and I can report that the trustees will remain at the bargaining table with the province of Saskatchewan, and it's our intention to together negotiate a reasonable and responsible and fair collective agreement with the teachers on behalf of all taxpayers in our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Madam Minister, don't even begin to pretend that you've been fair to our education system. Grants to school boards for operating and capital for this year are \$61 million less than your government's first year in office — \$61 million. That's part of the reason why our property taxes are ridiculously high, and that's why your termination of the protocol agreement is going to cause even more offloading.

Madam Minister, before any further negotiations take place, will you commit to covering all additional costs of any new agreement, both with respect to agreement costs and all of the additional expenditures necessary to meet classroom needs of our children? Ratepayers want to know that, Madam Minister.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, we have indicated on many, many, many occasions that as the financial resources of our province become more readily available, that we will move towards 60 per cent of the cost of education borne by the province and 40 per cent of the cost of education borne by local taxpayers. We have given a commitment to the trustees that any wage increase that would be negotiated at the bargaining table would be covered by an increase in the foundation operating grant to school boards. We have given that commitment, Mr. Speaker, and when we give our commitment, we keep our word, contrary to what Mr. Krawetz does . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Order. Now the hon. minister will — order — the hon. minister . . . Order. Order. Order. The hon. minister will be aware, I know, of a long-standing practice not to use proper names in the House and to refer to hon. members by their positions that they hold in the Chamber. And I'll ask the minister to conclude her response.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, my point is this: we have given our word to the trustees that any increase in wages will be fully covered by an increase in the foundation operating grant. That is contrary to the word that that member gave to the Liberal Party of this province when he said he would remain a loyal Liberal, and a few days later crossed the floor to sit with the Saskatchewan Party.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Incorporation of Doctors

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Health. As usual, Mr. Minister, your government can't do something right without some NDP (New Democratic Party) strings attached. Allowing Saskatchewan doctors to incorporate, Mr. Minister, I believe is a very good idea that will secure badly needed physicians in Saskatchewan. But as I say, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. In exchange for doctors being incorporated, they will have to, quote, "recognize the goodwill and collaborative spirit shown by the government."

Mr. Minister, it sounds like you want to impose a gag order on our doctors like you have on our health district workers. Mr. Minister, doctors shouldn't have to give anything but their expertise and professional opinion, and they should be allowed to continue to point out the many problems you've caused with your so-called health care reform.

Mr. Minister, we all know your government can't stand criticism, but it's time you stood up and were accountable. Will you commit to incorporating doctors while at the same time allowing them to speak their minds with no strings attached?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say to the member from Moosomin that there has never been any strings attached to a relationship that a Government of Saskatchewan, particularly NDP, have had with physicians in this province.

Because the reality is, Mr. Speaker, is that if you were to ask any physician in this province, and in particular the Saskatchewan Medical Association, they will say to you that the Saskatchewan Medical Association enjoys in Saskatchewan the best relationship that you can enjoy with a government anywhere in Canada — anywhere in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, in relationship to the issue that the member asks around incorporation, there is no gag order on our employees who work within the system; there is no gag order on the board members who work anywhere across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, if there should be any kind of a gag order placed in this province, it should likely be on the member, member from Moosomin.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Local Telephone Rates

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister in charge of SaskTel.

Mr. Minister, the tax grabs by your government just go on and on. As we speak, the cabinet is studying a proposal which will see local phone rates climb as much as 50 per cent for the Saskatchewan people. And while this rate increase will go into effect immediately, your promise of enlarging regional telephone exchanges sits indefinitely.

Rural people wouldn't mind paying more for local rates if your

government would enlarge the exchanges. But what you want to do is pay now, receive something later. Why impose this right now if you're not prepared to establish larger exchanges maybe until years from now, if ever?

Mr. Minister, why don't you do what's right and hold off the increase until larger exchanges are in place? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the member opposite raises the issue of larger exchange rate areas because it is true that we have announced a number of changes to the exchange rates that will make it very much easier for many rural people, particularly, to make calls that will no longer be long distance. So I think, in fairness, the member should realize and be upfront about what he's really asking for.

The policy of the Saskatchewan Party is to privatize SaskTel. That's their policy. So why don't you be honest about your position? This is not about rates; this is not about larger exchanges. This is about your policy to privatize SaskTel.

Let's get into that debate about who you would sell to and how you would sell the corporation instead of trying to destroy an institution that has been built by the men and women in this province for the last 70 years.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Possibly, Mr. Minister, the public would be better served if it was privatized, because all you're using it for is a tax grab — nothing more than a tax grab.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. I'll ask the government members to come to order. Order. Order. I'll ask, I'll ask members on both the sides of the House to come to order.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — At least private companies in this province are not using any of their income as tax grabs, and that's what that government's doing on that side.

Is SaskTel so unprepared for competition that you would have to punish Saskatchewan people who have . . . don't have a choice in local phone rates at this point?

There are over 600,000 phone lines in this province; so with an average of a \$5 increase, you're going to rake in about 3 to \$4 million a month in increases. That's 30 to \$40 million a year in increases, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you're not doing a lot to keep the customers from jumping to Sprint and AT&T for long-distance service when you're gouging them on the local side now.

Come on, Mr. Minister, it's Christmas. Let's give the SaskTel customers a break and promise to hold off any great increase until they're receiving something for their money. Will you, once again, put the exchanges in place and then increase the rates?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether the member asking the question could see the look of shock on

the present leader of your party when you said you were going to privatize SaskTel. But you may want to have a little discussion in the caucus room. But question period should be true confession today because you, sir, have now outlined the policy for us of the Saskatchewan Party — that is to privatize the Crown corporation.

In terms of competition though, in terms of competition . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order.

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — The member says we should compete and I'll tell you that the people who manage and work in SaskTel are competing with AT&T, and Sprint, and they're beating them at every turn. That's with men and women.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — And I say to you, that if you're taking the position of AT&T and CANTEL and the other private sector of companies, like Sprint, ask yourself when's the last time you saw Candice Bergen shopping in downtown Sturgis or Regina.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Rural Doctor Shortage

**Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has been urging the government for well over a year to solve the issue of weekend on-call coverage of Saskatchewan doctors, particularly of those in rural Saskatchewan. The latest edition of *The Medical Post* indicates that three months ago the Saskatchewan Medical Association gave the province a proposal to reimburse physicians. A deadline of December 1 was set — a deadline which has come and gone.

To the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker — why do you continue to drag your feet on this very important issue?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well as the member from Melville knows, last year in the budget we put in significant dollars and manpower to assist with rural services for physicians across the province. The member knows that we put in \$1.3 million for weekend relief, for rural physicians across the province, as well as established a coordinator that would help us with recruiting additional folks for rural Saskatchewan. The member knows that.

And the member also knows that in the negotiation process for 1998-99 and for '97-98, which is in front of us today, the doctors have in front of us the whole piece on rural on-call. And when the time comes right, Mr. Speaker, we can inform the member fully what the outcomes of those discussions and negotiations have been.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Osika:** — The *Leader-Post* I have referred to, Dr. Rob Weiler of the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) describes the on-call issue as an imminent crisis which must be

resolved shortly or it will result in, and I quote: "A combination of people leaving and the potential for work action." Dr. Weiler also warns that if there is no conclusion to this by December 1 they would really jeopardize the ability of rural practitioners to provide the on-call services that they have.

Mr. Minister, you know the impact this problem has had on the ability of rural communities to attract and retain physicians. You also know that a doctor turnover is at a level not seen since the medicare crisis of the '60s. Why are you inviting doctors to leave this province? Why are you opening the doors for job action?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Melville. I want to assure him that I have a very close working relationship with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, far closer and more in tune than I know his leader does. And so we're very much in touch with the issue.

For sure, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we have an issue of rural on-call and we're addressing the issue of rural on-call with the Saskatchewan Medical Association and expect that we'll have, in resolution through this contract agreement, some issues that can be identified through that contract arrangements.

**Mr. Osika:** — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health says that he's doing everything possible to address the issue of physician turnover in rural Saskatchewan, and I note with some interest that media reports today . . . indicating that this government will be introducing legislation which will allow doctors to incorporate.

Mr. Minister, the professional association of interns and residents has cited incorporation as the number one incentive this government could provide which would help Saskatchewan keep its graduates in this province. For two years we have been telling you to get this right. The time for games is now over.

Will you make a commitment, Mr. Minister, in this House, to move on this issue, not in 1999 but as soon and as quickly as possible?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well clearly, Mr. Speaker, the member from Melville is a bit confused when he talks about getting it right, because in this province the Government of Saskatchewan has negotiated with the doctors in very good faith over a long period of time; as well as has addressed on an ongoing basis, all of the issues that are in front of us in terms of addressing good health care services across the province for the people.

I want to ensure the member opposite that when the medical association advised me that there are a number of issues that they wish to discuss with us, we said that we will do that in an open forum with them and discuss, as best possible, meeting all of the obligations that we can in the negotiation process.

So I want to assure the member opposite that I'm not privileged today to discuss what those contract negotiations are about, but soon he will learn, as well as the people of Saskatchewan, what

the outcomes of those negotiations have been.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Tuberculosis Rates

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan continues to have the dubious distinction of having one of the highest TB (tuberculosis) rates in Canada — TB rates even more shocking when one looks at the figures for northern Saskatchewan where the rate is 100 cases per 100,000. The national average, Mr. Speaker, is 6 cases for 100,000.

Can the Minister of Health explain in the House today why his government has decided to ignore the problem in northern Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that our government hasn't ignored any of the services or any of the issues around the province of Saskatchewan, and clearly have not ignored any of the issues as they relate to northern Saskatchewan, as it relates to this very serious issue on tuberculosis.

I want to report to the member opposite that in 1996 the average provincial new cases were 8 in 100,000 population, of TB cases. And then 14 . . . as compared to 14 per 100,000 in 1995 — a reduction. And the corresponding rates for first nations were 85 for 100,000 in 1996 compared to 132 for 100,000 in 1995. Those numbers are clearly indicating that they're going down, Mr. Speaker.

Now do we have more work that we have to do in those areas? The question is that we do. And these are the things that we're going to be doing into the future, Mr. Speaker. Currently we have in the northern part of Saskatchewan, two district health boards, which the member is aware of, and we're working very closely with them to ensure that we can reduce those numbers into the future.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is well known that the rate of TB can be linked to the living conditions of people. We have called for a comprehensive approach to help solve the dire problems in northern Saskatchewan. The North has a critical housing shortage and overcrowding for many families. Along with the water and sewer services and the lack of water and sewer services, the lack of education about TB — a perfect recipe for the spread of this particular dreadful disease.

Will the minister tell this House if he has a plan to address the issues that we've talked about today, that helped contribute to TB; and if he does have a plan, is he prepared to table that plan here today?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, in regards to this question, the member has his figures wrong again and his facts wrong. I think that in regards to the North, what we have seen is federal

offloading in regards to the province, in regards to the reserve situation in the North.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the expenditures on sewer and water — over \$20 million in 19 communities in our first term. Last year, Mr. Speaker, we had \$14 million this year on 12 communities. That is action by the province at a time when the federal government is offloading responsibility to the provinces. They haven't put a penny in regards to the housing and we're putting \$8 million also in the housing program over the next three years.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### University of Saskatchewan Capital Funding

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions this afternoon will be for the Minister of Post-Secondary Education.

Madam Minister, I ran into a professor from the College of Phys Ed at the University of Saskatchewan a week ago who stated that he should give thanks and all of us should give thanks that there hasn't been a heavy snowfall, because it is unquestionable that the roof of the phys ed building would have fallen in, potentially taking the lives of faculty and students.

Madam Minister, what is your government prepared to do to address the inadequacy of capital funding for the University of Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd just like to congratulate the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) for their quick action once they did discover that they had a problem. Of course this wasn't a problem that anyone knew about, so as soon as they found out about it, they took the action.

Now capital planning is part of the university's priority-setting process, and this particular building was no. 7 on their list prior to them discovering this problem. And it may in fact move up on their list as a result of this. I'm not sure about that; they're busy reconsidering that at the moment themselves.

