

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan. 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 the films be given away to schools, sold, or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

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

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, come from communities of Saskatoon, Edam, Turtleford, Mossbank, and Assiniboia. I so present.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition 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 Montmartre and Kendal areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too wish to present a petition to the Assembly:

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 the films will be given away to schools, sold, or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the Regina area.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present on behalf of Saskatchewan residents. The prayer reads:

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 Saskatchewan

film library, ensuring that under no circumstances will any more films be destroyed; rather that the films be given away to schools, sold, or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

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

The communities involved in the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Morse, Ernfold, Chaplin, Central Butte, and Herbert.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring a 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 this petition are all from the constituency of Melfort.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wherefore . . . and I have a number of petitions and I'll read the prayer:

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 Saskatchewan film library, ensuring that under no circumstances will any more films be destroyed; rather that the films will be given away to schools, sold, or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

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

And these come from Allan, Saskatoon, and Watrous.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of people concerned about the Saskatchewan film library. The prayer reads:

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 the films be given away to schools, sold, or provided on a fee-for-service basis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Porcupine and Weekes.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition today.

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Montmartre and Kendal.

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have petitions as well this morning dealing with the very important issue of the Saskatchewan film library and people's concerns with respect to that. These petitions come from the Prince Albert area. All of them would appear to have come from the Prince Albert area, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition. A prayer for relief reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, your petitioners come from the community of Melfort.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also present a petition on behalf of people in Saskatchewan who are concerned about life, property, and long-term survival of big game. 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 people that have signed this petition are from Estevan and Hitchcock. I so present.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I know it is early. I too have a petition, Mr. Speaker, this morning to present on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, reading:

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, believe it or not, this petition is signed by the good folks from Biggar.

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition that I'd like to present. These are people that are concerned that the Canadian Home Shopping Network is being pre-empted by the legislative channel during a December sitting of the Legislative Assembly, although December is a very busy shopping month. And they say that enough is enough, and they go on, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The hon. member will now proceed to put the petition, as he knows this.

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** —

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cease sitting, enjoy Christmas with your families, and vacate the airwaves in favour of more topical entertainment like the Home Shopping Network.

And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Petitions respecting Saskatchewan film library, the ending the practice of night hunting, and the allocation of funding toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, this morning to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, four distinguished gentlemen who are in the gallery behind the government benches. Mr. Speaker, we have with us William Martindale. Bill of course is from Gull Lake, Saskatchewan. Bill is a farmer, insurance salesman, has worked with Crop Insurance, and has had a lot of experience in the oil patch, with things that are related to that.

We also have with him, Mr. Bill Kruczko, who is the chairman of the Cypress Surface Rights Association. Bill of course is a farmer, rancher, businessman, cattle dealer, all kinds of things that he works at; has had a lot of experience with things in the oil patch and related problems and of course has represented a lot of people.

We also have Wally Hamm, a soil scientist from Saskatoon. Wally Hamm of course has his master's degree in soil scientist and one of the few people who is depended on in this province to give expert testimony in courts that concern problems in the oil and gas industry.

With him is his son, Byron, who is also from Saskatoon, and he of course has been working with the Darwall Consultants group and does a lot of work with the natural foods industry in an attempt to provide people with foods that they can take if they have allergies and that sort of thing, because they have no sprays and no herbicides on them.

It is with great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, that I ask this Assembly to join with me to welcome this distinguished group of people today.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the House, two gentlemen seated in your gallery. The first person is Mr. Yogi Huyghebaert, the first declared candidate for the leadership of the Saskatchewan Party, and his campaign manager, Mr. Tom Durbin. I'd like all members to welcome them to the House.

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

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you today, and to all members of the Assembly, a former member sitting behind the bar, a good friend and former colleague representative of the Thunder Creek constituency. I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming Rick Swenson back into the House.

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

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Health Care Funding

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week I wrote the Premier, both federal and provincial Health ministers, and the residents of the Gravelbourg district. I indicated in those letters that I oppose the 20 per cent bed reduction to the long-term care home in Gravelbourg.

Funding pressures placed on the South Country Health District by this government will force area seniors to leave to get needed health services. While I've yet to receive a response from this government, in the last four days close to a 100 of the 600 families that I wrote answered loudly and clearly.

All of these responses are addressed to the Premier, and I would like to send these over to him after, Mr. Speaker. But before I do I'd like to quote from one resident. And this individual says to the Premier and his colleagues, I quote:

His colleagues should get down from their ivory towers and look after the health of we the people who pay your wages. Get down to the basics of Tommy Douglas, who knew how to take care for the people of Saskatchewan. Forget about investing millions in rather questionable ventures. Your government has lost millions in an American cable company. These funds could have been better used for the health of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Premier to carefully read each of these and take responsibility. These people hold you accountable, so be accountable. Do the honourable thing and ensure health care is driven by human need not by financial statements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Nelson Lumber Company

**Ms. Stanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker — some more good news. On October 28th, 26 employees of Nelson Lumber Company travelled from Lloydminster to Saskatoon to attend the chamber of commerce ABEX (Awards for Business Excellence) awards ceremony. In that ceremony, Mr. Ray

Nelson — the founder, owner, and CEO (chief executive officer) of Nelson Lumber — accepted an award as Nelson Lumber was inducted into the Saskatchewan Business Hall of Fame by our province's chamber of commerce. This is a well-deserved award, Mr. Speaker. Nelson Lumber has been in business in Lloydminster for 50 years. Raymond and his brother Austin started the business with three employees — now 400 employees — selling the basic building materials of our economy. Nelson Lumber has built itself into a business with local, provincial, national, and international expertise, all the while remaining under the control of the family.

This business, with employees on both sides of the border, is selling house packages to Japan and is currently expanding into several countries in Europe. And, Mr. Speaker, while it is expanding abroad, Nelson Lumber remains an active player in our community. It has created the Nelson Lumber Charitable Foundation, which contributes to the well-being of the Lloydminster community, also on both sides of the border.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows about the Bi-Provincial upgrader. I'm happy to give credit to another very successful bi-provincial business. Thank you.

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

### Satellite Dialysis Unit

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the members opposite, and especially the Minister of Health who just happens to be the member from Yorkton, of the oversight he made when expanding renal dialysis in Saskatchewan. I would like to make clear, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased that a satellite renal dialysis unit was placed in Tisdale Hospital. But, Mr. Speaker, I share the confusion and the frustration of the people from Yorkton, Kamsack, Churchbridge, Canora, Preeceville, and surrounding areas, who drive into Regina two and three times a week because a satellite unit was not established in Yorkton, where perfectly good equipment is available.

Mr. Speaker, the East Central Health District has access to everything it needs to provide kidney dialysis right in Yorkton, except funding for staff to run the machines. A number of patients from the Yorkton area that travelled to Regina every week is more than enough to provide for full-time positions in Regina. Instead these people should be able to receive dialysis in their own areas rather than driving three and four hours several times a week to Regina year round.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a perfect example of a two-tier health system this government is already operating — a health system which is the best system in the world, unless of course you are sick and actually need it.

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

### Importance of Aboriginal Role in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Hillson:** — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I, like many members of this House, was disappointed to hear some of the unfortunate comments made in this House yesterday directed personally at my colleague from Athabasca

when he was speaking. And I want to tell the hon. members that part of my life as MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for North Battleford, I'm often invited to round dances, sun dances, and powwows, all of which include as part of the closing ceremonies a give-away of gifts to elders and guests. And I want to say to the people of this House that I've always found the aboriginals in my constituency to be a warm and sharing people.

As part of the recent Remembrance Day observances this year, the bands in The Battlefords area held a memorial round dance to honour their veterans and casualties in Canada's wars. At the conclusion the usual gifts, mostly blankets, were distributed.

I want to assure the hon. member from Kindersley that when I go to these ceremonies no one has their hand out except in friendship and welcoming.

I wish that all members in this Assembly could experience the warmth of native ceremonies. No one asks for any hand-outs from me, although I do usually take the traditional gift of tobacco.

I believe that attending some of these ceremonies would be an important step in bringing some understanding and harmony to our province rather than for us, as politicians, to play on the divisions and tensions of our province for political gain.

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

#### **Award for Kitsaki Development Corporation**

**Mr. Renaud:** — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise and speak about another successful venture in Saskatchewan. We all know that more jobs are being created and more people are working in Saskatchewan today than ever before. This statement is not only true for southern Saskatchewan but northern Saskatchewan as well.

Kitsaki Development Corporation has received the 1997 Economic Developer of the Year award from the Council for Advancement of Native Development Officers.

KDC (Kitsaki Development Corporation) is 100 per cent owned by the Lac la Ronge Indian Band. It was started by the chief and council in 1981 to help develop an economic base for their band's 6,000 members who live in several northern communities. The council identified long-term economic development as an avenue by which economic conditions for their band members can be improved. Since then, KDC has grown into a corporation with 12 subsidiaries worth more than \$33 million and employing more than 400 people.

Kitsaki Development Corporation's office is in La Ronge. Mr. Speaker, the Lac la Ronge Indian Band can be proud of Kitsaki and its achievements and its contributions to self-determination for aboriginal people in northern Saskatchewan.

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

#### **Liberal Record on Saskatchewan Health Care**

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One point was

certainly made clear during this week's short legislative session, and that is the fact that health care remains in a state of crisis and that this Liberal opposition is the true defender of health care in the province.

Just to recap, Mr. Speaker, we moved the motion to provide compensation for hepatitis C victims. We challenged why the former minister of Health sat on a Betaseron report for nine months. We held the Premier accountable for failing to personally look into why a 79-year-old woman waited six days for surgery to repair a broken hip. We questioned why the Premier is prepared to reach out to the people of Quebec but is threatening to close long-term care beds of French-speaking Gravelbourg residents. We demonstrated that the closure of the Plains is premature and announced a new petition drive on the issue.

We urged the Minister of Health to explain why he's backing doctors into a corner and inviting job action by not resolving the on-call issue. We challenged the NDP (New Democratic Party) government to explain what plan it has to address the shocking rate of TB (tuberculosis) in northern Saskatchewan.

But you know, Mr. Premier, Mr. Minister of Health, if . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The hon. member will recognize, of course, that it is appropriate under normal circumstances to be directing debate through the Chair. Rule 28 makes that very clear, and I'll ask the hon. member to direct his member's statement through the Chair.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to the Premier and to the Minister of Health, if I could have one New Year's resolution come true it would be that in 1998 it would mean no more suffering, no more health care concerns, and some new solutions.

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

#### **Two Economic Surveys**

**Mr. Tchorzewski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week we have heard many examples of how our economy is growing and creating jobs in Saskatchewan. And the latest is the release by the Minister of Finance today of the economic review for 1997.

Now in passing, Mr. Speaker, I find it of some interest that not one opposition member in this short session has gotten up to talk about the good things that are happening in their communities which they represent.

Today I want to mention two recent surveys by reputable organizations which put these individual stories into context. In short, both surveys say in general what my colleagues on this side of the House have been saying in particular.