But they plan to continue their phys ed program in full and we are having discussions with them right now, Mr. Speaker, to see if there's some way we can help them through this interim period. But so far, my understanding is all the students are accommodated and the academic programs are continuing.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, that was interesting words but it did not answer my question, which is what your government's prepared to do with the inadequacy of capital funding overall.

No one believes that the critical problems facing Convocation Hall, the Phys. Ed. Building, the Thorvaldson Building, the Education Building, started recently. These chronic problems, Madam Minister, date back to the 1970s, and have been

outlined by just about everybody with whom one meets, that this was something that was actually a problem when Allan Blakeney was the premier of Saskatchewan.

What real commitment is your government going to make now to keep buildings at the University of Saskatchewan in acceptable order and safe for those who use them?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll just say that education remains one of our highest priorities. But what I would say is in the space of a minute you spent about \$120 million. And maybe you find that easy to do, but it's a little harder to do when you're actually responsible for a budget.

And certainly, the board of governors and the council at the university of Saskatoon appreciates that as well. So they're working in a number of ways with the public and the private sector to raise funds for what they consider to be their priorities. And we're working with them on that.

As well, DesRosiers is doing a study as a result of the MacKay report on university revitalization. We expect it in the spring, and at that point we'll be able to look at a long-term plan for the funding of universities. But I agree with you that it's very important.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, everyone knows that the gap in capital funding has gone on for almost two decades. Chemistry labs were actually antiquated in the 1970s when I was there, and there are chronic, hidden problems in the campus's utilities structure.

Now given the inequities between Saskatoon and Regina in everything from the Centennial Auditorium to the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), in amount spent per university student on both campuses, is your government prepared to treat Saskatoon, and in particular the University of Saskatchewan, with some fairness?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well without getting into a debate, Mr. Speaker, I will mention that she did leave out things like Innovation Place and SRC (Saskatchewan Research Council), but we'll just leave that aside for the moment and stick to the point of the discussion, which is that we do think this is important. And certainly, when you have an old and honoured university like the University of Saskatchewan, it does have old buildings and they do have needs. So we're just going to work with them to do our best to improve the situation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Grain Transportation

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question this afternoon is for the minister of transport.

Madam Minister, we have learned earlier today that the federal government has announced another inquiry, this time into grain transportation.

We support this. We supported the last one Ralph Goodale

announced. We supported the one he announced before that and the one he announced before that and before that and before that.

The point is, Mr. Speaker — the point is, Mr. Speaker — the grain transportation system in this country is in a shambles and the federal government hasn't taken any responsibility for it whatsoever. The provincial government hasn't done anything to help with respect to it as well.

Farmers today are facing successor rights, fuel taxes, rail line abandonment, higher taxes, and an unfriendly business climate here in Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, those are the concerns that farmers are faced with today. Are you looking into this latest grain transportation system problems that farmers are faced with, or exactly what are you doing for farmers these days?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to this particular question because this has been a matter of top priority for the provincial government. We have been saying at all levels, western premiers' conferences, the annual premiers conferences, the federal/provincial premiers' conferences, the ministerial meetings with the ministers of Transportation and Agriculture, that there is an absolute need to get at a very quick, thorough study of the rail transportation system.

We welcome the appointment of Judge Estey, who is a very competent person, a Saskatchewan person, and this announcement is a positive announcement.

My only concern is that the time lines are simply too long. The first phase is May, 1998 ending in the second phase in December, 1998.

And what I'll be doing is writing to the Prime Minister and Mr. Estey, Judge Estey, seeking ways and means to try and compress the study in order to get on with answers and solutions to help ease the bottleneck and the situation for farmers in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 240 — The Recall of Members Act

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that An Act respecting the Recall of Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

### MOTION — OPPOSITION



### Transportation Policies

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to have the opportunity to present this motion regarding the state of Saskatchewan highways and roads as well as problems faced in our entire transportation system.

I'm particularly pleased that we have a chance to debate this issue at this time of year. I think it is important to come back in the fall to debate the issues that are truly important to the people of Saskatchewan, and I hope the government members opposite have the intestinal fortitude to call back the House every fall now that precedent has been set. But given their terrible performance this week, I doubt very much if that's going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, since being elected in '95, there have been two or three types of issues that are obviously of more concern than others. Obviously the deterioration of our health care system has been front and centre for several years now since this government began its health reform policies.

And education has also been a major concern for people I represent, because they worry that this government has in its mind to close our schools just as they have boarded up our hospital windows.

But, Mr. Speaker, probably the issue I've heard most about in the last two, two and a half years, is the state of our highways and of our rural roads. People are angry when they see their tax bill continuing to rise and that the highways, the vital links that connect our communities, are very quickly becoming impassable.

In some cases people are scared to drive on some of the highways in this province for fear of heavy damage to their vehicles. I think we've all heard stories now about vehicles being thrown off the road because of conditions of the highways, or vehicles that are deliberately driven into the ditch to avoid giant chunks of asphalt that have been torn from our highways.

Mr. Speaker, in more serious cases however, some highways are avoided because of a fear of personal safety. I don't think there's a more telling instant of this than the ambulance driver who said he deliberately avoided some highways in his area when transporting sick or injured patients, because he was worried that high speeds on such potholed-riddled roads would cause further injury to his patients.

And school bus drivers have told us the same thing, Mr. Speaker. They take alternate routes now that roads and highways in their part of the province have deteriorated past the point of repair. Stories like this are becoming all too common in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And what makes this situation truly unacceptable is the fact that our highways are more important today than ever before. Because of this government's policy of shutting down rural Saskatchewan, because of its decision to close hospitals in many of our communities, and because of its choice to close schools in rural Saskatchewan, our citizens, our sick and elderly, and our children are forced to travel greater and greater

distances to receive the very basics of life — basics such as health care and education.

Now like never before, vital services are disappearing from our rural Saskatchewan communities, forcing our people to travel many miles over our highways to get the services they once could get in their own communities. And the situation isn't getting any better, Mr. Speaker.

This government has let our highways deteriorate to the point where many are simply un-repairable. I find it amusing and telling that the newly admitted Minister of Highways likes to get her face on camera when a new section of highway is actually opened, such as we saw Highway 16 last week. But I'd bet you a dollar that it will be a very long time before that same minister comes to get her picture taken along Highway No. 15 in my constituency, which resembles something like the roads in Bosnia.

There are examples all over the place, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the minister to travel Highway 35 from her constituency of Weyburn towards Fort Qu'Appelle in the Minister of Environment's riding. Or take a ride with the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood through Lipton, Dysart, Cupar. But I'd advise you to ride in an armoured tank because you'd probably have a better chance of surviving the trip intact.

Mr. Speaker, I could stand here and give you a long list of our highways in the province that are particularly in terrible shape, but since we only are sitting until Friday, I don't know if I have enough time to get through them all. But clearly we have a major problem in this province and government action so far is far too little and far too late. Unfortunately some of our highways have gotten to the point where they will virtually have to be built from scratch. Had the government been responsible in recent years, by maintaining this highway at a decent level, the cost of repairs would have been far lower.

Mr. Speaker, that didn't fit into their little game plan. They see no future in rural areas and did not want and do not want to do anything that contradicts this. Well there may be no future for the NDP in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but there's a whole lot of life out there yet, and they deserve decent roads to drive on.

Mr. Speaker, time is quickly passing our roads by. The coming of large, concrete grain terminals, the abandonment of railroads, the closure of small elevators in many of our communities, has made our highways even more vital today than they ever have been before. This is all happening because both the provincial and federal governments have partly written agriculture off. And we need to see in this province a long-term action plan on how we're going to deal with the changes that are occurring due to the changing face of transportation in Saskatchewan.

So far, Mr. Speaker, we've heard very little about this from the members opposite. Perhaps they realize that they themselves do not have a long-term future in politics so why bother putting together a transportation action plan. Well of course, the Saskatchewan Party will be glad to do it in a couple of years when we're on that side of the House. But I would urge, in the meantime, that the outgoing government get to work on it now, give us a bit of a head start, because there's going to be plenty

of work to do.

Mr. Speaker, in last spring's budget we heard the government brag about their new-found commitment to our highways — two and a half billion over 10 years they said. And the back-benches rose and cheered the Finance minister. But let's take a . . . take this into a bit of perspective. Once inflation and many other rising costs — many due to the government's own policies — are added to the equation over the next 10 years, the government's financial commitment to highways is about the same, if not less, than it was before this grand announcement last March.

The Finance minister may be able to fool her back-bench into thinking everything is now going to be wonderful in terms of our roads and highways, but the rest of us in Saskatchewan can count. This so-called commitment is another smokescreen thrown up by this government to disguise the reality of its own neglect.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's look at this from another angle. The government says it will spend two and a half billion over the next decade. Well try this on for size, Mr. Speaker. Over that same period, the provincial treasury will rake in over four and a half billion in fuel taxes and vehicle licencing registration fees. And that's if the taxes stay where they are now and don't go higher like they usually do under this administration.

That's a great big "if" when it comes to this government, Mr. Speaker. In the past fiscal year alone, the government took in 365 million in fuel taxes but spent only 107 million on the preservation and maintenance of our roads. Some commitment, Mr. Speaker, some commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I realize we have to be realistic. It would be difficult to begin spending 100 per cent or even 90 per cent of the revenue from the fuel tax on our roads immediately. Not because that much repair and building couldn't be done and isn't needed, but it's because we recognize that this money is used to fund other vital services.

However, I don't believe it is impossible that over time, the percentage of the fuel tax that is devoted to highways is increased until eventually most of it, if not all of it, is going directly to our roads.

In our consultations with the residents of Saskatchewan, that's what they told us they'd like to see, Mr. Speaker. And the government should listen to them and make this commitment now. I don't think any of us should forget that this is a government that today takes in over 800 million more in taxes than it did when it came to power in 1991.

Making this commitment over a period of time should not leave all other government services devastated, as the members opposite claim. Some sort of commitment has to be made and so far the government has done nothing. I'm sure in just a few moments they'll all start chiming about how their so-called promise of two and a half billion has done wonders. But I've already told you what I think of that, Mr. Speaker.

Last year I recall stating that the Premier stated that only so much money can be spent on repairing our highways because

the contractors can handle only so much. But even here, Mr. Speaker, the government is being less than honest. For years the Saskatchewan road builders association has urged the government to release their highway tenders earlier than they do, at least by a couple of months.

Tenders for work this fall were only released in July, giving the contractors very little time to line up necessary equipment. If it hadn't been for the unusually warm fall, much of the work couldn't have been completed and much of the budget would have gone unspent.

The same thing happens in the spring. Whereas the road builders have urged to get the tenders and contracts out early as January, to allow them to prepare for the job and to bring in more equipment and more workers if necessary, the government has refused and does not release these contracts until April, very shortly before the work begins.

Why not budget this work on a multi-year basis, Mr. Speaker? Then the government would not have to wait every year for the budget to be brought down before contractors know what work is going to be done. It seems like a simple solution to rather a major problem, Mr. Speaker. But of course, the government refuses to listen.

Mr. Speaker, because of this government's neglect of the primary and secondary highways in Saskatchewan, the entire transportation system in the province is failing very, very quickly. Because of the NDP's failure to ensure safe, drivable highways, many vehicles are now getting off the main roads to avoid potholes and taking grid roads. We see this in the oil patch, we see it where the large grain terminals have popped up, and this has a devastating effect on the grid road system in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

These roads were not built to handle a large volume of heavy traffic, and as a result, the roads in many of our rural municipalities have been left as heavily damaged as the highways themselves.

And what does the government expect? The municipalities will just run right out and fix theirs over and over again. Well again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the RM (rural municipality) councils would dearly love to fix their roads and I'm sure the RM councils would dearly love to build new roads, Mr. Speaker. But the provincial government has ensured that that cannot happen either.

I'm going to speak about the government's offloading to its own problems . . . off on to the municipal governments in greater detail tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, but it has to be mentioned when one is talking about the transportation system in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when more and more of the heavier and heavier traffic leaves the main highways, preferring the grid road system, the RMs suffer financially. More repair work is needed, and frankly the money just isn't there, Mr. Speaker, to do it. And why isn't it there? Because the provincial government has devastated the municipality's bottom line by its constant hatchet job to their budgets.

Since coming to power in 1991, this government has slashed transfers to municipalities time after time after time. Of all the effects this has on a municipality, perhaps the greatest is on the RM's ability to maintain its roads. As its revenue falls because of provincial government cut-backs, so does its ability to keep the roads in the RMs up in shape. And at the same time as this is going on, the province's own negligence is forcing more and more traffic onto these roads.

(1430)

They've created a vicious circle here, Mr. Speaker, and it doesn't look as if it's going to end any time soon. In the last year alone the provincial cut . . . the province cut another 25 per cent from local government transfers. And yet they expect those same RMs to pick up the cost of repairing these roads. I'll have more to say on this tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, when we discuss this government's offloading in all areas. I'm sure that's a discussion they'll love to have, since they just love to talk about offloading from the federal government onto the province.

Mr. Speaker, speaking about the federal government, I do recognize that it has some major responsibility when it comes to highways in this province and all across Canada, a responsibility that is not borne any better than our provincial government. The federal government, including Ralph Goodale, has got to commit to a national highways program. And in Saskatchewan it's got to commit to twinning Highway No. 1 from border to border. There is no question about that, Mr. Speaker, and I urge the current Highways minister and the Premier to continue to pressure the federal Liberals to do their share as well as when it comes to our highways in Saskatchewan. I would do it myself, but Mr. Goodale isn't accepting my calls for some unknown reason.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, times are quickly changing in the transportation system in Saskatchewan. More and more we are seeing rail lines abandoned by the major national railways; however, because the people of Saskatchewan have initiative, they are coming up with solutions to the problems. But as usual the provincial government is doing all it can to stop these initiatives.

I found it very amusing to see the Highways minister and the current Intergovernmental Affairs minister, the person who has so much devastated farmers in Saskatchewan, elbow their way in front of the cameras in Eston last week when the farmers were there coming up with their own solutions for the problem they face in transporting the grain. But those same ministers have done absolutely nothing to get their government to enhance the chances of short-lines starting in Saskatchewan.

They are part and parcel with their colleagues, who absolutely refuse to repeal succession rights for short-lines. They won't even admit that succession rights are a cause . . . and a problem for small companies wanting to establish short-lines in order to transport our grain.

I don't have to go into much detail here as I know my colleague from Kindersley will speak on this subject later, but for this government to sit back and cry about elevator closures and rail-line abandonments, is absolutely hypocritical, Mr. Speaker. They have refused to do anything to find a solution to these

problems.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a crisis in our transportation system. Last winter we saw that in spades with a severe shortage of grain cars. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be any solution coming any time soon. The review of those problems have been delayed again and again even with the seriousness of the problem, and we've heard very little from this government or from Mr. Goodale, who supposedly represents Saskatchewan farmers in Ottawa.

The provincial government has steadfastly ignored the issues that are involved in this situation, Mr. Speaker. They refused to negotiate with the federal government, with unions, with anybody, to help find a solution to this major problem. Once again they simply bury their heads in the sand and point the finger of blame elsewhere. Instead of showing leadership for once, they simply ignore the problem. Instead of being proactive and helping to come up with a solution, they simply pretend the problem doesn't exist.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough; it's not good enough for our farmers. Just as the government's negligence of our highways is not good enough for the rest of the people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing a major crisis in our overall transportation system, and nothing this government has done so far indicates that they're ready to address the many problems that exist. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker, but it's certainly not a surprise.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move my motion and I will read the same:

That this Assembly condemn the government for its underfunding of Saskatchewan roads and highways resulting in crumbling roadways, poor infrastructure, and loss of tourism and investment dollars; and further condemn the government for its failing to help short-line railways to purchase abandoned rail lines through its refusal to end succession rights, which is the number one hindrance to this transaction; and further condemn the government for its failure to negotiate with federal government, labour groups, and other interest groups to ensure the orderly transportation of grain and other commodities.

I so move, seconded by the member for Kindersley, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter into the debate today. The resolution that my colleague has brought forward with respect to grain transportation, transportation in general . . . and there are many, many aspects of this resolution that are extremely important, I think, that Saskatchewan people have opportunity to debate and to make comment on. So I'm pleased to enter into the debate this afternoon.

The whole area that I wanted to deal with this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, deals specifically with the concerns with respect to grain transportation. A part of the resolution speaks to that and I

wanted to contain my remarks essentially to that area.

The whole area of grain transportation, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is under great scrutiny these days. It has been for the past couple of years. Farmers across this province have been waiting patiently, I think you would say, for the last couple of years, as we wait for the federal government and the provincial government to deal with this issue . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Impatiently, impatiently.

**Mr. Boyd:** — And my colleague says impatiently, and I think he's probably correct because I think their level of tolerance and their level of patience is growing rather thin here as we sit back and wait and wait and wait.

We've seen the federal government just this afternoon, or earlier today, make an announcement with respect to another grain transportation study. And Mr. Judge Estey, I understand, is going to be handling that, and we are fully supportive of that, Mr. Speaker, although the concerns of course are with respect to time lines.

The farmers of this province and of western Canada will be waiting till January . . . December, 1998 before we see any results from this study, or at least the completion of this study. And if the federal government's inaction is any indication of what we might expect in the future, we won't expect anything coming out of them, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. We've seen nothing to date. I have no reason to be hopeful that we will see anything in the future either.

This grain transportation debate is very timely and I say that because we are now seeing in Saskatchewan another grain transportation problem developing, and that's the shortfall of cars once again here in Saskatchewan. Farmers have harvested not a big, huge crop by any stretch of the imagination, but they've harvested a good crop. Quality is good, quality is probably unprecedented over the last number of years, probably even decades, Mr. Speaker.

Now farmers are waiting patiently, and somewhat impatiently as I've said, to start moving that grain. We've had a fall that has set record temperatures all across western Canada. We see a situation where farmers are wanting to move grain as quickly as possible to meet their expenses — the expenses many farmers have faced with, dating back to the spring of this past . . . this year, 1997, bills that are still unpaid on many farms unfortunately, simply because they have a product that they can't move. They have a product that's sitting in their bins that the rail system just simply cannot handle, a grain transportation system that doesn't seem to care, a federal government that doesn't seem to care, and a provincial government that doesn't seem to care on any of these issues.

Mr. Goodale has announced, as you know, Mr. Speaker, study after study after study — talk, talk, talk. If that isn't the history of this man, I don't know what is. We have waited and waited and waited; seen nothing whatsoever but another deadline. Another deadline, another deadline, just saying you'll just have to be patient, Mr. Farmer and Mrs. Farmer, out there. You're just going to have to be patient until we get around to completing the latest study and then we're going to make some

dramatic announcements at the end of that. I don't know how long this has been going on. The member from Saskatoon Northwest probably has a better memory in that area than I do, but nevertheless it's been going on for several years now, as he well knows.

We have been waiting for some changes; we've been waiting for some response; we've been waiting for some help; we've been waiting for something from both levels of government and we've seen nothing to date.

I wanted to tell you a little bit about, Mr. Speaker, some initiatives that farmers are taking though, to try and address these concerns. Farmers in Saskatchewan, and as my colleague from Cannington has pointed out, are becoming very impatient with the situation. And so, as always is the case, as always is the case when it finally hits the wall, when it finally hits the wall the farmers of the this province stand up and say, well we've had enough and we're going to have to obviously take this system into our own hands and deal with the problems that are . . . we are confronted with.

And we saw a very, very good example out of my constituency and the member for Rosetown-Biggar's constituency here in the last few weeks. And he'll recall the . . . what I'm referring to, and I hope many members take the time to watch the news coverage of that day, where farmers, a few weeks ago, banded together in an effort to develop some consensus and also to highlight the problems that they are faced with. So there was some gentleman from my constituency, some gentleman from my constituency, a Mr. Bill Woods, a neighbour of mine from about . . . oh I'd say Bill's about 10 miles away from my farm. A very good operator and a good farmer out in that area; out in the Isham area of this province.

Him and another gentleman by the name of Rob Lobdel. And Rob is from Richlea, Saskatchewan; the heart of some of the finest farm land in all western Canada I would suggest. Those two gentlemen have taken it upon themselves — along with representatives of the municipalities and many, many farmers in the area — to coordinate an effort to try and bring some sanity back to this grain transportation system.

What they did, I think has been . . . is unprecedented probably in the history of grain transportation and in agriculture in this province, I would suggest. They did . . . What they did was organize and coordinate a complete producer car loading of a train. A hundred, I believe it was 104 or 106 cars, something in that neighbourhood, were loaded at various points all along that line, a line that has been . . . Well there's great concern about the possibility of that line closing down, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They are very concerned about that. That line that extends from . . . starts at Delisle, runs down through Demaine, up through Elrose, right through Eston, all the way out to Alsask and beyond, is the line that's in question here. That line, my understanding is it annually produces and moves in excess of 10 million bushels of grain, so it is one of the highest production lines in all of Saskatchewan. And yet it is a very strong possibility that line will be closed down in the not-too-distant future.

And so what farmers are concerned with here is a very, very

what would appear coordinated effort between various interests groups to move on that line. And I say a coordinated effort, because there are so many coincidences that it's hard to believe that all of these things just sort of happened by happenstance.

We see things like no cars coming into that rail line any longer. The elevator companies have responsibility in that area. As I understand the situation, Mr. Speaker, what happens is the rail companies move . . . they bring cars in on the line. What happens in advance of that, however, is the elevator companies themselves make . . . put in orders for grain cars. They say, we need 10 or 20 cars at Richlea, Saskatchewan in the next train that's going to be sent out there.

Unfortunately what happens though, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in recent months and in recent years the elevator companies, I think have developed a little bit of a coordinated strategy here. And I would like to talk to them sometime about their strategy in that regard, because I think that it's beginning to wear very thin on the nerves of Saskatchewan producers.

They see a situation where the elevator companies do what is called flex-cars. Instead of having the cars allocated in a normal fashion where the elevator managers phone up and fax information and computer e-mail information to their head office and say we've got in our house today, in our elevator house today, we've got 10 cars that — we'll say durum in this case — 10 cars of durum that are ready for shipment. When the Canadian Wheat Board has sale for it, and the grain transportation authority makes up a train load, they'll send out 10 cars to that point in question.

(1445)

Unfortunately what happens is, unfortunately what happens is though, the elevator companies, I guess being business people like they are, they've recognized that if they close down elevators all over this province and, in a coordinated effort with rail lines and with rail companies, if they close down a number of rail lines in this province and close down elevators all over this province, they will force that grain to move to higher production . . . higher movement-type areas, main lines.

And I guess that's true. If you have a monopoly, if you have a monopoly, that only makes sense to force it to a position where you can move it as cheaply as possibly, force it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's deregulation. Yes, the member from Saskatoon Northwest talks about deregulation. And I'll be happy to get to that in a moment. I'll be happy to get to that in a moment.

True deregulation has not taken place and the member knows that. If true deregulation had taken place we would not have rail lines closing down all over this province. We would have short rail line operations starting up all over this province because there would be opportunity. The entrepreneurial spirit in this province would take hold. Farmers would band together with rail line companies and they'd start up their own operations. That's what would happen. That's what true deregulation is.

What we've seen is a systematic regulation reduction. It's a far different thing than deregulation. We've seen a reduction in regulations for the companies themselves that are in existence,

the companies themselves that are in existence, and for the grain companies. We have seen nothing whatsoever in terms of freeing up the system so all people can use that system, which is what true deregulation is all about.

Getting back to the situation in my constituency and the member from Rosetown-Biggar's constituency, now those cars that I've been talking about that are normally sent down that line have been flexed, as they call it, to higher production or higher-movement elevators. The rail companies, the rail companies, and I would suggest the grain companies in this country, have in a very, very what is . . . if it isn't collusion it's so close to it it isn't possible.

They together have worked out a system where they're going to force grain to the higher through-put elevators. Now as a result of that, the cars that would normally be going to that lower-volume elevator rail lines, have been going to the higher-volume lines. And so what happens is the elevator companies have forced a situation where the lines that are up for abandonment always have a chronic problem with elevator congestion. The elevators are chronically plugged there all of the time. This is something new. This is something new to many, many areas of this province. We have never seen that.