First, the Regina Chamber of Commerce two days ago released its annual economic forecast membership survey. As president-elect, Leith McKay, said, the results show improved optimism for the coming year: 70 per cent of businesses expect an increase in business volume in 1998; 42 per cent expect to employ more people — none expected their number to decrease; 40 per cent to invest more money in their businesses.

And that survey, Mr. Speaker, is a vote of confidence in our economy.

As is a recent report by the Conference Board of Canada, which says in part, 10,000 new jobs will be created in Saskatchewan in 1998, spurred by manufacturing, petroleum, and service industry, and gross domestic product this year will be 3.1 per cent and 2.6 per cent next year.

These, Mr. Speaker, are highlights which are making Saskatchewan people proud and creating the confidence that is necessary in order that our economy grow even more next year.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### SaskPower's Investment in Guyana

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan).

Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if he may want to rethink his taking of \$31 million of taxpayers' money and sending it off to Guyana. Just to recap, in case you missed this morning's news, police have had to fire shotguns and use tear gas to disperse hundreds of demonstrators in Georgetown, Guyana — not exactly what you'd call a friendly reaction to the recent election.

I say this, Mr. Minister, because law enforcement has had to resort to these tactics because of accusations of rigging the election and it sounds as if there's a lot more where that came from.

Mr. Minister, what's it going to take before you scrap this thing? Will you once and for all put taxpayers' minds at ease and cancel your plan to blow \$31 million on a power company in a country as unstable as Guyana? Will you do that, Mr. Minister, today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite again that on Monday he was saying the election was over and we should either conclude the deal or get out of it. That was his opinion Monday. Tuesday he said that we should wait and watch. Today he is now gloating over the implication of a country of fledgling democracy, that they are having problems.

I say to the member opposite that the very reason we haven't made the decision is because we are still looking at aspects of the arrangement, and as you know a decision has not been made.

But I say to the member opposite, I say to the member opposite that this attempt today to gloat over the problems that are existing in Guyana I think are shameful, for he and the right-wing party, the Saskatchewan Party, the former Liberals and Tories, who come here today with that approach.

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

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Minister, when are you going to get the point? Saskatchewan ratepayers are being smacked with big increases to SaskTel, SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), and SaskEnergy while at the same time you're running all over the world looking for new places to spend their money.

As far as Guyana goes, you know there are many reasons to rethink this investment. Mr. Minister, once the rioting stops and the guns are . . . stop firing and being put away, what are you going to do with the \$31 million? Are you going to continue to insist on risking it in Guyana?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that to date there have been three equity investments by Crowns outside of the province in international investments. Each one of them have been very carefully analysed and we have said to the public that every one of these investments will be reviewed with proper due diligence and proper recommendations from our staff, in the Crowns and the holding company, CIC.

No decision has been made on Guyana and I say to the member opposite, what you should be concerned about, sir, is that document that you signed to your leader that promised in blood that you would be a Liberal. And what I'd like to say today to the new, incoming leader of the Saskatchewan Party — the new, incoming leader — you better watch your back dealing with those birds on that side who have signed statements, have broken their promise.

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

#### Early Release of Sex Offender

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Justice minister. It was only after a good deal of pressure that you decided to put in place a process to warn residents when a dangerous sex offender is released.

Today we have a case in Prince Albert where a dangerous criminal is going to be released in three weeks. Just two months ago the parole board said releasing this man early, who sexually assaulted a 10-year-old girl and threatened to kill another child if they told, should not be released early, but he's going free anyway.

Mr. Minister, the mother of these children wants to warn her neighbours and other parents about this man, but she's been told she can't. I'll leave it to the Liberals to explain their federal cousins' parole policies, but can you explain what's going on? I thought you took care of this type of situation. Why is your legislation not helping this woman and other Prince Albert families? If ever, this is a season when the children of this province should not have to feel unsafe.

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to receive that question and provide a bit of information.

Personal safety and safe communities are the main goal of the justice system in Saskatchewan. And we responded to the people of Saskatchewan and set up a Public Disclosure Act which would deal with some very difficult issues. The process of that Act involves the police working with the local community and making application to that board. And practically, the process there is for this woman to make application in her local area and proceed with that.

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

### Services for Rural Women

**Ms. Draude:** —Mr. Speaker, the announcement that government is going to spend three-quarters of a million dollars to help women's groups get on the Internet proves the government is totally out of touch with women, especially in rural Saskatchewan.

The Internet is a useful tool but there are many better ways to spend money to help women, considering many don't have a computer in the first place. The program is supposed to benefit rural women in particular.

Madam Minister, both you and I are from rural Saskatchewan. In rural Saskatchewan most women have no access to 911 for real emergencies. We have no safe shelters for battered women. There are no support groups or counselling services available for rural women. There's no access to emergency funds for social services. There's no shortage . . . there's a shortage of subsidized housing, and the list goes on and on. On top of it all, women have to be part of an organization to qualify for this new program.

Madam Minister, do you really believe there's a women's club out in Podunk, Saskatchewan waiting to apply for this grant? How can you possibly say this program is the number one priority for women in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Ms. Bradley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have the opportunity to answer this question.

One of the things that we did in meeting with women right across Saskatchewan . . . This is one of the things that they had identified to us, that organizations that women wanted to be part of, rural women, of Indian and Metis women, of immigrant women, of organizations, that they wanted an opportunity to be able to communicate, be able to link each other together. And because of the great expanse of the province this is one of the ways in which we could link women's organizations together.

### Teacher Contract Negotiations

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Premier, yesterday the Minister of Education created tremendous uncertainty in the collective bargaining structure for education. Public pressure will be placed on both boards of education and teachers and in every community.

Mr. Premier, you have another chance today to set taxpayers' minds at ease. All you have to do is promise to cover every

penny of a new agreement, including any salary cost increases, allowances, improvements to benefits, and other related costs. That's the least you can do, Mr. Premier, because you've already cut our education system to the bone. It's time to put something back.

Will you commit today not just to pay any increase in salaries, but to cover all increases a new agreement will be bring?

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

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Education, I'll be pleased to answer the question on behalf of the government.

The member opposite was told yesterday by the minister — and I repeat again — the trustees are at the bargaining table with the government in negotiations with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. And those negotiations are either ongoing or about to be resumed.

I think it is prudent for all of us to take the time to see the outcome of those deliberations before making any decisions that flow therefrom.

I do know one thing, and that is that the trustees and the teachers and the governments are partners in good education, top quality education. And we have produced what I think is one of the finest, if not the finest, K to 12 systems in all of Canada.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A further question to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, you have left school boards to fend for themselves in that kind of a situation. You have slashed the K to 12 budget by millions and millions of dollars since the NDP government took office a number of years ago.

The Ontario government did a study on what percentage of K to 12 education costs are picked up by each province, and you did not fare very well, Mr. Premier. You pay only about 40 per cent of operating costs while Manitoba pays 65 per cent and Alberta even more.

Mr. Premier, when are you going to start making education a priority in this province, and when are you going to start paying 60 per cent of operating grants to schools like you promised?

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you one thing: when he says, referring to me, that I closed, I didn't close nearly as many, in fact no schools compared to the number that you personally closed when you were a trustee in your area. You closed them. You closed the schools, point blank. And when the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order. I'll ask all hon. members to come to order and allow the Premier the provide the answer.

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, this is the person who

closed more schools in his district than anybody in this Legislative Assembly, and probably more than any trustee. But the hon. member . . . Mr. Speaker, I can't hear myself speak — I can't hear myself speak.

**The Speaker:** — Order. I'll ask all hon. members on both sides of the House to allow the Premier to be heard, to provide the response to the question. Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could only assume that their loud yelling is an allergic reaction to the truths.

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

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — And the simple truth of the matter is that that person sitting behind you, and that person sitting beside you, who are Tories, and that person sitting beside him who's a Tory, and that person there from Saltcoats who was a campaign manager for a Tory, and that person back there from Rosthern who's a Tory, and that person there who wishes he's a Tory, and that person sitting behind him who also is a Tory — they bankrupted this province for nine years under the former premier Devine.

They left the teachers and the school system virtually zero because you bankrupted this province or brought it to the edge of bankruptcy. We've turned it around. We have provided fiscal help, and today I can proudly report that we have more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before in the history of Saskatchewan and we've eliminated the deficit.

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. All hon. members will come to order. Order. Order, order. All hon. members are in serious jeopardy of getting lumps of coal in their stockings next week here.

Order, order, order.

Now the hon. member from Arm River has been recognized to put his question and I'll ask the cooperation of all members to allow the hon. member from Arm River to be heard.

### Reduced Hospital Services

**Mr. McLane:** — And a Merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance delivered a rosy financial picture to the public this morning and I'm sure that he and his bean counters will have a very merry Christmas. However it will be a black Christmas for health care in Regina. Even though this government has already closed almost 400 hospital beds in the city, another 77 hospital beds will be closed for two weeks during the holiday period.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health explain why he is forcing these bed closures just to save money regardless of the impact it may have on the emergency care needs of people?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit surprised by the question from the member opposite, because, and I say this because this member, this member, Mr. Speaker, has served, this member has served with the Saskatchewan health association for a number of years and he knows in Saskatchewan that through two times of the year, at Christmas and during the summer season, all acute care centres in the province reduce the number of acute care beds.

And he should know that, Mr. Speaker. This is a given. And this has been the practice, this has been the practice for ever. And the Liberal member should have a full appreciation of this and knows it very well, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McLane:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, while this government is forcing the closure of another 77 hospital beds for Christmas, the city of Winnipeg is considering opening as many as 100 beds for the holiday season for an expected increase in their workload. In fact we're told that the Manitoba government is working with hospitals to develop a long-term strategy for funding the beds, something this NDP government could clearly take a lesson in.

Mr. Minister, when are the people of Saskatchewan going to see a long-term strategy for funding beds? When are you going to move away from your bean-counter mentality and start basing health care on need?

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to answer on behalf of the government. The hon. member asks us questions which are prefaced by, when is the government going to acknowledge. Well I have something for the Liberal Party.

When is the Saskatchewan Liberal Party ever going to acknowledge that the biggest damage inflicted on medicare, not only in Saskatchewan, but across Canada, was the \$7 billion cut by Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Rock. When will you admit that? When will the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, of Saskatchewan, ever admit that they believe in two-tier medicine?

You, sir, yourself, the member from Arm River, got up and you said favoured two-tier medicine. You're like the so-called Saskatchewan Party. You want to two-tier medicine; you want to privatize medicine, you want to have private hospitals for profit, all of that. When will you get up to admit that? When will you get up and admit, on behalf of the Liberal Party, that you fought medicare tooth and nail? That you don't believe in medicare, no more than the Saskatchewan Party believes in medicare? Both of you are of the same.

Heaven forbid that they ever should elect you or the Saskatchewan Party because we'd see the end of medicare the way we know it and the way we love it in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. All hon. members on both sides of the House. Order. Order.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, since you want to answer the health care questions I'll ask you the same question I asked the Minister of Health. It appears that in Winnipeg they recognize there's a problem over the holiday season with increased people that need help. The Minister of Health is saying, in Saskatchewan we need less beds because nobody's going to get sick.