In the town of Eston where I'm from, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've always been represented by three elevator companies — the Pioneer, United Grain Growers, and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. As a result of that, there's always been extremely intense competition; and as a result of that extreme competition, there's always been car allocation that has always gone to that rail line. There's never been a problem with that before, up until about a year and a half ago; never have seen that before.

Many other rail lines have experienced that. All of them have been done in the same, systematic fashion — starve them for cars, plug the elevators, the handle goes way down. Close the rail line because the handle's down. You can demonstrate that the farmers don't want to deliver grain there.

But that isn't the way it is. The farmers want to deliver grain to these points, but they can't because there's no space in the elevators. There's no space in the elevators because the elevators don't want there to be space in the elevators. The rail companies don't want there to be space in the elevators so they can close that line down and force grain to the higher through-put elevators and to the main lines in this province.

And that, unfortunately, is what's happened in our area. As a result of that, farmers have banded together out there in a very, very unusual . . . particularly in an area that is known for its independence. For an area that is known for its independence, Mr. Speaker, what has happened is farmers have got together and they've said, we have got to address this situation. We have got to bring some sanity back to this situation. So they've coordinated this one full train load of No. 1 and No. 2 durum to be sold in a complete unit train that was going to be picked up all along that rail line.

So I think that there was, I believe, something in the range of about 9 or 10 different points that were involved in this situation, a number of rail cars at each one of them. In Eston, there were 13 rail cars loaded on that day.

Now I think it was an extremely important effort because it pointed to a couple of things. It pointed to the fact that farmers won't accept this any longer.

Farmers around this province, I think, watched with great interest to see what was going to happen out there. It came, it went, was coordinated; it was put together, and it came off in just a spectacular fashion. That entire train was loaded by about 11 o'clock in the morning. Farmers started at about, oh, I'd say 7 o'clock in the morning. They had brought in trucks — entire cars of grain were loaded on trucks in advance.

In the town of Eston I would estimate there was probably 100, if not more, grain trucks in town that day delivering grain to that train. They wanted to show clearly that this is not something that they're going to stand by and just watch happen. So the farmers that day loaded that entire train.

You would never believe, Mr. Speaker, the people that were there. Eston is a community of about 1,200. The school closed down because the people in that community recognized how important this was to the people of this community, and the entire school population . . . I don't know about entire, but there was a huge number of students there that day. They had to seek permission from their parents in advance, and some people, I guess, thought it wasn't perhaps as critical an issue as others. But there — I don't know — I'd guess there was 150 to 200 students, something like that, there. I think the school holds 250, somewhere in that neighbourhood. So there was a large contingent of students there that day.

But in addition in that, there was a large contingency of people who were non-farmers there that day, watching and wondering what was going to happen, whether this thing was going to come off very well. The minister of transport was there, the minister for Intergovernmental Relations was there, glad-handing everybody in sight, making it known that they were supportive of this effort — supportive of this effort. And I say that because it is with great concern that the farmers have with respect to things like successor rights.

If you talked to the coordinators there, Bill Woods and Rob Lobdel, they were at the grain transportation hearings that were held here in short-line grain transportation talks. They were held here in Regina, oh, about a year ago. And I remember Mr. Lobdel speaking at that meeting, and he got up and he said that he was very concerned about the rail line in his area; it was going to close down. And one of the significant problems were things like successor rights. He had been talking to many people.

This young fellow is a recent arrival to our community. He's an American, young guy, married a farmer's daughter from the Richlea area, and has moved up here. And what he has seen, from where he has come from in the United States, is many, many short rail operations setting up down there. And of course the natural question that he has had to ask, is why aren't there rail line operations like that setting up in Saskatchewan.

Well, so he attended the meetings that were held here in Regina to find out what was said and what was the problems with setting up rail lines here in Saskatchewan. And he found that there are many people that shared his concerns. There was one

gentleman by the name of Russell MacPherson from Moose Jaw talking about the Outlook line, a line from Moose Jaw up to Outlook. It faces the same problems as many other rail lines here in Saskatchewan.

And Mr. MacPherson said on that day, any of the short-lines we've talked — apparently they talked to numbers of them, trying to interest them in that short rail line opportunity in that area — any of the short-lines we've talked to are interested in coming, but successor rights are certainly a roadblock issue for them.

Now here we have a situation where this government opposite over here, they like to stand up in their places and say that they have concern for farmers. They like to stand up and say that they're going to deal with this thing. They like to stand up and criticize the federal government at every turn. They like to stand up and say, we're going to do something good for the agriculture here in Saskatchewan.

But what have they done when it comes to helping short rail line operations in Saskatchewan? Absolutely nothing. In fact they've placed a huge roadblock in their way, and that is successor rights.

Another gentleman at that conference, a Mr. Bruce Flohr — Flohr I think his name is — and he is the chief executive officer for Railtex. Now Railtex, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a short rail line operation from the United States. This gentleman runs a company that sets up short rail line operations all over the United States, and they have numerous of them; they have numbers of them. They run good operations. They come in and they are able to run an operation and make money at it, and provide a service where no one else can. And that's why they've been very successful at that.

And Mr. Flohr was at the conference here in Saskatchewan. And he stood up and he said, we will not be buying rail lines in Saskatchewan — in spite of the fact that they have them all over the United States and are very successful at that — we will not be buying rail lines in Saskatchewan as long as successor rights are in place. Without a change, without a change, we are not interested in Saskatchewan, but we are interested in . . . And get this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Flohr says, without a change we are not interested in Saskatchewan. We are interested in everywhere else.

Everywhere else. Everywhere else. All across the United States. All across Canada, with the one big exception of this place in the middle called Saskatchewan. Don't want to operate here. Don't want to operate here. Don't want to operate in Saskatchewan because they will not be responsive to the needs of companies that are successful all over the United States, in places all across Canada. But we can't have them here because of one simple reason he says, and that is successor rights.

What possibly could be wrong, what possibly could be wrong with trying to help successor rights . . . deal with the issue of successor rights and help farmers in this province? What possibly could be wrong with that?

The member from Regina South speaks from his chair over there. This is an expert on short rail line operations, as we

know. He won't take the word, he won't take the word, he won't take the word of a chief executive officer of a company that handles them, sets them up all over this . . . all over United States, says he would come to Saskatchewan. Oh no, we have to listen to the likes of that member over there because he knows more than people who actually run these operations, actually run these operations.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — Order.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, it seems a very, very ironic situation when you have people who first . . . in the first case, a Mr. MacPherson from Moose Jaw who has a rail line opportunity that he knows that the farmers along that Outlook subdivision want to proceed with, a short rail line operation. And they say they've gone out and actively solicited bids from people, gone out and tried to interest companies that have experience in setting these operations up. And they have been told on every occasion, no, don't want to come here. Saying, you know, we'd be happy to have a look at this situation, we'd be happy to enter into an agreement with you but there's only a . . . there's one problem here. If we do enter into this agreement, we're going to go broke — we're going to go broke.

The chief executive officers of outfits like Railtex aren't in the habit of going broke. They're not in the habit of going broke because they know how to run operations.

**An Hon. Member:** — Omni Trax.

**Mr. Boyd:** — They know how to go in and set up operations. And the member from back in the corner over there, the former transport minister . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Carrot River Valley.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Carrot River Valley, says Omni Trax. Well I know about Omni Trax as well as you do, I think. Omni Trax came in in a very, very different situation, as you know — very, very different situation.

(1500)

They bought an entire rail line, starting in Saskatchewan, all the way extending up to Churchill. A situation where farmers in those areas, farmers in those areas have been supportive of that line for a long, long time, saying that that line can be economic if we could just get, if we could just get the federal government and the provincial government's hand out of their pocket.

So for once, they did something right and sell it to somebody that could run the operation properly and make a few dollars at it. And we congratulate Omni Trax for coming in under very, very difficult circumstances. But their circumstances, even though there are successor rights in place, they were able to secure the line and make money at it. That doesn't happen with other lines — doesn't happen with other lines.

Omni Trax can do what they want and they're doing a very good job. When you look at other rail lines in this province, they are different situations altogether. And the member knows that is to be the case. And that's why you see rail company

executives that have experience in this area saying no, we don't want any part of this.

Getting back to the situation along our rail line there, and with respect to this whole thing, the member from Rosetown and the member from Weyburn happened along that date, as I said, glad-hand every farmer they could come across. And I suspect as a result, the member from Rosetown-Elrose being there, it'll be just like the situation back when he came out into our area when the whole situation of hospital closures was, and won by a relatively small majority in '91, and as a result of his exposure in my constituency got nearly 60 per cent in the next election. Lord knows, in this election upcoming, I probably won't even have to campaign if he shows his face again.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — It was interesting, it was interesting, it was interesting, because the farmers looked at them like the Scrooge that stole Christmas. They wanted their help, they wanted their help like a . . . there was no help from those people that day.

I had farmers talking to me all day long that day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, saying to me, what are these people doing here? What possibly do they know that could be helpful? What possibly could they do to help us out?

And I said, they could do one thing, and when Mr. Lobdel spoke that day, he said they could do one thing as well. And Bill Woods, who coordinated that train, they said they could do one thing. They said if they truly were interested in anything other than a photo opportunity, if they are truly interested in anything other than a photo opportunity, they'd have been out here standing on a stump saying, we are going to deal with some issues for you.

We are going to deal with some issues like successor rights. We're going to deal with some issues like fuel taxes. We're going to deal with some things like rail line abandonment. We are going to deal with some things like municipal reassessment that has cost rail companies significant amounts of dollars. We are going to deal with this unfriendly business climate that we have here in Saskatchewan. That's what could have been helpful that day.

But having the member from Rosetown-Biggar going around getting in the way — which is literally about what he was doing — these guys, these farmers out there that day, were busy. They were busy. There was a hundred, there was a hundred grain trucks running around. There was tractors and loaders and farmers busy all over the place, and they were staggered by the situation of this member wandering around wanting to climb up on top of the rail cars and have his picture taken. He practically fell off.

They moved the train. They had a backhoe there that they were moving the cars along so that they didn't have to, so that they didn't have to, they didn't have to reset the cars. And the member got up on top of there and the backhoe operator — I don't think it was deliberate, although he had a little smile on his face — he had a little smile on his face. I know the guy very well; he just lives 2 miles south of me. He had a little smile on his face and he gave that car a little bump.

You never seen anybody, you never seen anybody jump to attention as quick as the member from Rosetown-Elrose did . . . Rosetown-Biggar did, because I think he thought he was going head over heels off the end of that thing. We didn't wish . . . we wouldn't wish that on anybody because it could have resulted in a serious accident. But nevertheless, nevertheless, the point is here, Mr. Speaker, any time that the farmers of this province stand up and try and do something for them, this government is always there — always there — to try and get in on it; to try and have their face on the front page of the local newspaper.

But what really, what really the farmers are looking for is some help from you guys. And I think you people know very well that. The member from Watrous, he knows very well that there are problems out there. He knows that there are concerns out there, and he knows that there are problems that need to be dealt with.

When you look at agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and grain transportation, these kinds of issues have been going on for a long time. All change, all change in agriculture has been preceded by a couple of things. It's been preceded by the perception in agriculture and the perception in farmers that is has to change and that it should change.

It's also been preceded by one other thing — opposition from the NDP and every left-wing farm group that there is. Any beneficial change has been opposed by these people opposite every step of the way. Every step of the way. And you can go back, you can go back as long as my memory exists in agriculture, back to, back to the days when grain terminals were set up in this province by farmers.

When the Weyburn Inland Terminal was set up, when that terminal was set up here in Saskatchewan, what was happening at that time? Farmers had congested elevators, poor grain movement, NDP bucking them all the way. And what happened at that time? They banded together. Free-enterprise farmers banded together and said, we've got to address this situation. So they stood up and they said, we're going to build a terminal in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

They stood up and they built that. They pooled their money together; put their resources together; built a terminal in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. And I remember the NDP and the National Farmers Union, they condemned that out through and through. They said this is going to be the end of agriculture; this is going to be the end of collectivism in Saskatchewan. This is going to be the problems . . . this is going to be a big problem for . . . They tried to put all kinds of barriers in front of them, if you remembered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you were around at that time, so I think you remember pretty well . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm not surprised that Karl Marx would have a concern about this, no doubt.