If that indeed is the case, Mr. Premier, why not have the people in this province that need elective surgery utilize these beds over the Christmas season, if there isn't a need for them? And can you answer that, Mr. Premier? Will you allow these beds to be reopened and used for elective surgery?

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member knows, as the Minister of Health has said — being a former president of the Saskatchewan hospitals organization, SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) — he knows full well what the pattern has been for years and why it is so. During the Christmas period and during the summer period, surgeries and acute care hospital beds are in less demand for obvious reasons.

If it's at all possible, medically, patients want to be home with their families. Doctors want to be home with their families. And that's where the utilization . . . (inaudible) . . . is in the place. You know that to be the case and it's always been that way.

And I want to tell you something. When this House resumes, if you deny that you don't know the case, we're going to take out what it was when you were president of SAHO and what the record of hospital beds and closures were during this period. And I bet you they reflect almost the same situation today. And if they reflect the same situation today, you will have to ask this and answer this question: why were you so silent? Why were you so silent when you were president of SAHO in this situation? Did the cat take your tongue at that time or what?

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

### Health Care Funding

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the government brags that we have needs-based funding for health in Saskatchewan. The Provincial Auditor says, yes we do — it's the fiscal needs of the government, not the health needs of the people.

The Provincial Auditor said in his report this fall, when health districts set priorities, they were often related to the department's fiscal expectations rather than the district's priority health care needs.

My question is for the Premier: when will you begin getting back to the health needs of the people, not the fiscal priorities of your government? When will the health care needs of Saskatchewan people rather than the bottom line be what drives our health policy? When will the priority be hospitals in Saskatchewan instead of power plants in Guyana?

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

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Well I find this interesting, again

coming from the Liberal Party. When will you get up and tell the people of this Legislative Assembly that the needs and the priorities of the Liberal Party are such that they should never have cut \$7 billion from health care?

We just got back from Ottawa, the premiers meeting with the Prime Minister just a week ago today, and at that meeting, unanimously, all the premiers and the territorial leaders said that the Liberal government in Ottawa ought not to have cut back the \$7 billion in health care. And they want that restored back as part of the federal fiscal dividend.

When will you get up and be consistent and honest to the people of Saskatchewan by saying that they should not have cut it back? And why don't you get up and tell us right now that you've written a letter, tell us publicly that you're asking the Prime Minister to restore funding for health care for the people of Saskatchewan and Canada?

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

**Mr. Hillson:** — The Premier of course, would suggest that \$7 billion has been cut from Saskatchewan's grants, and of course that's absolute rubbish and nonsense. The health funding is increasing.

Anyway . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Mr. Speaker, in this session we have pointed out how the people of Gravelbourg are facing long-term bed closures. East Central Health District has got a \$2.4 million deficit which they describe as a crisis. We've talked about the six days of agonizing wait for hip surgery. In The Battlefords, we've lost 16 acute care beds and 52 long-term care beds.

We now know that because of cut-backs and burnout and the stress faced by our few remaining nurses, that their sick time is double the national average because of the pressures they're facing.

Now we hear that there will be dozens more beds closed in Regina as a prelude to shutting down the entire Plains Health Centre. Although you campaigned against doing that, now that's what you're doing, blaming the health district. Well the health district says it's your funding that forced that decision.

What was once your biggest strength is now your biggest . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The hon. member has been extremely long in his preamble. Order. Order. Order. I'll ask the hon. member from North Battleford to put his question immediately now. Directly to the question.

**Mr. Hillson:** — My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. When will you start facing up to the constitutional responsibilities of your government to meet the health needs of the people of Saskatchewan and quit blaming either the health districts or federal government and . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order.



**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, this hon. member asks us to face up to our responsibilities which I'm proud to say we have done. We have reformed our health care to be the model for all of Canada — for all of Canada.

I know that your seatmate wants to have two-tier medicine. I know that the Liberal Party was part and parcel with the Conservative Party over there in the Keep our Doctors committee strike on medicare. Were you there at the time of the strike on medicare in 1962? Were you there? Were you there? Did some Liberal in your family take you there? Because I bet you almost everyone of your caucuses . . . The Liberal Party and the Conservative Party fought medicare tooth and nail and now you have the audacity of getting up and saying you support medicare? You don't support medicare because you don't understand it.

But my question to you is this as I sit down. Look at all the premiers in Canada, all the premiers in Canada — Liberal premiers, Conservative premiers, NDP premiers, the territorial leaders — all of us got together and we said to Ottawa: give us a hand by returning some of that \$7 billion that you cut Canada-wide. Why don't you get up and help us and join us in that approach? What's wrong with you?

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

#### **Ranching Operation's Water Problems**

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Speaker, this morning is to the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management.

Mr. Minister, it has been disappointing to watch the lack of initiative that your government has taken with respect to solving the problems of families harmed by what is left over after the oil and gas industry have drilled their wells.

Perry Anton and his family are a good example of this. Perry has been trying for years, Mr. Minister, to get a fair settlement from you after the water was contaminated on his ranch as a result of residue from the gas operations. He has reported from specialists . . . and has reports proving beyond a doubt that damage to his water and death to his cattle operation were directly a result of the leftover contaminants.

Mr. Minister, will you please finally help this family? Tell us what your government is prepared to do for the Anton family, and will you commit today to meeting with the delegation that is here to represent them after question period to further discuss and give a commitment to this serious problem?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for raising this very important issue. Certainly the Perry and Charlotte Anton family has experienced a number of hardship and stress over the last number of years.

Unfortunately after several years of completing over 20 reports on the situation on the Anton ranch dealing with potential contamination from the oil and gas industry, 19 reports indicated there was no confirmed evidence of this pollution and contamination. One report indicated that one dugout did contain toxic water in 1992-93.

More recently, we met with the Antons last spring, and with their cooperation we conducted yet another study of the water on the Anton ranch. This included well water as well as dugouts. That report was released yesterday and we took the report out to the Antons and reviewed it with them. The report indicated that all of the water was clear, no contamination. Similarly we did a test on the cow herd on the Anton ranch. That report was also completed yesterday and the cow herd on the Anton ranch has a clean bill of health.

I certainly will meet with the delegation here today.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker; supplemental to the same minister.

Mr. Minister, we challenge your report that 19 studies say that there is no problem, and we'd ask you to table those reports, because we don't actually believe that they exist or that they say that. We have a suitcase full of other things.

The Antons are not the only family, Mr. Minister, especially from the sand hills region of our province who are experiencing these kind of problems. I realize that the oil and the gas industry are vital to our province's economy. But so are the environmental . . . and the needs of families in their family operations in this province.

Mr. Minister, something must be done to address the environmental impact of the oil and gas industry that are having effects on the sensitive areas like The Great Sand Hills. Changes need to be made to The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act and they need to be made immediately in order for that board to be able to act.

Mr. Minister, what are you going to do to help the people suffering because of inadequate legislation? Are you going to make these companies clean up after themselves?

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the oil and gas industry is very important to the economy of Saskatchewan — everybody recognizes that — and the jobs created are also very beneficial to the province.

At the same time, our environment is also very important and we are committed to using the latest technology, updating processes where we can, to ensure that we leave a healthy environment when the oil and gas industry is being conducted here in Saskatchewan.

We have sensitive areas, as the hon. member mentioned, such as The Great Sand Hills. In that particular area, for an example, we have a planning commission in place with local people. We have environmentally sensitive lands which have been identified and are off limits to the industry. And we have a number of other activities that we are doing.

Most recently, last week I met with the Southeast Surface Rights Association representatives and heard firsthand some of their concerns. And we are committed to working with the landowners as well as the industry to ensure that our environment is safe and kept in as best shape as possible for future generations.

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

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplemental the same minister. Perhaps the other ministers will want to jump into this.

Minister, you know very well that later today I'll have an opportunity, and I will be presenting and tabling documentation that comes to about half a million dollars worth of consultants' reports, all of which say that Perry Anton's ranch was contaminated, and that there is a link, that cattle did die as a result of that pollution, and that it continues to exist all through this province, not only in The Great Sand Hills.

Mr. Minister, I'm glad that you have finally taken the initiative to accept the responsibility of meeting with these people. But the Perry Antons fell through a crack. They fell through a crack because scientists are scientists and they never agree. I can give you a litany of examples of that.

You know very well that it will be 100 years and they'll never agree. You have a moral responsibility to help these people and to see to it that nobody else falls through the cracks in this very important area. We want you not only to help the Antons but to seal up the crack and change the legislation.

Mr. Minister, ask the Minister of Energy and Mines to join you. The legislation is in his purview. The Minister of Justice handles another one. You've spread it all . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, order. Now the hon. member has been extremely long in his preamble and I'll ask him to put his final question directly now.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Minister, will you take the appropriate action to bring the Minister of Energy with you and negotiate with this team today and carry on with what needs to be done?

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

**Hon. Mr. Scott:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly worked continually with the Department of Energy and Mines. And we will have representatives from Energy and Mines at the meeting with the delegation today.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 239 — The Crown Corporations Rate Review Act, 1997

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that An Act respecting the review of rates imposed by certain Saskatchewan Crown Corporations be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carleton, a motion:

That the name of Mr. Andy Renaud be substituted for that of Ms. Judy Bradley on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert:

That the names of Mr. Lindy Kasperski . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. First of all the minister has requested leave to introduce the motion. Leave has been granted but the motion needs to be introduced on the record, and I'll recognize the Government House Leader to introduce the motion on the record.

## MOTIONS

### Substitution of Members on Legislative Committees

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Move that, seconded by the member from Prince Albert-Carleton:

That the name of Mr. Andy Renaud be substituted for that of Ms. Judy Bradley on the list of members composing the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carleton, a motion concerning membership changes to the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been requested and again perhaps in the interest of expediting procedure, if the Government House Leader has a series of motions and would request leave for introducing, would that be acceptable to the House? I'll just simply then . . . leave is granted for introducing a series of motions if they're related to change of membership on committees.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That the names of Mr. Lindy Kasperski and Mr. Myron Kowalsky be substituted for that of Mr. Ed Tchorzewski and Mr. Dwain Lingenfelter on the list of members composing the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carleton:

That the name of Mr. Harry Van Mulligen be substituted for that of Mr. Kim Trew on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Municipal Law.

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the names of Mr. Harry Van Mulligen and Mr. Jack Langford be substituted for that of Ms. Judy Bradley and Mr. Maynard Sonntag on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That the names of Mr. Grant Whitmore and Mr. Ed Tchorzewski be substituted for that of Mr. Maynard Sonntag and Mr. Bob Pringle, and that the name of Mr. Jack Goohsen be substituted for that of Ms. Lynda Haverstock, on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

(1100)

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave of the Assembly to move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton, a motion:

That the name of Mr. Myron Kowalsky be substituted for that of Ms. Judy Bradley on a list of members composing the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Speaker, as well to ask leave of the Assembly to move substitution of names on committees.