But the NFU (National Farmers Union) blockaded it. The NFU blockaded it; they tried to stop free-enterprise farmers from delivering grain to an elevator that they had just finished building with their own money. The NFU stood out front of that elevator and said, we're not going to let you into the elevator that you just built with your own money. What kind of, what kind of lunacy is that, Mr. Speaker? That's what happened that day.

And I recall another incident. I think the member from Saskatoon Northwest might even have been there. This was with respect to the, this was with respect to the opening of Cargill in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Either it's someone that strangely looked like you then. There was someone, there was someone there that bore a very, very funny resemblance to you that were there.

What happened that day, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Again farmers wanted to have an elevator.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):**— Why is the member for Saskatoon Northwest on his feet?

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — What is your point of order?

**Mr. Whitmore:** — The member from Kindersley has made reference that I was at an event in Rosetown, Saskatchewan at a particular time. I was not at that event, and I want to make sure that that is into the record.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — I thank the hon. member for Saskatoon Northwest for raising what he refers to as a point of order. What we have here is a dispute between two members; therefore I cannot entertain it as a valid point of order.

**An Hon. Member:** — Apologize.

**Mr. Boyd:** — I'd be happy to apologize. If the member wasn't there, he wasn't there. But certainly the likes of him were there.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — The likes of him were there that day. The National Farmers Union was out in all its splendour that day, and the member opposite was a member of the National Farmers Union at that time, I think. Yes, he nods in an affirmative, he was. If he wasn't there the likes of him were there.

Well anyway, getting back to the story. Cargill was opening up. Again it was going to be the end of the world for agriculture — end of the world for grain transportation as we knew it. Big elevator going to open up. So Cargill, they run a pretty good operation as many of you know, and Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's hooked up with on many joint ventures now. They realize that they're pretty good operators as well. Anyway, Cargill, they run a pretty good operation.

So they had a big opening that day — big, big opening that day. They had grain transportation representatives at it all over the place. They had dignitaries of all description there, and they had the National Farmers Union at their gate not wanting to let anybody in.

That all took place all day long, and the National Farmers Union was mad as the devil all day long until it came supper time; then they had this big barbecue. Cargill, as I said, they run a good operation. They know how to bring in customers. So they had this big steak barbecue that day and I was there. It was



great. They put on a pretty good show for the farmers that day, trying to gain their business. And they gained a lot that day. And many of them are still delivering their grain, and their families are delivering their grain, to that operation today.

The protests ended when the dinner bell rang. When the dinner bell rang, the protest ended, and all of the National Farmers Union bellied up to the table like everybody else, and the protest was over. The protest was over and again grain transportation moved on. The farmers triumphed once again over that left-wing bunch of radicals known as the National Farmers Union.

And again, as you look down through history, we see, as I said, change is preceded by the perception of change and an unwillingness to have the NDP and the National Farmers Union to accept it. We see that with the Crow rate. We've seen that with many, many grain transportation problems. Farmers have always had a . . . Something that really sticks in the craw of every farmer in this province is when it comes to things like demurrage.

You know what this is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Demurrage is a situation where you hold hostage the people that shouldn't be held hostage and you make them pay in what amounts to bordering on extortion for something they have no responsibility for. No responsibility for that.

Who has responsibility for that? Who is responsible for that? I remember Henry Kancs, a grain handler out at the west coast, standing up and saying he could care less what anybody thought; they are going on strike. They were going to put the grain transportation system in chaos. They were going to hold up the economy of western Saskatchewan. They were going to hold hostage every farmer in western Canada. And they didn't care what it cost; they wanted their increase in salary.

**An Hon. Member:** — It wasn't Henry.

**Mr. Boyd:** — It was so Henry. Henry Kancs has been a thorn in the side of agriculture as long as I can remember. And the sooner that guy retires, the better off agriculture will be. And the better off . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — He's one of the sane ones.

**Mr. Boyd:** — One of the sane ones? Why would he make a statement like that then?

**An Hon. Member:** — Stevedores.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Stevedores. Anyway, the situation with demurrage has been something that's been a problem for agriculture as long as I can remember. It's a situation that this government has opposed. I remember there's been resolutions put before this House on many occasions to make the grain transportation a first line operation, to make it a situation where they cannot strike, to consider it an essential service — which it is — and not allow strikes in that system.

But oh no, the NDP has opposed that all the way along. That's why we are seeing many, many changes taking place in agriculture. The approval rating in terms of the grain

transportation situation has changed.

I wanted to touch, I want to touch, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, in getting to my closing remarks here, I want to touch a little bit on the problems that farmers are faced with in terms of marketing their product, like through the Canadian Wheat Board these days.

The Canadian Wheat Board has done a pretty good job at marketing products for a long, long time for farmers. I'll acknowledge that. I'll acknowledge that. There's been lots of problems associated with it. There's been lots of concerns. It was brought in years . . . 50 years ago for some very, very good reasons I think at that time.

Just as many things have come and gone in Canada, things that have been good, things that have continued to be good, things that need to have some changes made to them.

I think the Canadian Wheat Board is at a crossroads, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think they're at a crossroads because of two things. I think they're at a crossroads because many, many farmers now are looking at other crops. They want to market their product outside of the Canadian Wheat Board, and that's why you see the explosion in things like specialty crops. That's why you see an explosion in terms of acreage of crops, like canola. That's why you see all kinds of developments in diversification aspects in agriculture. Farmers want some freedom.

(1515)

There are farmers that also . . . there are also farmers that believe that the Canadian Wheat Board is the best system to go through, and far be it from me to criticize them for that. That's their right. That's their . . . that is a right I believe that they should have to deliver their product wherever they choose.

I've had farmers say to me many, many times: who are you, who are you, Mr. Member from Kindersley, to tell them how they should market their grain? Far be it from me to tell them how to market their grain. I would never stand in a hall anywhere in Saskatchewan and tell them that they should market their grain through the Canadian Wheat Board or outside the Canadian Wheat Board.

But I would ask you people opposite to extend one courtesy to us as well and that is not to do the same in reverse. I want those same kind of opportunities myself, just as many, many farmers across this province want. They want the opportunity to market their product in the way they see fit.

If that is within the Canadian Wheat Board, so be it. But if that is outside of the Canadian Wheat Board, that is also a right that they should be given. Dual marketing is something that is coming. The member from Watrous knows full well it is coming. Change in agriculture has always been preceded by two things: first and foremost, that it should change and will change; and second, that the NDP will oppose it all the way along.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Boyd:** — Nothing has changed. Nothing has changed in 50 years of agriculture that the Wheat Board's been around. Nothing has changed.

Australian producers have changed. Australian producers have said they want freedom. Australian producers have looked at dual marketing, have implemented a system of dual marketing not, albeit, perfect in any respects — not perfect in any respects — but at least a start down the road to freedom, a start down the road.

If there was one farmer in Saskatchewan that wanted the right to market their product outside of the Canadian Wheat Board, you Minister of Agriculture and the minister of transport should be standing up and defending that right rather than denying them that right. That's what democracy is all about.

That's what democracy is all about — allowing choice. Allowing choice. Allowing people to stand up and say yes. Allowing people to do what they choose to do. That's what the choice is that farmers want. That's what the kind of change that needs to happen.

I'm always amused when I'm debating these . . .

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — Pursuant to a special order passed by the Assembly dated December 15, the time for this debate is up and it is time for the question to be put.

The division bells rang from 3:18 p.m. until 3:20 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

#### Yeas — 15

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Boyd	Draude
Gantfoer	Heppner	Osika
Hillson	McPherson	Aldridge
McLane	Julé	Goohsen

#### Nays — 23

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Goulet	Lautermilch	Upshall
Kowalsky	Calvert	Pringle
Koenker	Renaud	

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — Order, order. Order. Order. It is a good thing that there is a visual aid to this vote because I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the votes. I ask the cooperation of members on both sides as we complete this vote.

Lorje	Scott	Nilson
Stanger	Wall	Kasperski
Jess	Murrell	Thomson

#### SPECIAL ORDER

#### MOTION — THIRD PARTY

#### Northern Community Development

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just want to say it's an extreme pleasure that as the MLA for Athabasca I'm here to present for the next 45 minutes a great and very innovative idea on behalf of northern Saskatchewan people. And before I get into the debate, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to assure the member from Kindersley, who has always indicated that I had my hand out, that the fact of the matter that the people of northern Saskatchewan actually have had their hand extended in cooperation and in support for this province for many, many years; and all they want back, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they want fairness and they want . . .

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — Order. The hon. member for Athabasca has the floor and I am having a great deal of difficulty in hearing his presentation. I ask for the cooperation of all hon. members.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just want to say it's an extreme pleasure for me to be here today to speak on behalf of a very important issue that many northern leaders and many people throughout the history of northern Saskatchewan have been hammering away on and talking about at great lengths.

And as I mentioned, on numerous occasions, that there is no way in my opinion that the people of northern Saskatchewan will continue being denied and will continue suffering the indignation of people from various other parts of political parties in parts of Saskatchewan by saying you always have your hand out, people in northern Saskatchewan, like the member from Kindersley does.

Mr. Speaker, we got to have understanding. We got to have compassion. We have to have respect for northern Saskatchewan people. That's all that they've asked for and that's all that they practically had to demand in the year of 1997.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure, as I mentioned a couple of days ago, to talk about the tribute to northern leaders that we participated in, in Prince Albert, and there we spoke about the many leaders that have spoken so eloquently on the challenge that northern Saskatchewan people and the communities of the North. At the supper, we recognized many of the people that have passed on that played an incredible part of the leadership role of northern Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the reason why we celebrated that leadership is because for many years the leadership was consistent and they're very, very well-connected to all these northern communities and they're also very disciplined and continuing on with one same message: we want to part of the northern economy; we have contributed a lot to the province; we want to be equal.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I mention names, the names of people like Louis Morin, Rod Bishop, Jonas Favel, Raymond Daigneault, Jonus Clarke, Louis Chicken, Dick Waite, Leon Hanson, Albert Hanson, Ross Cummings, these are the leaders, Mr. Speaker, that have passed on. The people of the North will remember these people.

And last Saturday, as I mentioned, we spoke about the current leadership that's out there now. And we spoke about the Vital Morins, we spoke about the Lawrence Yews, we spoke about the Nap Gardiners and the Allen Adams — the current leadership of northern Saskatchewan. And as the MLA for Athabasca, it was the most . . . the best honour that I ever had and the best tribute I've ever seen for the northern leaders and the leadership in general.

So I'm saying that, Mr. Speaker, as I panned through the leadership and the people of the past and the people of the present, every single leader in there have asked for one thing for northern Saskatchewan — and they've asked for revenue sharing. And this is the reason why we're proposing this motion to this day.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about definition of roles and responsibilities, we have got to believe that the northern leadership, which includes mayors, includes chiefs, want one thing and that is control over their own destiny, their economy, their lives, and their community. And, Mr. Speaker, we have not gotten any of that over the many years that we have existed as northern people.

And when I hear the Minister of Northern Affairs continue pressing us, saying how about the federal Liberal government? How about this? How about that? How about this? Well, Mr. Speaker, does Alberta and Manitoba not have the same federal Liberal government?

In the last 20 or 30 years that northern Saskatchewan has suffered with some of these problems, did we have the same federal Liberal government in power? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not. There's all kinds of governments that have been in power. There has been no government that has delivered the due benefits that northern Saskatchewan people ought to have and deserve.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is time. And I encourage the Minister of Northern Affairs to stop apologizing for what northern Saskatchewan gets and start fighting for what northern Saskatchewan needs.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — These people before us and the current leadership have all said time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they want revenue sharing. And why can't they get it, Mr. Speaker?

And I sit back and I say . . . People tell me, well revenue sharing, what is that, Buckley? What is that, Buckley? Well let me explain to you what I believe revenue sharing is. What revenues do you get from northern Saskatchewan? Well let me go through a bit of the revenues I feel that the current government does get.