Leave granted.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That the name of June Draude be deleted from the names composing the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Speaker, as well, by leave of the Assembly I move that the name of Don Toth . . . seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That the name of Don Toth be substituted for that of Ben Heppner on the Standing Committee on Regulations.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That the name of Rod Gantfoer be substituted for that of Don Toth on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, by leave of the Assembly I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That the name of Bill Boyd be substituted for that of Ben Heppner on the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That the name of Mr. Ben Heppner be substituted for that of Mr. Don Toth on the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last but not least, by leave of the Assembly, I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That the name of Mr. Bill Boyd be substituted for that of Mr. Dan D'Autremont on the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

#### MOTION — INDEPENDENT MEMBER

##### Environmental Problems in the South-west

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be introducing a motion later in my discussion, moved by myself and seconded by the member from Cannington. The motion is on record and so I won't read it just now, but it has to do of course with the problems that we have discussed through question period that relate to contamination as a result of oil and gas well operations and their related activities. And particularly of course, we are going to talk about Perry Anton and his family because this is a classic example that shows what has happened to so many people.

And when you, when you try to make a point with government, I think it's important that you focus on one small area so that they can understand the whole process and work their way through it. If you don't do that, of course, the issue and the problems related to such a large area of discussion as pollution become so large that people just can't get their minds around it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit today to begin with about how these things happen. I've been in discussion with

government members and it seems like they really don't understand why the government has a responsibility for the damage that the oil and gas industry have done. And they're true in that — their arguments are right — that when you think about it, the people that make the mess should clean the mess up. There's no question about that.

But the reality is that there is a responsibility for government in regards to the oil and gas industry and it goes very simply like this. And I want the Minister of Energy and Mines to particularly take note of this explanation. It's quite simple.

Some years ago the governments of this province decided that they wanted the oil and gas industry to come into the province to explore for oil and gas because of course that would be good for the economy. Oil and gas is necessary for everybody's lives and it's a very important industry.

And so they decided that there would be a process by which this would all unfold. That process would be that the government would lease the minerals that are underneath the ground on the basis of measurements of land above the ground and they would lease those minerals to the petroleum companies on the basis of, the highest bidder takes the lease — an auction, very simple, very fair.

Unfortunately though, lots of these leases lie under private land and Crown land, and so they had to come up with some way that would allow the oil and gas industry to get onto that land easily, because the oil and gas industry said we don't want to pay a bunch of money for royalties, a bunch of money for permits and leases, and then not be able to get on the land. And so the government said, we're going to guarantee you the ability to get on to private people's lands.

Now under today's rules under the private . . . under the human rights acts of this nation if this sort of thing were done again, I don't think it would ever be allowed to go through. I think it would be challenged in the Supreme Court. But we didn't have those kind of protections for people in those days and this has evolved through.

And so quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, what happened is the government said we'll write legislation in the province that will allow these companies the right to expropriation; the right of entry onto private people's lands without their wanting them on there. And of course that's been done. That legislation is in place. This government has chosen, when it got elected, to leave that legislation in place, and so they are responsible for what happens to people as a result of that legislation.

And what happens to people is this: they cannot stop the oil and gas industry from coming on. And so when the oil and gas industry does something that is environmentally threatening nobody is there to control it. The farmer can't stop them.

They can put their pipeline any place they want. They can go through an alkali slough. They can go through a surface water area. They can go through shallow, sensitive areas. They can go through sand dunes. They can go straight through any place they want. They don't have to answer to the farmer that has lived on that land for maybe two, three or four generations of people.

And four generations of people on many of the ranches out in the sand hills know how critical the environment is out there. And they know the areas of their ranches are the most . . . that are the most critical a lot better than an oil company or a gas company would ever know or care about. But they can't stop them, and they can't tell them what to do.

And I've had personal experience in this on my farm. I told the gas company . . . or an oil company, don't put a line through that sensitive area because it's highly corrosive. Your line will rot out and then the water will be mixed with your effluent. But no, they put it through. Eight years later the line had rusted through and the pollutants are flooding into the underground water system.

Now you may think that that doesn't matter. But it does because the underground water system is where you get your drinking water from. And it runs in rivers under the ground just as surely as the water above the ground runs in rivers. And it runs across this province just as fast. So if you have a pollution spill in the south-west corner think about the Swift Current Creek water on top of the ground. How long will it take for that water from the Swift Current Creek to run through the system to the Diefenbaker dam and up to Saskatoon — and all the people through the South Saskatchewan and into the North Saskatchewan drink that water that's polluted — if you put a pollutant in it down south of Gull Lake? That's how long it takes for the same kind of pollutant under the ground to move through the underground water system.

Mr. Speaker, the government's responsibility lies where I've just pointed out, in the fact that they have taken away the rights of farmers to stop these industries or to negotiate with them. And by doing that, by giving expropriatory powers to the oil and gas industries, the government has accepted the responsibility then to take care of the people's needs, of society's greater need for pollutants not to get into our drinking water, our soil, and our foodstuffs.

When a cow takes a drink of polluted water, where do you think that water ends up? In the meat and in the milk. Who drinks the milk? The calf. Who eats the meat? You and I, every time we stop at McDonald's hamburgers. That's where that can end up at. Highly critical.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I want the Minister of Energy and Mines to listen so closely. Because the legislation is largely under his jurisdiction. The Minister of Justice has The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act under his jurisdiction. The Pipe Lines Act is under Energy and Mines. SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) has an involvement through the other legislations, and there's a half a dozen of those.

And so you've got three different departments all fighting with one another for jurisdiction, and once again you never know if you can get a straight answer out of one, if you'll ever get a straight answer that agrees from the others. And so the whole thing is a mishmash of fighting back and forth and nobody ever solves these problems.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is why we are saying the government has the responsibility, because they have made themselves the

watchdog over the industry by giving away the rights of farmers to be able to say no — expropriatory powers.

And I believe that right today the oil and gas companies, because they work on the basis of making a profit . . . And I don't fault them for that. Lord knows, we have to have profits in the industry or they won't be here. Lord knows, we need the industries and the jobs. We absolutely do. But we have to be careful not to kill ourselves in the process. And so we ask the ministers to recognize the fact that they have this responsibility as the watchdogs to make sure that pollution doesn't occur, and that it's cleaned up if it does.

Now we're not so naïve to think that we can have a great industry like this without some problems. Accidents will happen, Mr. Speaker. There is no question in my mind that there will be accidents that will happen and there will be oil spills and water spills. The tragedy is not having a system that can properly react.

When you have a system that allows for five or six years of a farmer having to go through the process that Perry Anton has gone through and not have this problem resolved and still don't even have the pollutants cleaned up, something is desperately wrong.

(1115)

Mr. Speaker, I have with me today the evidence that the government wants. They wanted evidence that they have responsibility. I have just argued that point for them. They gave away our rights and in exchange they accepted the responsibilities, because with rights there must be responsibility.

You gave away our rights as farmers and ranchers, and the Crown landowners — the government itself — you gave away the rights for people to be able to regulate this industry for themselves by simply being able to say no sometimes. And right of entry orders are given without question. I haven't heard one in recent history that's been turned down. And so that rubber stamp has to be broken.

Next question is that the minister says he wants evidence and proof that Perry Anton, as an individual, has a link with his problem. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's go through some of the documentation that I've been provided with today.

I have here the Anton-Ocelot dispute resolutions and solutions brief that is prepared by a group of people that have worked together after looking at all of these other reports. We are prepared, Mr. Speaker, to have all of this material photocopied today and laid on the table, and presented not only to the members of the government but also to the press and the general public. Because it's time that some of this stuff became public. That's one file, Mr. Speaker, and we'll talk about that a little later.

Then we go into some of the reports. Here we have the ground conductivity surveys, Freefight Lake, Saskatchewan, by geophysical consultants, and that was done on the Perry Anton ranch. Not a very thick report this one, but certainly a lot of material in here and it is impressive — a lot of good, detailed

maps and pictures in that one for those folks that can't read too well.

We also have the document from Darwall Consultants. Darwall Consultants lived at this ranch — physically lived at this ranch — to do the necessary testing, the drilling into the soils where they found the pollutants, the contaminants. That report, Mr. Speaker, along with this report — both of these now, and the final conclusions, all three of these — absolutely say that there is a link and that Ocelot energy is a bad corporate citizen who did not clean up their mess and should be held responsible to clean up that mess and to pay compensation.

Then of course we have one from Roper environmental engineers. Now this one was, of course, commissioned by Ocelot, and lo and behold there are a couple of things that are a little different here. The first thing that is important for the minister to know is that this report that is favourable to Ocelot concedes that there is pollutants and that those pollutants are in fact there. They only disagree with the other people on the conclusion — how far has the pollutant migrated through the soil and did it or did it not get into the dugout where the water was drank?

Well it really doesn't matter, Mr. Minister, if it wasn't in the water. The cattle don't necessarily have to get pollutants out of the water. They might've ate the grass that grew on this stuff and got it out of the plants. You see there is a reality that plants also suck up pollutants and so they'd link by this report — even though they say there is no link, the reality is that they all do say that Ocelot has pits there that are full of pollutants and that they are responsible for that, even this one that favours the company.

Then we get to a little bigger and better kind of a thing because you see the Antons couldn't agree with Ocelot and Ocelot couldn't agree with the Antons and so they hired some lawyers and they've got hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on this thing. A half a million dollars is probably right. The minister said it himself, probably half a million dollars spent on this case alone on consultants. If they'd have give Perry Anton that money he'd have been a happy man and we'd have cleaned the mess up already. But we spend half a million dollars on consultants' reports and yesterday we got another one and I bet you this afternoon we're going to be proposed to sit down with somebody else to go through it all and make a decision based on what he finds.

And we're going to carry on and pay him another 100,000, I suspect. And the lawyers that have worked. Perry Anton, of course haven't been paid because he went broke and that's why he couldn't carry it on to the Supreme Court of Canada because no individual farmer can ever afford that.

And this of course is the Weir Report as it's referred to. Now it's got a little more professional. Ocelot said we will agree to pay an independent consultant that we both will agree on and whatever the consultant finds out, we will do that. Okay, Perry Anton said — he's a nice fellow — incidentally he couldn't be here today. He's here in spirit, believe me, he's sitting in the gallery in spirit. But this whole process has wore him down.

Yesterday the government sent out their delegation to try to

brainwash him into stopping this process today. And he quite seriously succumbed to that. And . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes they did. And I have a written report on what happened there yesterday and it's not pretty, Mr. Minister, and it's not very nice what happened there. This man now is so sick, he's in bed because of the mental stress that you've caused him. And that's not very nice in a Christmas spirit.

Anyway, back to this report, the Weir report. They all agreed, everybody agreed, Perry agreed. Then they did the report, but Ocelot didn't like the answer because the report said Ocelot is guilty. They polluted the land and there is a link, based on the evidence . . . in terms of circumstantial evidence, there is enough proof to link this that you have to accept it. That was their argument. And lots of people are sent to jail for crimes that are committed on circumstantial evidence. We know that there isn't black and white evidence in many things in our world.