And we continue on, Mr. Speaker. In my humble opinion, northern Saskatchewan contributes billions to this economy — billions. Uranium mining industry alone: Cigar Lake, 1.4 billion; McArthur River, 1.5 billion.

And then let's look at Key Lake. Let's look at Cluff Lake. Let's

look at all the mines — McClean Lake. The list goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

So all these mines, the last 20, and for perhaps the next 30, years will contribute to provincial coffers. And we're not talking a 100 million or 200 million, Mr. Speaker, we're talking billions over the next 10 to 12 years.

(1530)

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we haven't talked about the natural gas exploration in the Garson Lake area. We haven't been talking about any of the contributions made to that tremendous forestry industry out there. We haven't been speaking about the personal income tax. If it's not news for the people in this room, there's a lot of people in the northern part of Saskatchewan that pay an incredible amount of tax to this government and various other levels of governments.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not talking tourism, agriculture, forestry, fishing, farming, the list goes on. There's all kinds of opportunity in the North and there's all kinds of resources and revenues that this government currently receive from the northern part of our province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to add to a very clear point as well. A very clear point. There are only 3 per cent — 3 per cent — of the provincial population, approximately 30,000 people, that live in northern Saskatchewan, and yet they occupy half the land mass of this great, beautiful province called Saskatchewan.

Now what is beyond me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that after all these years of getting revenues from northern Saskatchewan and the fact that we have such a small population base in northern Saskatchewan with all that land, and all the opportunity and time that this government had, why is it that we're continuing to have the social, economic, and infrastructure problems that northern Saskatchewan has had to endure for the last 20, 30 years.

You cannot answer that question, Mr. Speaker, because the fact of the matter is nobody ever had a plan. There never was a plan and there never will be a plan. But as I mentioned before, the northern Saskatchewan people have a plan — it's called revenue sharing.

Another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we done a freedom of information Act through the . . . for SaskPower information and we asked for three northern power plants, the hydro plants. And we asked the question: how much hydro . . . or how much electricity do the three northern plants generate for SaskPower?

So we got the information back and I just want to share with you, first of all, in kilowatts, so the message gets through, and then we'll go to . . . the Wellington Hydro Station, 37,900,000 kilowatts; E.B. Campbell, 1,179,700,000 kilowatts; Island Falls Hydro Station, 688 million kilowatts.

So these three northern stations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, three northern stations, they generate 43 per cent of the total hydro requirements that SaskPower has in terms of their needs for power — 43 per cent. And that generates, Mr. Speaker, again, the \$374.53 million from the northern hydro plants. Another

significant contribution.

So, Mr. Speaker, you look at the uranium mining industry — Cigar Lake, McArthur River, Key Lake — you look at the northern dams, you look at the forestry information, you look at the personal income tax, you look at all the taxes, all the royalties. And, Mr. Speaker, I still sit in this House for the last two and a half years and I hear the Minister of Northern Affairs get up and say, for every dollar we spend in northern Saskatchewan, we put a dollar sixty back in.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister and I've said on many occasions, we want that information. And then when we force them to give us the information, they could not. They could not justify statements.

So I ask the Minister of Northern Affairs to stop insulting the intelligence of northern Saskatchewan people and start speaking facts. The North contributes a significant amount of money, a significant amount to the economy of the province, and it's time that this Assembly recognizes that contribution.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the very important point that I want to make is that if we are going to speak up about northern Saskatchewan, it all becomes an issue of voicing the concerns. This is about economic and social justice of the people of northern Saskatchewan.

And what's confusing to a lot of people is, would not a truly socialist government, a government that's supposed to care for the people, that's supposed to help the people, would not a truly socialist government not . . . give the people very little in return for what they've done? Would not a truly socialist government empower the people of the North and help defend what northern Saskatchewan needs? Well I believe that it should. And, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to stand here today on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca and say it's time for this government to deliver.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — And, Mr. Speaker, we have gone through enormous challenge, enormous challenge as an individual, coming here as an MLA, enormous growth, and there are problems galore. But I want to say that from the day I walked into this Assembly to the day I leave, that the northern issues will continue to be heard. Whether the Minister of Northern Affairs or whether the government does not want to hear them, they will be heard.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — And, Mr. Speaker, I watched with great interest on the way the government also divides the North. I've seen memorandums of understanding signed on numerous occasions. MOUs. Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe they start putting those MOUs away and start singing IOUs.

And I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that I've got a number of points I want to make. And I want to also point out these news releases we have over a period of time. And it's one press release that says "Goulet fails the North again on revenue-sharing issues." And we've talked about a number of

problems we've had in the North. And that was one press release that we had.

Number two, "Lack of access to health care facilities putting Northerners at risk." That was the second press release we talked about the northern issues.

And even so far, Mr. Speaker, that we've supported the mining industry, where July 31 we issued a press release. "Belanger urges speedy approval of northern mining developments." On the headline it says, "Athabasca MLA also calls on government to renew investment in people and communities of the North."

And then we have another news release, October 29, "Aboriginal study prompts need for immediate dialogue." That wasn't heard.

And then we have another one on the McArthur River mine, "Government needs to use McArthur River mine as a springboard to future northern development." That's dated May 5.

And then we have another press release, May 16, 1997, "NDP government not making people a priority in the North."

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, how many more press releases do we have to make and how many more statements does the northern people have to make till this government understands the bottom line is, you are not hearing northern Saskatchewan when they say we want revenue sharing as a solution to some of our problems.

And I also want to add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that fact that I had the opportunity to read an article in the *Star-Phoenix*. And in that article it indicated that, "revenue sharing no panacea for northern problems." And the reason why they said it wasn't the panacea for northern problems, or the answer to northern problems, it was because it was a finite resource.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the northern Saskatchewan people don't need 50 years to settle some of their social and economic problems. They need 5 years or 10 years. And that's the key message we're trying to get through for the last 50 years, is give us that opportunity, that 5 or 10 years that we need, to begin to develop our own future.

And I also want to share, Mr. Speaker, a few of the articles just for the information of the Assembly on some of the problems that we've had. Housing, for example, and I quote Cecile Caisse that says, quote, "There's a real big need. There's not enough housing for everybody." That's the Pinehouse mayor, Cecile Caisse.

And then we also go talk about needs in Buffalo Narrows, Green Lake, Pinehouse, Duval, the far northern communities. We mustn't forget those communities. And the most critical community of all, La Loche. And fortunately, Mr. Speaker, I quote from the same article. And this is . . . I'll read it out:

"Putting more houses in the northern community has to be . . . is a continuing priority for the province," Styles says.

And I believe that this is Deputy Minister Ron Styles with the

... associate deputy minister of the Municipal Government, in charge of housing. And the quote is: "The need is quite high; in almost all the communities the housing authorities have large waiting-lists," Styles said, quote. In La Loche it's over 100 people.

So an associate deputy minister of Municipal Government in charge of housing, admits housing needs are quite high. These housing needs have been high for the last 5 or 10 years. But I have a news flash; it's not the waiting-list in La Loche for 100 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the list is 200 people.

It's 200 people that need homes for their families; that need jobs for the young people. That's the one community. And I say that that community is the one community that has been for many years struggling with a sense of powerlessness in the things that they want to change but have no control, no resource, and no support to make that change.

So when their mayor and their chief get up and say we want revenue sharing, we want a piece of that pie that the government benefits from, the people believe their local people. All of a sudden they begin to see that revenue sharing may be the fantasia, it may be the solution that we need over the next 10 years to make things happen.

Now I submit to everybody in this Assembly today, from the uranium mining industry, from the northern hydro stations, from the forestry, from the tourism, gas tax, personal tax, corporate tax — all those taxes — do you believe that 3 per cent of the provincial population consume all those dollars? No, we don't.

And further, if we can look at the situation that we've had with a number of areas of concern, which includes housing, as I mentioned, highways, economic challenge for the communities in terms of funding some of their economic agencies, infrastructure needs such as a facility for recreation in Pinehouse, decent strategies for our young people so they're able to go to work, hospitals. La Loche is, after how many years, getting word they're going to get a hospital in a couple of years.

Mr. Speaker, how many more years must the northern people wait? How many more years must the northern people be ignored? And how many more years must our calls for revenue sharing be denied?

Again, Mr. Speaker, going on. We talk about the native veterans. And I take an article here from the indigenous people's article, in which Frank Tomkins of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan talks about: "Native veterans denied helping hand from Saskatchewan." And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot of native veterans in the North that could have benefited from activities that Mr. Tomkins certainly wanted to propose here on behalf of the Metis veterans.

And I point out, quote:

I recently tried to have provincial departments of intergovernmental and aboriginal affairs and Northern Affairs provide our Metis veterans with financial assistance and a gift of useful telecommunication devices.

Both of these things are necessary because we need all the resources we can in order to capture the attention of government. Unfortunately the two ministers responsible for those two departments that I can't name here — two ministers known for their support of aboriginal people — failed to have their departments provide our associations with the funds necessary for a general meeting of Metis veterans in Prince Albert on September 2.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we look at that small request from Metis veterans and you point out another article from the *Star-Phoenix* in which we talk about the recent situation here in reference to the two rich uranium deposits in northern Saskatchewan, Cigar Lake and Midwest mines. And I quote from the second page, "Estimated revenues for the province from licensing and royalties from Cigar Lake are expected to reach \$1.4 billion."

So again we'll continue on, Mr. Speaker, of some of the challenges that we have — some of the discussion we've talked about. And when we say royalties, what we're saying is we don't want the whole pie coming to us. All we want you to do is to help us with our hospitals; to help us with our roads; to help us with housing; to help us with training for our young people so we can have a chance as well.

(1545)

So we can share in the revenues that northern Saskatchewan has for many years been pumping into the southern economy and the thousands of jobs created in communities like Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Regina — the list goes on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to one day hear this minister and this government say that northern Saskatchewan contributes to this economy a significant amount of money. I want to hear that from them one of these days as opposed to excuses and their total rejection of revenue sharing.

I tell people in northern Saskatchewan that governments react to success. They do not initiate success. But they have told us, the northern people, for we have been successful for many years despite the fact that we've had all these challenges; we still have our eye on the ball. We still have ... the fact that the matter is, we still have the vision needed for northern Saskatchewan, and it's time that you start financing that vision appropriately by giving us our fair share.

People in northern Saskatchewan talked about the definition of roles and responsibilities. We know that there's discussion going on separately with FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). We know that there may be discussions separately with the Metis Nation. There may be discussions separately with the northern municipal councils.

Now in that separation, we're going to urge all those organizations is that they have a northern focus. If they're talking about northern revenue-sharing, why have separate discussions with all these groups when the whole intent is to not support the North? That's the intent, not to support the North. That's the intent, not to support the North.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I tell you again, when you have all this

dollars — and I say it 10 times — you have all these dollars coming in from the North, why can't you put back a piece of that pie for their future? Why can't this government deliver revenue sharing to the North? What's the excuse? What's the reason?

And I don't ever want to hear somebody say that for every dollar we take out of the North you put a \$1.60 back in, because we know that is not true — that's not true. They could not substantiate their figures. These new figures . . . And the fact of the matter, you look at what the provincial government gets from the federal government in northern Saskatchewan, we done an inquiry a couple of years ago, and we found out that all the dollars that Indian Affairs put in and the federal government — some of these northern projects — includes money into the Cumberland House bridge, money into some of the road construction into Grandmother's Bay by the Indian Affairs department, and all the dollars that they put in, plus the federal government . . . If they want us to apologize for them, the federal government also gives this province \$1.3 billion in social services and education and health care funding, block funding.

So in essence, some of the social services, education, and health care needs of the North are also being, in a roundabout way, being met by the federal transfer to this province.

So we can't even say that some of the uranium mines are here for your support towards the social services system or towards your health care system, because this province gets money from the federal government for those purposes as well. Very important to clear that.

And recognizing some of the strategies, Mr. Speaker, we had time and time again handed in petitions here about roads, housing, health care. We've handed petitions about the . . . and are planning on handing on more petitions about those same issues.