This report was done by these people and it represents the findings of scientists from all across the world. These people went out all across Alberta, all around the world, and these are the highest paid, the most intelligent scientists that we've got in the world today and their information was put into this report. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars later Ocelot was found to be guilty and Ocelot said, we don't like it and we're not going to pay any attention to it. They not only didn't pay any attention to it, they didn't even pay for the report that they promised to pay for and they've got those guys on the hook as well.

And that, Mr. Speaker, in itself could represent, I'm sure, about 10 or 15 hours of debate just to talk about what's in this report. But we don't need to do that because we are looking at all of the evidence. And the minister wants some evidence. We've got some more evidence for him.

Here we now have the Alberta beef producers report and another report, Mr. Speaker, that was done at the request of the Alberta beef producers. And it hired consultants and it costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to put this together. And there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pages of evidence in here of what actually has happened in Alberta to cattle herds that have been exposed to what has happened in the oil and gas field.

Mr. Speaker, this is evidence conclusive. I have to be careful about drinking this water you see because in Regina there are some salts, and if you drink too much while you're making a speech, you have to leave quickly. That's why Perry Anton's cattle are dead, you see, because the water they drank poisoned them.

Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of cooperation to try and resolve this issue, I have agreed to go along with the government and to allow them to introduce an amendment to my motion, because I believe we have to have cooperation here or we'll never solve this problem.

I'm therefore going to sit down and allow the member opposite to introduce his amendment so that we can solve this problem.

**The Speaker:** — It'd be out of order to recognize another member until the motion's been moved and must be on the

floor. And I'll invite the hon. member for Cypress Hills to conclude his debate.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will now introduce my motion. I move, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That this Assembly urge the government to take immediate action to make amendments to existing legislation and regulations to provide swift, binding restitution to the clean-up of pollutants and related problems; and as a humanitarian gesture to assist the Perry Anton family and other families in the south-west corner of Saskatchewan who are threatened by polluted water that is used for human and animal consumption; and further, to correct soil contamination problems with immediate emphasis on The Great Sand Hills.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Koenker:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will speak very briefly today. The member from Cypress Hills has spoken very eloquently and passionately about the problem that exists today and sketched it very well for us and for the public at large.

I want to say simply that we do have a problem in this regard in the province of Saskatchewan, that we do need better vehicles to deal with the consequences of oil and natural gas activity in our province, better mechanisms to deal with disputes — not just more money, not just tighter legislation, not just better science — but we need better mechanisms to ensure that there is equitable treatment for both landowners and people in the oil and gas industry. We need better mechanisms to give citizens recourse where problems exist, so that this recourse can be timely, user-friendly, and inexpensive. Recourse to mediation, where helpful, re-mediation where necessary, and yes, even better compensation.

Today we hear a call to make improvements to legislation and regulations. Today we are challenged as legislators to enhance the quality of life for people in Saskatchewan. The member from Cypress Hills has done this legislature a favour and has done the public a service in raising this matter, both the particular problem of Perry Anton and his family and the larger issues associated with the oil and gas industry. This morning on my way to Regina, on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio, I heard Bruce Steele talk about Christmas time being a time, quote: "to mend fences and heal old wounds."

The Perry Anton situation is a problem that has been unresolved far too long. We need to try to bring some closure to this wound, some healing to this situation, and as this legislative session closes today and as this year comes to a conclusion, my hope would be that this resolution today would be a springboard for action, would set the stage for some change in the new year for a healthy environment and a healthy society.

And so I move an amendment which enlarges the focus of the original motion, seconded by the member from Regina Coronation Park:

That this Assembly support the government's ongoing

actions to ensure existing legislation and regulations are adequate and updated where necessary, that is Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act, to protect the ecological integrity of the Great Sand Hills; to work cooperatively with landowners and industry to protect Saskatchewan families from pollution and contamination stemming from oil and gas activity; to ensure that concerns created by past and future practices are addressed; to apply the principle of "polluter pays" so those responsible for contamination are also responsible for clean-up and compensation as required; and to monitor ongoing situations to ensure water quality is protected over the long term.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I'll ask that the clock be stopped momentarily while I review the amendment.

Order. I've reviewed the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland and find that it is technically not acceptable in its format, and we'll provide to the hon. member for Sutherland the opportunity to move his motion again to attempt to make it acceptable in proper format for the House.

**Mr. Koenker:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I have a solution, which would be to move the amendment:

That all the words after "That this Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

Support the government's ongoing actions to ensure existing legislation and regulations are adequate and updated where necessary, that is The Surface Rights Acquisition and Compensation Act, to protect the ecological integrity of the Great Sand Hills; to work cooperatively with landowners and industry to protect Saskatchewan families from pollution and contamination stemming from oil and gas activity; to ensure the concerns created by past and future practices are addressed; to apply the principle of "polluter pays" so those responsible for contamination are also responsible for clean-up and compensation as required; and to monitor ongoing situations to ensure water quality is protected over the long term.

I do so move, seconded by the member from Regina Coronation Park.

(1130)

**The Speaker:** — I find the amendment in order and the question before the Assembly then is the amendment moved by the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland, seconded by the hon. member from Regina Coronation Park, and the original motion moved by the hon. member from Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak just briefly to the amendment. I think the amendment is friendly enough to the cause that we are championing here. I believe that the fact that Perry Anton's name has been taken out does not relieve the government of responsibility directly to that family

as an individual family.

I am therefore going to ask the Assembly to support the amendment, in order so that we can get on with the business of solving this problem with the Antons and get on with the business of rewriting some of the legislation; so that this very serious crack in our system can be corrected. It's the only way that we can close this crack in our society, in our system, is to address this issue so that it can't happen in the future.

So that, Mr. Speaker, is what I want to do. For the minister who questioned whether or not Perry Anton really should have gotten ill yesterday, let me read very carefully . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Now I have to remind the hon. member that in speaking to the amendment and having already spoken to the main motion, his comments are extremely limited and must be directly related to the amendment only.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — The amendment, of course, Mr. Speaker, asks that steps be taken to correct pollution, and those steps of course would include correcting the pollution in a dugout that presently exists.

Some people attended Mr. Anton's ranch yesterday and they said yesterday afternoon SERM officials arrived at the Anton ranch to communicate the results of yet another study, total cost of which they don't know but it's estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. They said, your water is clean, it's beautiful; it's now not polluted. Mr. Anton said, oh that's great, maybe I'll take my herd of cattle down there tomorrow because the grass is good there and it hasn't been grazed. And the official turned to him and said, oh wait a minute, maybe you'd better just take 10.

What does that tell you, Mr. Minister? Are you afraid that that water . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Now I need to remind the hon. member that the debate must be through the Chair, as per rule 28, not directly to members in the House.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I also want to lay on the Table today a list of the kinds of pollutants that the amendment will refer to. The kinds of things that we have to be careful for. I've asked for Darwall Consultants to give that to us so that I could put it on the Table, and a copy or copies for the minister and the other people that are interested to look at. I will do that now.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Pursuant to a special order dated December 15 in this House, debate on this motion, time has now expired. And the Chair is required to put the question directly.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

#### SPECIAL ORDER

#### MOTION — OPPOSITION

### Provincial Government Offloading

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this morning and to present to the House a motion condemning the NDP government for its lack of financial commitment to, among other things, the K to 12 and post-secondary education systems in Saskatchewan. And I will present that motion at the end of my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm especially glad to be raising these issues at a fall sitting of the legislature. I believe that it is an opportune time for us as opposition members to raise issues on behalf of Saskatchewan taxpayers. It is, I think, important that this government commit to having a fall session each and every fall. Issues like this must be brought forward, must be raised on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to indeed get a better understanding of why certain decisions are being made.

I would like to begin by repeating some of the concerns that I raised yesterday with the Minister of Education and this morning with the Premier.

Yesterday we were informed by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association that the minister has thrown out the protocol agreement that was negotiated to establish an equitable collective bargaining process between boards of education and the teachers' federation.

Mr. Speaker, every time the current Minister of Education talks to Saskatchewan teachers about difficulties which arise in contract negotiations, she blames it on the protocol agreement. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday when the member opposite threw out this important agreement, she stripped the taxpayers of this province of their voice in any negotiations in teacher contracts.

Mr. Speaker, this is simply another example of the NDP hypocrisy this province has become accustomed to. Since this government has come to power, we have seen the same trend in health care, municipal government, and education. Even though provincial funding gets lower and lower, this government tries everything it can to centralize decision making. That is what I mean by hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, because this is the same NDP government that criticizes the federal government for doing exactly the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, this is the hypocrisy I have come to expect from the NDP. So I can't say I was surprised to learn that the Minister of Education axed this agreement and the position of local taxpayers. I was not surprised, but I can't help wonder if delegates who attended the 82nd annual SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) convention in November were surprised.

At their convention, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education went on and on about the importance of local school boards. She said, quote:

School trustees, as locally elected and locally accountable decision makers, have a vital and integral role to play in our education system. In Saskatchewan we believe in the idea that local people should have input into the decisions that affect their families.

Then the minister went on to share her insightful commentary on the problems with school boards. Mr. Speaker, the minister went on to say:

The legitimacy of the school boards and school trustees is being threatened by a very subtle foe. In the most recent local elections, about 63 per cent of trustee positions were filled by acclamation.

And what is her summation, Mr. Speaker?

The greatest threat to the role of school boards appears to be apathy.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think if you ask school boards who their biggest foe is, you will get an entirely different answer. Second of all, as politicians we should all know about low voter turnout and acclamation. People don't want to run for office if they don't think their voice will be heard or if all of the important decisions are made at the top.

Mr. Speaker, people don't like to be puppets on a string. Nor do they like making all of the tough decisions for a provincial government that offloads financial responsibility but refuses to take the heat for the consequences of those cuts.

Mr. Speaker, to get back to my earlier point, undermining the ratepayers' voice at the negotiating table does nothing for apathy. You cannot say on the one hand that you believe in school boards and trustees and on the other hand mute their voices in important decisions such as salary negotiations.

Especially, Mr. Speaker, it is the local ratepayer who picks up the majority of the bill for education in this province. And I do not think I need to remind the minister that it is the local taxpayers of this province that pay for 60 per cent of the total education bill in this province.

Just this week my colleague from Saltcoats received a letter from the Minister of Education containing a backgrounder from the Ontario Department of Education detailing education finance systems in Canadian provinces. This report indicated that the Saskatchewan government pays the lowest proportion of overall provincial education funding except for the province of New Brunswick.

In order for school boards to maintain quality education in their schools, they have had to hit local taxpayers — the local property taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. But the well is almost dry. Property taxes simply can't go up any more.

The operating and capital grant of this year, fiscal year that we're speaking about, is \$61 million less than the government's commitment in their first year of office — \$61 million less.

(1145)

As a result of inadequate funding for education, Mr. Speaker, a number of things have occurred to the K to 12 system in the province of Saskatchewan. I want to identify a number of points that were raised by teachers in a survey done by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and that document is in the hands of the Minister of Education.



Teachers said: that teachers themselves were spending a lot of their own money on textbooks because there was no additional resources provided; there were overcrowded schools and classrooms; inadequate school facilities, especially for students with disabilities.

Thirteen per cent of Saskatchewan school buildings are inadequate. That means over 27,000 Saskatchewan students go to school in environments deemed inadequate for learning by their administrators. Thirty-one per cent of those buildings have mechanical difficulties, 24 per cent have electrical difficulties, 6 per cent list safety as a concern.

Further to those comments, one specific school division, and I will not mention the school division's name, and this is a quotation, says:

We the administrators of school division (X) . . . wish to express our concern regarding the inadequate resources for textbooks, materials and supplies to support curriculum implementation. Due to the overwhelming number of curricula introduced in the last eight years, our libraries and classrooms have reached a critical point. Often there's only one book for 10 students.

The lack of guidance counsellors in our schools means real issues are not being addressed. In our school the social worker comes to the school twice a month for the afternoon. Parents are contacting the school looking for some services for their children.

Career guidance is inadequate. It is difficult to prepare students for the future when teachers have little to provide students with knowledge they need. With the emphasis on resource-based learning, we feel that all schools should have access to a teacher-librarian. Additional funding is needed for libraries.

Final paragraph:

Because of funding cuts, divisions are downloading onto teachers to provide services they are not adequately trained for — social workers, dieticians, nurses, career counsellors, and addiction counsellors.

I think, Mr. Speaker, you can very clearly see that as a result of downloading we have placed two very significant burdens. Number one, schools and the burden that have been placed on teachers in the schools has become almost unbearable. The conditions need to be improved.

I was very happy to see just a short while ago a presentation to the cabinet, to the government opposite, by a combined effort of Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and school business officials. That document indicated very clearly that the government has to place education funding higher on their priority scale. The concerns on behalf of Saskatchewan students are real concerns. That's half of the problem.

The other half of the problem, Mr. Speaker, is that as a result of millions and millions of dollars of downloading and offloading

onto the local boards, the tax increases that have been felt by property owners in the province of Saskatchewan has reached the point of individuals indicating that it is a maximum.

Property tax owners, as a result of reassessment this last year, have looked at their education property tax and have said, this must stop. It's a tremendous predicament that we've placed the school boards of this province, the teachers of this province, and now we're looking at the whole scenario and looking at the crumbling effect this has on the on the education system.

A couple of comments about the post-secondary side of education, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the member for Saskatoon Greystone raised the concern about post-secondary capital funding. And that is not only for the city of Saskatoon and the University of Saskatchewan, but we also saw it here in Regina at the U of R (University of Regina) with the fact that a brand-new building was opened last year and no additional monies were provided in funding from this government for increased expenses for operating a new building.

We see crumbling buildings in Saskatchewan . . . at the University of Saskatchewan. The member from Greystone adequately, I think, described those kinds of situations.

What we also see though is a concern from students. Students have had . . . at the post-secondary level have picked up more and more of their education costs as we've moved along. Last year, November 29, the former minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education indicated that he was establishing a student assistance task force to look at the entire problems, all of the problems, that students faced in their education needs and education costs. And he announced the formation of that committee by stating this, and I quote:

I will be appointing a task group on student assistance. The task group will include students, representatives of the universities and SIAST, and government officials. The task group will be charged with the responsibility to recommend possible improvements to current student assistance programs and to (present innovative approaches — sorry) present innovative approaches to student assistance that the government will be able to advance in discussions with the federal government and the other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, that quotation is November 29, 1996. We have heard from the government's additional person that the government hired; a gentleman by the name of Harold MacKay, stated:

Students are, with reason, increasingly concerned by the high cost of education. Increased tuition and other on-campus charges, general increases in the cost of living, and reduced summer employment job opportunities have combined to create significant financial pressures on university students. These are pressures which continue after graduation as students cope with the high levels of debt and early repayment schedule.

Mr. Speaker, what you see there in that quotation is the fact that it's a recognition that students have had to pick up additional costs. The burden of student loans is reaching a point of

maximum amounts, and indeed students are not sure that they will be able to repay the huge amounts of money that they are incurring as a result of obtaining loans.

That document, Mr. Speaker, was called for by the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union. It was asked to be released so that the public at large, the opposition members, in fact all government members, would have a chance to look at the recommendations of students, look at the recommendations of this task force, and decide whether or not there are things that can be implemented.

To date, Mr. Speaker, the document sits in the hands of the minister. And we need to be able to assure students that their concerns, their concerns about costs, the costs that the universities are incurring, the costs that technical facilities are incurring, are being looked at by this government. And we urge the minister to seriously look at releasing that report in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion — and I'd like to allow my colleagues to debate the issue as well — we have a number of concerns, we have a number of concerns in both K to 12 education and post-secondary education. Whether they're related to the operating costs or whether they're related to capital, extreme pressure is being put on the field of education in general, and I ask that this government take a very serious look at placing education much higher on its priority list.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the minister . . . the member for the constituency of Moosomin:

That this Assembly condemn this government for its offloading of funding to the health care system, causing undue hardship to Saskatchewan people needing medical attention; to both K to 12 and post-secondary education to the point where Saskatchewan now pays the lowest percentage of provincial operating grants in the country; and to municipalities, which has resulted in further deterioration of roads and high increases in property taxes for landowners.

I so move.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I realize we're getting close to the Christmas season and not far from Christmas Day and members probably want to be on the road going home to enjoy time with family and friends, but there are a number of areas that it's certainly important that we address and the reason for the resolution coming forward this morning.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about offloading, as this resolution deals with, and the responsibilities of different levels of government, over the past number of years we have certainly seen this government take and address a number of concerns within the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you could say they did it responsibly, I would suggest to you that most people would say no, they haven't shown a lot of responsibility or they haven't shown a lot of compassion or a lot of care in how they have addressed situations of funding in health care, or funding for education, as my colleague, the member from Canora-Pelly was talking

about, or funding from Municipal Government as I'm sure we'll hear about a little later on.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at areas, especially like health care, an area that I've been involved with for a number of years as critic and certainly have had the privilege of sitting on a health board and dealing with issues in the past, we have to ask ourselves what has the government really done to address the critical needs that face us in the areas of health care.

What the government basically says and will argue — and the Premier did it again today — will argue that the reasons they made some of the choices they did were, number one, they would go back and say it was because of the government of the '80s and the debt that this province was saddled with. He forgets about part of the debt that was there prior to the government of the '80s being involved, or what's been added to the debt since then.

Or the Premier will say, as he did today . . . he'll blame the federal government, blame the Liberals. And yes, there is room to blame the federal government for part of the problems that we face today and the fact that they have cut transfer payments. But what have we seen in all of this, Mr. Speaker?

What we do see is governments at all levels — other than the local level, where there's no place left to go but to go to the taxpayers — we see governments at all levels looking at blaming somebody else rather than accepting the responsibility for their actions. And when the Premier talks about the federal government offloading, I would suggest that maybe the federal government took a very close look at what the Government of Saskatchewan did since '91 and said, hmm, this is a nice . . . this is probably the easiest way we can find of balancing the books. We're just going to shift more of the burden onto the provinces.

Because what the province did since 1991, what they have done, is shifted more of the load to the local tax base. We see that directly in educational costs. We see that directly in municipal costs, and we're seeing it as far as health services available to people across rural Saskatchewan. And when I talk about offloading, I talk about the district boards that this government brought into place.

They said we needed to address the cost of administration of health boards across this province. Well I don't disagree, Mr. Speaker, that we needed to find a way of bringing communities and the district . . . and all the local boards to a common denominator of working together to address health needs in that community. But I would have to suggest the government's response of larger district health boards has maybe not necessarily met all the problems that were there before or even addressed all those problems.

If you were to talk to a lot of local health board members — members who were involved before the district boards came into place — they would say: did I get any remuneration for the work I put into working for my ambulance board, or working on my hospital board, or working on my care home board? I would suggest many of them would say, you know, when you look back at it, most of the work that I . . . and the effort that I gave was done on a voluntary basis. I did it because I wanted to

see . . . and have an impact and be involved in presenting a sound and . . . access to health . . . sound health care in my area.

And so what the government did, they brought in the district health boards, suggesting that they're going to clean up administration. When I go through my constituency, Mr. Speaker, what — or Mr. Deputy Speaker — what do I find? People don't believe that we've actually cleaned up the administrative costs. They believe that we have actually added to those costs. They see large district office complexes now filled with many staff members, whether it's clerical or secretarial or someone to answer the phones or different leaderships, whether it's involved in facilities management or addressing the needs of the workers.

Mr. Speaker, that's what most people see. They see and they basically say, have we really saved any money? But boy, when it comes to, do we have any more acute care beds or do we have enough acute care beds to meet the needs in our district, they say no. Do we have enough long-term care beds to meet the needs in our district? And they say, no. The government or the district boards will argue yes we do, because our waiting-lists aren't as long.

But what's happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not that the need isn't there, it's just that they've readdressed the criteria to the point that you basically have to be on your back and totally incapacitated to actually get access to our care homes versus what they used to be before.

Now I'm not saying you go back to providing services and facilities for individuals who can genuinely take care of themselves, because I've always believed . . . and most people in my constituency would suggest that they can take care of themselves. They would like to have and like to feel that they have, the ability to remain at home for as long as is physically and mentally possible.

And that's why the home care program came into place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, what we've done — what this government has done — has put more responsibility at the home care level, put more responsibility at the local level, but . . . And here's where the problem comes in. And the auditor certainly pointed it out, that number one, health . . . in one of his comments, the auditor says we found four out of five districts did not have adequate practices to consistently identify priority health needs. And he also goes on to say when districts set priorities, they were often related to the department's expectations rather than the district's priority health needs.

(1200)

And then another comment: most districts respond to specific department priorities rather than assessing the health status of their district. And I think that's one of the major problems we have here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that while we have district boards in place . . . even people I've talked to . . . and just recently we have a minor health crisis that has cropped up in one of the communities that I represent, the community of Whitewood, an area that people were really glad when they saw . . . were feeling that well, we've got something. We're going to combine our acute care with our heavy care — something that I've talked about for a number of years — and provide a real

service, and make sure that we're actually going to have services and facilities and access to beds available in our area.

But we find what has happened, rather than people originally feeling that this was a good project, we do have a number of individuals now who are questioning whether or not we're going to have better service or whether or not we're going to have less service. And as we find in most cases, districts will say we're going to have better service. The public will say at the end of the day, well it's pretty good for what's there but it seems to me we just lost another step.

And then on top of it, when you look at the district boards and how they were set up, the government first of all appointed all the board members. So it just comes back to this argument we have here right now, that local people have very little input and say into the health priorities for their district, even the local boards. And if you were to say today what . . . the make-up of eight elected and four appointed district boards have the ability to meet the specific needs, the auditor is pointing out that no, they don't. Why don't they? Because of the way the Department of Health sets the funding.