But let's look for a minute at Stony Rapids — no water and sewer — Stony Rapids. I spoke today about the TB rates in northern Saskatchewan and that they're 100 per 100,000 in the North. And those figures we got from an article. But the fact of the matter is, the TB cases in the North are prevalent because of inaction on a number of fronts in a number of problems; an inaction in terms of housing needs, in terms of basic water and sewer services like I mentioned in Stony Rapids. And that, Mr. Speaker, totally lies squarely on provincial government responsibility.

I think it would be very important as well that I add, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a number of letters that we forward to the minister last session. We asked this young man to go around and talk to 250-some elderly people that live in their own homes. We asked them what they paid for water, power, electricity, and so on and so forth. And they told us, for many years we can't afford to fix up our own home; we're older people. So upon which I sent those 250 questionnaires from five or six communities to the minister. I said, could you use some of those dollars that you would speak so highly about to help these 257 people within my constituency on housing problems? And I got a number of letters back, Mr. Deputy Speaker, saying that there was nothing done. We're still waiting.

So you don't take my word for it. You take the press's word for it. You take the northern people's word for it. You take some of the panel's words for it. You take some of the stats from your Finance department — take their word for it and see who is exactly hitting the nail on the head in this Assembly when it comes to revenue sharing. I propose to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's the MLA from Athabasca hitting the nail on the head when it comes to revenue sharing.

The other, in fact, that we talk about, Mr. Speaker, is when we talk about the mining sector. I want to say that I support the mining sector. I support the forestry sector. I support every sector in northern Saskatchewan, as many northern people do. They have done a tremendous amount of work. The northern mining sector have created a thousand jobs, of which I hear the minister expound on from time to time. So the mining sector should be given credit for the work that they have done.

But the big problem that we have in that whole sense is, as long as we continue to simply focus our economic strategies and our economic energies on development of the uranium mining industry and the diamond mining industry and the gold mining industry, which is a finite resource, we are asking for problems 20 to 30 years from now.

The people of northern Saskatchewan want to use revenue sharing for social development, infrastructure development, and economic development. And that economic vision, Mr. Speaker, they are saying, we now want to expand the dollars to develop an economy in the North, an economy that we're familiar with and an economy that where we can have 100 per cent of our people participate in that economy as opposed to the 52 per cent that are currently employed in the mining sector.

Mr. Speaker, let's take for example the fishing industry. Many years ago the fishing industry was a very successful industry. Many people survived on fishing. And I think of people in northern Saskatchewan over the many years that have fished their entire lives, and now some of their students and some of their kids are going to university. Now the fishing industry is that . . . could be potentially a billion dollar industry if you put resources and efforts into that industry.

And let's take for example eco-tourism — another example. There's a lot of land out there — 3 per cent of the provincial people, you should be able to take 3 per cent, connect it with half the land mass to equal great opportunity in eco-tourism.

But is it happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It is not. Many of these communities continue suffering through 70, 80, 90 per cent of the unemployment rates.

Now if you don't take my word for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, phone some of the mayors, phone some of the chiefs, phone some of the people with housing problems, phone some of the people from Stony Rapids. Call these guys. Our office can provide you with all those numbers. Call them and talk to them.

And the key thing here is that we have been saying this thing for time and time and time and time again. And you look at the situation with some of the northern communities. They have financial challenges time and time and time again. Because these northern mayors, these northern leaders of these northern

communities, they have not got the resources in which they could work with and which they could make a difference to their local people. Why? Because they get meagre amounts of money handed to them to operate their entire community with.

And I say today that we should pay tribute, as we did Saturday, to the northern leaders that continually refuse to let go of that revenue-sharing argument. And they continually refuse to say yes, we'll base all our economic aspirations on the mining sector. They absolutely refuse to continue to suffer through the indignation of poor roads, poor housing, and high TB rates, the lack of infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this does not come down to politics. This comes down, downright to humanity. And the bottom line is unless and until we begin to see the benefits and the discussion of revenue sharing being taken very seriously and within time frames that are spelled out and a definition of roles and responsibilities of an organization like the Metis Nation, like the FSIN and the communities and the mayors and the chiefs, then and only then can people begin to even take . . . believe they have an opportunity to change things. That's the first step, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I think the key thing that we've been pointing on is that the northern people do have the spirit. They do have the vision. They do have the imagination to improve their surroundings. And when they talk about social development, infrastructure development, community development, or economic development, they know what they're talking about. They know exactly what they're talking about.

So this is the reason why we took it a step further, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We developed a model, and I hold this model in front of you as an idea that we worked on overnight. And this model is probably the first plan that this Assembly has ever heard when it comes to northern Saskatchewan — the first plan — and this is called the northern community development model.

And let me expound on this a bit. The issue that I spoke about and I'm speaking about today is the need for economic, social, and infrastructure stimulation in northern Saskatchewan. And I highlight we can set an example for the rest of Canada with Saskatchewan being leaders when it comes to northern and aboriginal service. And I quote here when I'm done this thing, the key to a new development plan for northern Saskatchewan, I'm not talking about investing more money — I'm talking about reallocating existing dollars which includes revenue sharing.

We have to look at a number of things at the community at the local level that we talk about. The current revenue sources for northern communities, for the government's sake, there are three areas the local councils access. They get dollars from the revenue-sharing pool, they get dollars from local taxes, and they also get complimentary dollars for northern capital works programs. That's it — those three sources of incomes plus services.

Now what these communities try to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they try to do a wide range of things, responsibilities that are traditionally with the provincial government but they know they'll be waiting for a long time before these things get done.

So in the end what they do is they use all these revenues — these minor revenues — they get local councils in there. They have to look after staff. They have to look after maintenance. They have to look after water and sewer. They have to look after their garbage collection. They have to look after their general costs. And after all those costs are met, many of these communities have no dollars in which they can operate with.

So once again we come hand in our pocket or hat out to Regina — as the member from Kindersley say we always do — and we say, can we have more dollars for our infrastructure needs? Can we have direct financing of our local economic development corporations so they can create training and jobs for us? Can we have direct financing for our social development agencies so they can help people that may need help in the social development aspect? And this is the problem that's so apparent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the ignorance and the problem that many people over the years have afforded to northern Saskatchewan.

They have not listened. They have not accorded us the decent time of day for us to hear what we have to say.

Another example we talk about and this is Garson Lake. Their mayor out there, who's been working quite hard on trying to convince the government to build a road to his community, now this guy, he's got a small community. There's probably about maybe 10, 15 voters in there and he has travelled many miles to talk about the road to Garson Lake.

And is he given a huge amount of money in which he can lobby with? Is he given a free airplane? Is he given a brand-new department which he can work with?

The answer of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is no. He has not been given anything except the meagre amount of municipal funding that that small community of Garson Lake has been given by this current government.

Northern communities cannot continue to afford to wait. We talk about economic development, we talk about social development, we talk about infrastructure development, and we have seen hide nor hair of any evidence that would suggest that this government's finally waking up to hear what the northern Saskatchewan people have said.

And I'm going to repeat myself time and time again here. So they're able to hear finally what needs to be said in this Assembly. And we talk about the taxes that the North pays.

(1600)

And I quote here again,

In 1988, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council of northern Saskatchewan got help from the federal government to buy 40 per cent share in a struggling pulp mill, NorSask Forest Products, and update the mill's equipment. Help from the provincial government produced a tree farm licence.

A licence came from them.

Then the LPC then launched a new business to do

reforestation, logging, and road construction. MLPC businesses have since paid \$11 million in taxes and saved \$10 million in social assistance costs by employing 240 people who would have otherwise been jobless.

And that statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, comes from the report, *People to People, Nation to Nation*, a highlight from the report of the royal commission of aboriginal people, 1996, page 38. Now that's proof in the pudding, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the fact that if you give the aboriginal people an opportunity to participate then they will deliver. And there's benefits totalling \$21 million from one joint venture from one Indian band.

So I submit to you, imagine for a moment that we took it upon ourselves to afford that same opportunity to the northern Metis communities, to the northern band councils, and to the northern people in general.

What if you give them the opportunity to produce their own wealth? How about if you give them the opportunity to produce their own economy by affording them the means and royalties from northern Saskatchewan to design their own future? I submit to you that many northern leaders and many northern people have more vision for northern Saskatchewan in their little finger than the entire room here has collectively.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Belanger:** — Now what we propose here in terms of a northern development Act, Mr. Speaker, is that fact that we believe that northern development Act should be established. And that the northern development fund be direct financing of local councils in the area of local economic development authorities, social development agencies, and infrastructure needs.

If you give the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, the community of Buffalo Narrows an opportunity to develop, they will deliver. And I believe that's what this government is afraid of — is the fact that the northern people will finally stand up and say, that's it, no more, we've waited long enough, we're going to do it our way with our resources.

And that's why today we propose this motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We've talked about this. We've talked about this motion time and time again. And in the future, the people of the North will be the judge, will be the judge of what this government does — not our caucus, not me as the MLA. We will be watching what it does from here on in.

And I talked to a number of other northern leaders, some of the people that work with the current government and northern aboriginal people. Some of the people that work for the mining companies and the Indian bands and all these northern people that work for other people in southern Saskatchewan, I submit to all these people — these aboriginal people that are using their talents, their dedication, their drive, and their intelligence for other purposes — is come back to northern Saskatchewan and help us develop a bright, brand-new future for northern Saskatchewan. Not for me, but for our children and the children after that.

And that's the bottom line, is many times northern aboriginal people commit to processes that take them away from the North. And in the end, who suffers? The northern people. So whatever capacity that these people currently hold within government and within industry and anywhere out of northern Saskatchewan, use your time, your resources, and your intelligence to help northern Saskatchewan people develop that better future.

Now in closing, Mr. Speaker, if I have to go through the . . . if I have to go through where the sources are . . . the revenues could come from, again, northern resource extraction — uranium, forestry, tourism, hydro. There's also perhaps federal initiatives: sale or lease of Crown land in northern Saskatchewan; reallocation of provincial programs to where they should be allocated to northern Saskatchewan, if it's in economic development, tourism, or agriculture; establish a brand-new northern development fund. In terms of all these development dollars in the North, they're there, Mr. Speaker. There's no question about it in my mind, they're certainly there.

I guess the key thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk in closing, as I mention, is the northern people also want accountability. They say any new development strategy, any community development strategy must highlight the need for accountability and decent principles.

We say that large extent, operating traditional government agencies in northern Saskatchewan on behalf of communities without accountability, will not be acceptable. That's the message that we are presenting today on behalf of the northern people, and that this is not a matter of trust, it's a matter of business. They understand that better. Accountability and the delivery of any services on our behalf will be first and foremost on the minds of all people in northern Saskatchewan.

So eventually the bottom line or lesson this current government is a word that they've never heard before — empowerment. The overall mandate about revenue sharing, the proposed northern development Act is to cultivate local industries that will maximize profits, decision-making, and employment to the local people. It will let the northern people priority-setting goals include their basic needs of housing, health care, jobs, training, and decent roads.

And we, as a northern representative . . . myself, as a northern representative, will continue to expound on that regardless of what the situation is. We will continue to expound on that.

And to add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my closing remarks, is that I will share with the minister what we have, a report, and the source is *The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty*, 1989, Ottawa. And page 40 of the *Barriers to Social Health*, we have a figure 4.4. And the title is: percentage of the population for Canada, 1986.

And it goes coast to coast, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this map. It talks about different levels of poverty, with the light being not so bad in terms of the overall poverty, with grey being fairly decent, and with black being the most depressed social and poverty-stricken area in the whole country. And as I pan from coast to coast, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that northern Saskatchewan, the whole portion of northern Saskatchewan, is



the biggest and the blackest mark in this country.

And I want to get a copy of this for the minister, to explain this to the people in Pinehouse who may need some decent housing, to the people in Stony Rapids who want water and sewer, to the people of La Loche that want housing. Why is it that we continue to be in the deep, dark, black hole of depression? It's because we have been denied revenue sharing; we have been denied the opportunity to develop our own future. And we've been denied, largely, respect. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can no longer continue.

I say to you that today we are going to call for a standing vote and I wish to see how the members opposite vote. And we will be using the information to our benefit, most certainly, and we will be letting people know exactly what a socially compassionate party is supposed to do.