So what the government has done, when you raise a question about fewer health care beds, when you raise the question about the Plains health care centre and the fact that it's going to be closed down, the Minister of Health would argue that we're going to have better services once it's closed down, even though we may be 200, even fewer, 200 or so acute care beds fewer than we had before, which, if you take a careful look today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the beds we have in place today with the Plains Health Centre operating, we find that people are still being turned away.

And in case, I point to a recent comment made by an ambulance operator in our area who was sent with a patient to Regina, sent to the Plains health care centre. But as he's on his way with this patient, he receives a phone call and says, don't go to the Plains. Don't come to the Plains health care centre. We do not have a bed to handle a patient.

Well where do I go? Try the General. Call the General. No, you better not come here because we don't have a bed to handle a patient. Well where do I go? Try the Pasqua. Well the Pasqua eventually did work a position for that patient, or find a bed for that patient.

But the frustration of dealing with all of these problems is certainly coming to the forefront. People are becoming more and more annoyed, because they're getting tired of the fact that the government is arguing that we've balanced the books and we've done it responsibly and it certainly hasn't been our problem that has been created in the health care system; it's the district boards that have made the decisions. And as the Health minister . . . as the auditor is saying, the district boards have really been limited.

It's the same thing in Education or with regards to Municipal Government. Regardless of the minister, when they say we have managed this province responsibly, but anyone at any of those levels would say, I don't think so. I don't think you've managed it responsibly. All you've done is shifted the load. And so at the end of the day the taxpayer has to dig into his pocket deeper

while the government continues to take more out of his pocket and builds on the funds coming into the General Revenue Fund and cutting services.

When you look at the Department of Health and how the government has balanced the books . . . I remember the former member of Health, back in the early '90s when restructuring the wellness plan came into place, the minister of Health said at that time, we must make these decisions to address some critical problems and to save some money. Why? First of all they were going to save some money in health care so they could address the so-called deficit that we had.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you take a look at the expenditures in health care since 1991 you will find that while we've seen 52 hospitals close, while we've seen numerous jobs lost out of the health care system, while we've seen health care beds, acute care beds, and heavy care beds terminated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have you seen a significant reduction in expenditures? I would suggest take a careful look and you will see no. We're actually spending more money today than we did in 1991.

So to say that we did all of these things to save some money is being not totally accurate, but in fact it's being false. What the minister is basically saying — no. In fact when I confronted the past minister of Health regarding that situation and his comments about the fact that we didn't save money, and said, well take a look at the books — your own books show that you're spending more, but you've reduced all of this — the minister's comments were, well it wasn't about saving money; it was about spending money differently.

I think if you look throughout the province and why rural Saskatchewan has been hit significantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker — I think even the large urban centres will indicate as well that they have seen some significant changes in how health care is operated — and many people would suggest it hasn't been to the betterment of better health for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's appropriate that this resolution has come forward, because health care is on people's minds. We're in a time of the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where many people are thinking ahead to Christmas and they're thinking ahead to a time of joy and happiness. They're thinking ahead to a time of spending time with family and friends. And yet they have to deal with the realities of, what if an emergency transpires today? What if an emergency transpires over the next few days while we're in this holiday mode and this time of happiness and joy? What if we have to take a family member to utilize a health facility, and we find we've actually got some shut-down of beds because it's holiday time.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that may be true that we do reduce some of the bed usage in regards to specific elective procedures. But what about the emergency situation? If you close that bed down what do you say when an emergency situation arises?

And we've seen it time and time and time again where people have arrived at emergency wards only to find that they may be the 20th or 30th on the list. And in many cases people are on stretchers because there aren't the acute care beds available, or the beds needed to address that specific need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have to ask the government if they have indeed taken the time to talk to people about how we provide quality health care in this province. And by putting the district boards in place, I don't think they necessarily addressed it. By continually demanding that they have the opportunity to appoint at least four of the district board members doesn't necessarily address the problems out there.

And certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to appointments, I had a recent letter that was sent to me and a person made this comment. What can you do to basically bring up the problem that I see of individuals who are on very good pensions tying up well-paying positions on government boards, such as the district health board — in this case we're talking about Mr. Garf Stevenson, the chairman of the Regina District Health Board — a gentleman who has been appointed.

Unfortunately I can't do much about it because of his appointment. However, I can suggest to you that our, that our . . . one of our recent policy resolutions, our members said no more appointments to district boards — all elected, so they are accountable to the electorate not to the government, such as we have right now.

So that's something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our caucus will certainly be working with, proposing, and our party is certainly coming forward with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at other ways of how do we address the problems in consulting people, do we do like the departments or like the Crown corporations, announce an increase in rates and then say you've got 45 days to consult with us, and tell us whether or not you like the rate increases? Such as we see in the recent rate increases for SaskEnergy, where they announced almost 9 per cent increases, had their 45-day review process, and then yesterday announced that the rate increase will only be 7.9 per cent because we've consulted.

My feeling is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the department and the government knew that those rates were going to be at that level but they put it higher, so that they can say to the public when they announced that less . . . a little less, a little less than the 1 per cent or 1 per cent less than the 9, they're going to say, well it's Christmas time; we're giving you a gift. Yet the public are looking at paying their bill at the end of the day, and they're saying, well some gift. It seems to me that the government's been the Scrooge at Christmas time rather than the gift-giver.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to health care as well, people across this province have come up with ideas and innovative ways of making our health care system work better. If you were to talk to Mr. Douglas, going back to Tommy Douglas and when this whole debate of medicare took place, Mr. Douglas had a vision of medicare in this province. But at that time, even Mr. Douglas realized that you needed some public involvement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, did Mr. Douglas say that the taxpayer is going to bear all the load? No, he didn't. What did he . . . he had a premium . . . a health premium in place for a number of years until, I believe it was Mr. Blakeney removed that because it was going to . . . he was going into an election and he wanted to, he wanted to get some votes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I believe the member from Saskatoon Eastview wants to make some comments and offer some input as well. He's bringing Mr. Thatcher's name into the case here. I think Mr. Thatcher saw that people wanted to be involved as well and he put a fee on at the doctors' offices.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the government would argue that the public are totally opposed, I would suggest to you that no, they're not. Since I've been elected to this Assembly, the public have said to me, what's wrong with me being involved a little bit? What's wrong with me having . . . paying a premium and guaranteeing a level of service that I feel would be appropriate for my area or for the community that I'm involved in or wherever? What's wrong with the fact of saying . . .

An area that I think most people don't understand is visitations to doctors' offices. On many occasions I . . . If you go into a local hospital, especially in the rural areas and probably so even in the larger centres, you'll see people at the outpatient clinic. And you ask, well how come . . . why are they there? Like I mean the doctor's office, the clinic is open at 9 o'clock in the morning. There's a physician there to see you because of arrangements that the doctors have made. How come you are here at the outpatient service for that same consultation, because of the fact that a consultation visit at an outpatient service is somewhat four times as much as a clinical visit?

And I want to commend the doctors and physicians throughout this province who have even indicated to the patients, you know, unless I am asking you for specific lab treatments or it's a real emergency, come and visit me at my clinic. You are actually providing a saving to the health care system and we're going to be able to provide service to more people.

So the medical profession is offering ideas. The public is saying . . . and what's the public's response? Well maybe we need to set a fee on if you're going to the outpatient service just for a consultation visit that you could do in a clinic. We'll exempt emergencies or visits that have been requested by your physician.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest to you that there are many people across this province who have some very unique and innovative ideas as to how we address health care, and they are very concerned about the fact that the government continues to offload the responsibility onto local people and local people don't have any involvement or any say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there are many other individuals who want to speak on this issue, want to bring up the problems that have been brought forward by this government, who want to talk about the offloading of responsibility. And it would certainly be appropriate that I don't tie up all the time in this limited debate — because I could certainly go on and on. I could talk about the MS (multiple sclerosis) sufferers who have fought for years, and the question that we've raised for people on hepatitis C who only recently, as the result of bringing the issue more to the forefront . . . and certainly Chief Justice Krever's comments in his review of the tainted blood problem we've had in this country have certainly been of help. But still I believe the government is still lacking in how they are addressing some of these questions.

So like I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could certainly stand here and address a number of other areas and basically eat up the rest of the time period of debate on this resolution, but I just want to close by saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time the government took responsibility for their actions. It's time they quit offloading their responsibility. If they want to blame the federal government, that's fine. But don't then you turn around and offload onto a lower base which stops at the doorstep of the taxpayer.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in support of this resolution.

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

(1215)

**Ms. Murrell:** — I'm very pleased to enter this debate today on the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. His motion makes reference to health care and to education, and I will address those broader issues as well as the specific issue of K to 12 education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is important that we establish very clearly two central facts at the outset. First let us acknowledge what all Saskatchewan people clearly understand — the biggest fiscal offloading in the history of Canada has been deliberately imposed by the federal Liberal government in Ottawa over these past few years. Billions of dollars in financial responsibility for health care, education, and social programs have been offloaded by Ottawa onto all provinces, including Saskatchewan. That was the policy and the decision of the federal Liberal government during the time that the member was himself a Liberal.

Second, let us also recognize a second fact that all Saskatchewan people clearly understand. It was the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party, now calling itself the Saskatchewan Party, that had unmanageable budget deficits every single year they were in office; spending borrowed money that they didn't have; piling up a huge debt which Saskatchewan people are still having to service and repay.

When our government took office in 1991, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan faced a deep financial crisis caused by the mismanagement of the Devine PCs. That's the same crowd who have now changed their name and are currently being led by the former Liberal whose motion is here before us today.

Saskatchewan has come a long way since those dark days of 1991. We have cleaned up the financial mess created by the Saskatchewan Party when it was the PC Party. We have turned the corner. We are investing in Saskatchewan people, and we have implemented a 2 per cent sales tax cut.

And Saskatchewan's education system. Students, parents and teachers are looking forward to the future with confidence and optimism. In our 1996 budget we increased provincial operating grants to schools. In our 1997 budget this past spring we further increased our provincial operating grants to schools. And we have already announced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a further increase in school grants for 1998.

Saskatchewan people are proud of our public school system, and every member of this Assembly should be proud of it as well. Just as this government has acted responsibly in rough times, so too have our school boards acted responsibly. The Leader of the Opposition would be better off if he would give credit where credit is due — to all of those who have worked together during the difficult years our province faced.

For these reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting this resolution.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My colleagues have spoke this morning on education, health, the cuts that go on and on. And I'd like to touch on municipal government.

There's no other area that has been hit worse than municipal government, that has caused more devastation to all areas of the province but especially rural Saskatchewan. We saw revenue sharing for cities, towns, villages, RMs (rural municipalities), and we saw the devastation caused by the cuts that this government has made by loss of jobs, closure of schools, the erosion of our people into the cities, from this government's policies.

And the member opposite cries about federal offloading. Well I suggest they learnt from the best. They watched the Government of Saskatchewan dump on everybody else and then took their turn from there and did the same thing to you. So they're only following what you have already done and taught them to do.