And I also want to point out this last bit of information on the housing situation. There's a number of working people in northern Saskatchewan that cannot afford to continue living in government housing and they've asked that the current government . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order. Pursuant to special order, the time for debate on this motion has elapsed and I will ask the member to put his motion directly.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Moved by myself, and seconded by the member from North Battleford, I move the following motion:

That this Assembly call upon the provincial government to establish a comprehensive community development program to improve the life of people in northern Saskatchewan; particularly that measures be taken to rebuild the dilapidated hospitals in northern communities, to build basic infrastructures such as adequate housing, roads, water and sewer installations, recreational facilities; that initiatives be undertaken to provide training and employment opportunities for people in northern Saskatchewan; and further, that measures be undertaken to provide true empowerment for people in northern Saskatchewan, beginning with a genuine policy of fair and reasonable revenue sharing from provincially controlled resources such as forestry and mines.

I so move.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Why is the member on his feet . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . According to special order, this is your timed debates and the time has elapsed for debate on the motion; therefore it's out of order.

The division bells rang from 4:12 p.m. until 4:16 p.m.

Motion negated on the following recorded division.

#### Yeas — 8

Osika

Hillson

McPherson

Aldridge  
Julé

Belanger  
Goohsen

McLane

#### Nays — 27

Van Mulligen  
Whitmore  
Kowalsky  
Koenker  
Scott  
Stanger  
Kasperski  
Thomson  
Boyd

Tchorzewski  
Goulet  
Calvert  
Renaud  
Nilson  
Sonntag  
Jess  
Bjornerud  
Draude

Johnson  
Lautermilch  
Pringle  
Lorje  
Serby  
Wall  
Murrell  
Toth  
Heppner

#### SPECIAL ORDER

#### MOTION — INDEPENDENT MEMBER

##### Business Investment Promotion

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased today to be able to stand and address the many problems with over-regulations, red tape, and excessive taxations — policies of the NDP that have long been a thorn in the side of all Saskatchewan residents. But particularly today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to address those frustrations on behalf of the entrepreneurial spirits wishing to start their own business and engage in diversification and value added activity directly into the bison industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been a number of bison producers, particularly the more than 100 producers in the north-central area of the province, that have come to me, making me aware of the many problems and regulations standing in their way.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. Now I cannot hear the speaker and I'm sure that everyone would want to get in on a debate, but you'll have to wait till she's done. So would you please let her have her say first.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was referring to the numbers of bison producers within the province, particularly in the north-central part of the province, who have contacted me with their frustrations regarding their ability to make a profit, and not only that, but to enable their business to work in an efficient and effective manner. And they're having difficulty doing this because of the excessive regulations in the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we all know, many farmers have diversified in many ways. And many others wish to continue to diversify their agricultural operations. However, the bison producers, as well as many others, are finding that the costs associated with value added production is greater in Saskatchewan than it is in our neighbouring provinces, and they act as a major deterrent to growth in this, our home province.

The fact that it costs an average family of four \$5,000 more to live in Saskatchewan than a family of four in Alberta is a telling tale and highlights the high cost of living in this province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one can imagine that the costs associated with value added farm production such as bison ranching adds a great deal of extra financial burden to the producers. Because needed is a larger land base, and more utilities and more taxes are paid. And it seems that these costs are enough, without the inconvenience and high costs of having yet to transport bison to be slaughtered, processed and marketed, to places outside of the province, such as to New Rockford in North Dakota, to Edmonton and to Fort Macleod in Alberta.

However, this is the only auction that larger producers have because excessive regulations in this province, red tape and excessive taxation, have deterred companies from setting up slaughtering and processing plants in Saskatchewan. Regulations connected to workmen's compensation and occupational health and safety, while they are generally good, are very much more strict and costly to implement here.

In addition, the unfair inclusion of bison into the classification of wildlife rather than the classification of being domestic animals means that bison fall under the very strict and cumbersome regulations of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) that affect wild animal transport, killing, processing, disease control, storage, handling, and inspection.

Now if classified as domestic animals, bison would be handled as cattle under the Department of Agriculture, with much less red tape, easier movement and handling, and handling of packing plants. If this reclassification would take place provincially, then it should follow through that a reclassification at the federal level under the Health of Animals Act would also take place.

While dealing with animals right now classified as wild compared to domestic, the federal Health of Animals Act contains much more red tape again and has higher associated costs regarding rules of quarantine, transport to other countries, and disease control. And so this provincial reclassification would simplify things and benefit the bison producers greatly in their efforts at this value added industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also need inter-provincial standardization of these Acts and regulations. The Labour Standards Act and The Trade Union Act also fall into this category. And while they can be argued to be beneficial, the fact is that they are not standardized with Manitoba and Alberta, and the fact is that our regulations under this NDP government are more costly to business. Once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these facts make our province uncompetitive.

Mr. Speaker, presently a new-generation cooperative from New Rockford in North Dakota is showing some interest in setting up slaughtering and processing plants somewhere in the West and they are looking at Saskatoon. However those in the bison industry question whether or not they will be seriously considered, or Saskatoon will be considered seriously for this plant's set-up, because they realize that once the cooperative looks at the many deterrents to investors here in this province under the present NDP administration, they may turn away from the province.

And these bison producers have reason to be doubtful again, as not long ago, the Koreans were thinking of setting up a drying plant for elk horns in Saskatchewan. However once they did their research, they determined there were too many regulations and taxes. Saskatchewan did not produce a climate for growth or a fair and profitable environment for investors. And so they turned their sights to other provinces as an option.

Mr. Speaker, last month we heard about the announcement that Maple Leaf packers was taking their business to Brandon, Manitoba. Why did Saskatchewan miss out on this opportunity? Well for the same reason — too many regulations, high taxation, too much red tape. And Maple Leaf furthermore did not want to compete with the existing government-backed packers in the province.

And what did Saskatchewan lose? Well it lost 1,200 jobs. It lost millions of dollars in investments, and more than likely the hog industry in Saskatchewan will grow only in areas closest to the Manitoba border. Mr. Speaker, it is time to fix what needs to be fixed in this province in order to promote growth, to foster wealth and prosperity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, rather, the NDP must commit itself to establishing a level playing-field for all agriculture producers and all kinds of businesses, including any value added business. In addition, political patronage and every form of government interference in business must come to an end. Government funding to preferred businesses through SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) and the likes, favouring a few to the detriment of the many, are contrary to fair-minded practices and policies that the people of this province are asking for.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking this government today to recognize the need for change and to make change to its excessive and prohibitive taxations and regulations, and to stop patronizing their friends. All businesses deserve to flourish in a fair and equitable manner in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore put forward the following motion, seconded by the member from Athabasca:

That the Assembly urge the provincial government to create an environment conducive to growth that enables private investment in the agriculture value-added industry to benefit through cost savings and convenience in their transactions, and that the provincial government facilitate this environment through the lifting of excessive regulations, taxation, and interference in business which presently deters such investment.

I so present.

**Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address the member's concerns today in the motion that she has brought forward.

I found it . . . I must admit I was a little taken back. I expected the discussion being presented by the member to be slightly broader than what was in fact presented. I am not completely up to speed in terms of what is happening with the bison and buffalo industry, and in fact I felt a little bit buffaloed by the

entire speech the member gave today.

(1630)

But I do want to say a little bit on the general approach this government has . . . what the government has been doing to improve the business environment in this province. And I think it's significant. I think in fact there have been very many positive things that in fact the member herself I'm sure would recognize.

This government, as we know, was faced with some very difficult choices in 1991 when it was elected. It has gone through a very remarkable turnaround. I think we've seen the very, very positive business environment come out of it as a result. There is no greater proof of that than the fact that today we are able to say that there are 22,000 new jobs created over the same time a year ago. That's not simply something government does. Government didn't create these 22,000 jobs, but it set an environment, it set forward a climate that allowed business to do so. And I think that that's very important and worthwhile noting.

That environment contains a bunch of different pieces. It contains a tax piece that saw the sales tax decline from 9 to 7 per cent. It has seen changes in terms of targeted tax relief for businesses to allow them to grow. It has seen changes in terms of the way we have dealt with labour-force training, which I know is important to the member for Humboldt. These are the sort of changes we need to continue to work on as a government.

It is our economic development strategy, our business climate strategy; our strategy for growth is larger than simply buffalo. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it also will provide room for people who want to raise game farm animals to see growth as well. I know that there's a lot of debate out there in the community today about how we should approach that, whether it's elk farming, whether it is buffalo, whether we simply proceed on with cattle. But we understand there has got to be an opportunity for people to find those sort of new niche markets, to be able to develop and to grow.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded that there are in fact many things and many positives in all parts of the province. Perhaps no more . . . more so specifically than with value added for agriculture. And we've seen some great, great things. The agri-food equity fund, I think is a very positive initiative this government has introduced to help the agricultural sector grow.

I think we have been able to see a lot of growth in the area of farm manufacturing, farm implement manufacturing, particularly in the area . . . I see the member for Kelvington talking from her seat. I'm sure she'll want to jump in this debate as well because she has seen the growth in her community. In her local community she has seen the growth from the sort of climate and the sort of investment climate that we've been able to set on this side of the House through this government's policies.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is one of those issues where we should be able to . . . to sit back and say, are there changes that need to be made? Certainly. Are there minor pieces we need to look at?

Certainly. Is this government headed in the right direction? Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to prolong the debate today and I don't think there is much need. I appreciate the opportunity from the member for Humboldt to be able to speak today. I would note that it was certainly a courtesy on her part and I want to recognize that, because other members, I think, shamefully and unfortunately have monopolized the time in this Assembly and have not allowed opposition voices to their motions to be heard.

I am certainly reminded that the Liberals have not given us a single opportunity in these days to put forward the government's position. Lots of rhetoric, lots of strong words, but no opportunity for government members to speak. And in that regard, I want to say that I certainly appreciate that from the member today the opportunity for us to put forward our case. I think that that shows a certain honour that other members in this House have certainly been lacking and have not shown.

Let me move . . . but let me move an amendment to this. I know that the member will likely support me on this. I would move, seconded by the member for Lloydminster:

That the motion be amended by adding the words "to continue" after the words "That the Assembly urge the provincial government", and further, by deleting all the words after the words "facilitate this environment through", and substituting with the words "continuing to examine regulations and taxation levels".

Moved by myself, seconded by the member for Lloydminster.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I find the amendment in order, and debate will continue on the amendment and the motion.

**Ms. Stanger:** — Since I seconded the amendment, Mr. Speaker, I'll only take a minute so the member's seconder can have a few words also. I just want to say that I have been involved with many game farmers in my area and we have been working very hard to decrease some of the regulations. We have been working cautiously. The government has set up the technical advisory committee which includes members from all types of game farming across the province.

Progress has been slow but steady. We believe in the game farming industry in our government. People like the Minister of Agriculture have been trying to move to get game farming under the purview of Agriculture. There are many aspects that you have to negotiate because a lot of the regulations were under the Department of Natural Resources, SERM, and we are moving in this area.

I thank the member for bringing this up because I think that this is an area where there's going to be great growth. It's a great value added area. And I think that working together we're going to . . . in fact right now, we are exceeding the industry in Alberta and Manitoba because we have worked with our game farmers and because we are decreasing some of the unnecessary

regulations.

And I think if the member would like some information, I certainly could get her some in this area and certainly would be glad to work with her because I have many game farmers in my area.

So I'll just sit down and let the other members speak, but I just wanted the member to know that this is an area that I'm really interested in.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been really interesting to listen to the debate going back and forth for a change as we're sort of used to in normal sittings. And I want to say that it makes some sense what the government members have said, and it makes some sense that they would want to put in an amendment that would give them the opportunity to be able to support a cause like this.

I think it is apparent in their remarks that they intend to try to move in this direction and I think that the bison producers and all people involved in wild game farming — that should not be called wild game farming anymore, but should be called domestic farming like anything else — I think those points are well made.

It'll take a little time. I'm going to encourage the member from Humboldt to support the amendment. I'm going to, more pointedly, ask that all of the members support both the amendment and the amended motion so that we can get on with the business of helping our people to expand and diversify in this province and get out and make some money doing their jobs and provide the jobs for other people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

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