I'd like to touch on some of the cuts that this government has done to local governments. This year alone local government lost 25 per cent reduction in the grants that were given to RMs and towns; \$29 million in one year — 25 per cent of the funding, the overall funding. And then at the same time they turn around and say, well look what we're doing for highways — \$30 million for highways. Municipal governments just did it with \$29 million you took out of their pocket.

Some grants out there, conditional and unconditional for RMs, have been cut 90 per cent. And you're crying about federal offloading. You should be ashamed of yourselves, what you're doing. You back-benchers should be speaking up for the people you represent, especially the rural ridings. And what . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. Order, order. I would ask, I would ask the hon. members to come to order. The hon. member from Saltcoats has the floor. And while I'm on my feet I will remind the hon. member from Saltcoats that all debate must be addressed through the Chair and not directly to members opposite.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really don't need their assistance.

I'm talking about local governments. What are local governments? Local governments are local people elected by their neighbours to handle their money efficiently. And they've done that. They're not allowed to deficit finance, so they can

get their house in order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. I can stand here till the close of this debate if you like, but the hon. member has some points to make and I think that we owe him the courtesy to allow him to make them. I will ask the government members to come to order and to remain to order.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to go back to what I was talking about in local people being hired by their neighbours and being elected by their neighbours and friends to represent them. And they've done a great job. They haven't ran deficits; they've kept the books balanced; they've made every cut possible to be as efficient as they could.

And then what happened? Your government got elected in '91 and dumped all over them because they were efficient and kept their house in order. That can't continue. We can't survive if you keep dumping on them.

That's just some of the examples I'd like to give for RMs out there, the programs that you have discontinued. And one of the most ridiculous cuts you've made on that side of the House — and the minister made — was the one to the futures program. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was cut without any consultation with RMs.

And what was the futures program? It was a program where local government financed your share four years in advance, were happy to do it, so they could build at least five, six miles of road at one time, carry your share of the load, and you would reimburse them over the four-year period.

But no, because it was shown as a debt, your government saw fit to cut the program, a very good program which helped rural people, and once again you came along and slashed.

Main farm access. You completely cut all the funding for main farm access roads. Now many of your constituents live on these same roads. They pay gas tax. In fact a high dollar in gas tax, and yet are receiving no benefit when it comes to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, building the road, maintaining the road, grading the road. You people should be ashamed of yourself.

And we see all our roads in our province that are falling apart, disintegrating under the heavy traffic, and what are you doing about it? Well we've got successor rights. We need short-line rails to start up and take over for rail line abandonment. But in many cases it isn't going to happen because of successor rights, which your government refuses to remove as a roadblock to this happening.

We see a great number of traffic, Mr. Speaker, diverting from our highway system to our rural road system, because for one reason, it's too rough to drive on the highway system in this province. And the RMs have kept their roads in shape with no help from you, so it's smoother to drive in the RMs. But what it's doing is disintegrating and deteriorating our rural road system at a greater speed and a faster rate.

Then I remember, I think, believe it was the last election, that there was a promise of 10 per cent of the VLT (video lottery terminal) revenue going to municipalities. But shortly after the

election, I'm sure on the other side, we had to decide very quickly how we were going to break this promise but not look bad doing it.

So what we did, the minister decided we would take SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), SAHO, and the education people, throw it in a hat and say here, divvy up this money. But that wasn't the promise. The promise, Mr. Speaker, was 10 per cent of the VLT money for municipalities.

You did that knowingly that they could not agree and would never agree on how it should be spent. It's time to honour that agreement. What, \$130 million last year; \$130 million in gambling revenue this year? That's \$13 million that municipalities have been robbed of that they need to offset to some degree what you've done to community organizations that are having a hard time functioning in our communities because of another tax grab your government has brought in through your gambling policy. I believe the addiction is on that side with money, not with the people of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, this government treats all local governments with complete, outright arrogance. It did not get its way on forcing amalgamation so now it's trying to do it by starving them of funds. Well it won't work. It didn't work last session when you tried to force amalgamation through and it will not happen now.

You know, I find it amazing. We've got \$31 million, Mr. Speaker, to go over to Guyana, and really look shaky this morning spending it on a power company over there. We forced and helped force them to privatize theirs when at home we won't even look at that here. We wouldn't even consider it. But it's good enough to happen to somewhere else so we can buy in with taxpayers' money from here that we could use here for health, school, roads. The list goes on and on.

But we want to go over there and take such people as Jack Messer, Carole Bryant, Don Ching, and make big shots out of them with our money. No mandate to do it; run around the world and be big shots. And no one in this province has said, do it. And at the same time what are we doing? We're raising telephone rates, SaskEnergy rates, SaskPower rates, all SGI rates. The list just doesn't quit. It goes on and on and on. Well in '99 we're going to see how the public of Saskatchewan is happy about all these deals.

Mr. Speaker, what I would say is, let's finally . . . let's take this money, invest in Saskatchewan. Let's keep our money at home. Put into such things like the RUD (rural underground distribution) program. That was the program where you added a reconstruction fee, took 14 more million dollars into the kitty. Didn't want to show it anywhere, actually, was it? They didn't want to put it anywhere, and at the same time cancelled the reconstruction in the province.

A little bit hypocritical, wouldn't you say? On one hand we're charging and on the other hand we're taking it away. Amazing. Really amazing. That money could be well spent at home on our road system, our highways, our hospitals, and our schools.

Mr. Speaker, as you can tell probably by now, I support this motion.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm also happy today to talk about this resolution, which I support wholeheartedly.

I recognize the offloading this government has done in Saskatchewan, but nowhere have we seen the effects of it as badly as we have in rural Saskatchewan.

The members opposite have forsaken rural Saskatchewan. Even the members who come from the rural constituencies sit by and watch the government totally devastate their areas. And members in the opposition, I can't tell you how many phone calls I get every week from constituents of yours who are very upset over the fact that they aren't being listened to by the government they supposedly elected.

And, Mr. Speaker, as part of this government's scheme of offloading, rural areas have borne most of the brunt. It's a sign of a government with mixed priorities that slashes and cuts away at rural Saskatchewan.

Let's look at the money that they brought in from Liquor and Gaming. There were \$476 million in Liquor and Gaming revenues and there hasn't been any dividends given back to the province directly from this fund. There are over \$270 million more in taxes from the sale of oil and gas as in the same period last year, and yet the local governments are forced to maintain the services and absorb third-party funding cuts.

When this government came to office they paid 60 per cent of the education costs and taxpayers paid 40. In the latest Saskatchewan indicators, we see that this trend has been reversed and that the education funding has dropped from 19 to 17 per cent of your budget.

As a result of the reduction of education funding, rural Saskatchewan has gained a closure of schools and a reduction since 1992 of more than 100 educators, and an increase in multiple grades. Our educators and our administrators and our boards of education are forced to meet the challenges of providing quality education with less money.

This government has lost \$16 million in the failed SaskTel venture in NST (Network Services of Chicago). They've made a dozen trips to Guyana to ensure that we can gamble \$31 million of our money in Guyana. They've hired 200 people, at the cost of \$7 million, to communicate all their policies, and they've chosen to spend \$3.9 million on a new executive airline rather than invest it in the future of our province.

Agriculture producers are the drivers of the economic engine of this province and yet they've been extremely hard hit in the past decade. Statistics Canada released numbers the other day to . . . shows for every one dollar's worth of grain sold at the elevators, the farmer pockets less than a dime.

(1230)

Current profit margins are now down at 9 per cent from 36 per cent in the mid-'70s. Yet this government, through its new assessment which raised some farmers' tax bills by as much as \$100 a quarter . . . and expecting the farmers to pick up more on education tax. Many in the agricultural industry have been forced to pick up this increased cost at a time when input costs and transportation costs are rising and grain prices are declining.

The government claims there is very little they can do with this transportation issue and yet they fail to look at the very severe problem of successor rights. They've chosen to support unionized workers rather than the farmers and the grain transportation industry.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to talk about the economic prosperity of this province and the potential for growth. But this growth will not be recognized if the government continues to ignore rural Saskatchewan. Economic prosperity in this province is dependent on maintaining a viable infrastructure. Eliminating programs like the future programs, which allowed our municipal governments to carry out road construction they might not otherwise be able to do, was not a step in increasing economic prosperity.

According to a study released by CAA (Canadian Automobile Association), the government is putting only 37 per cent of what it will collect in fuel tax and motor vehicle registration back into our highways. While this government collected the highest amount of road-related revenue in more than 10 years, in 1996-97, they put back into the highways the lowest percentage in the same time frame.

Do you realize that in 1991 when this government came into power they were spending \$212 million on highways? This year the spending is less than that. My office continues to receive calls from constituents about the condition of the highways.

This spring I received a call from a school bus driver in the Saint Front area concerned about Highway No. 349 to Saint Front. This bus driver was concerned about the condition of the road and told me that there were portions of the road where he had to drive the bus on the wrong side of the road just to make it down the road. We've got school buses with children driving in them that are having to ride on the wrong side of the road just to have to make it down the highway. This is a safety concern.

This government did choose to increase health care funding by \$18 million. The impact of the closure of hospitals, especially in rural Saskatchewan, and reduction of health services are continuing to have a major impact on rural Saskatchewan. We are continuing to hear about the increasing waiting-list for surgery, for tests, and for placements in homes.

Just this week there was an article in the *Star-Phoenix* about a Weyburn peewee coach who shattered his kneecap in a Tuesday night hockey practice and didn't have surgery until . . . in Regina until Friday.

Our health care professionals are not to blame for the lack of the health services. They are working very hard; it's the government that must bear the blame for the state of our health system. The government prefers to focus on the dollars,

forgetting that the added stress of the crumbling health centre does not support the wellness model that they supposedly built. It's a well-known fact that stress actually causes many of our health problems.

This summer I watched my constituency assistant and her family deal with a family problem and the death of a loved one, and as they tried to help her through this terrible situation they found they had to set up a 24-hour schedule with their family to sit with this lady just because the nurses didn't have the time to give her the care that she needed. They tried very hard, but it wasn't possible to spend time with individuals, and the family themselves sat by her bed 24 hours a day.

I don't believe that this is the type of medical care that Tommy Douglas envisioned when he introduced medicare into Saskatchewan. The mid-term financial report told the people of Saskatchewan how great the provincial finances are looking. We all know that much of the rosy picture is the result of the many taxes and hikes that the people of Saskatchewan have to bear. The average Saskatchewan resident has to work 12 more days to pay for his or her taxes than any other place in Canada. Saskatchewan's tax freedom day has gone from June 5 in 1990 to July 12 in 1997. That's another increase.

SaskTel, SGI, and SaskEnergy are making a combined profit of \$180 million and yet now they need an additional rate increase. The latest proposed SaskTel rate increase could amount to a 47 per cent increase in local charges over two years even though last year SaskTel had a profit of \$84 million. SaskTel expects rural Saskatchewan local rates to increase as much as 49 per cent yet rural residents enjoy very small regional telephone exchanges compared to their city counterparts.

Many business owners have approached my office concerned about the small regional exchanges and the cost to their company for long-distance calls, for directory information, and now for local rate changes. Businesses in rural Saskatchewan are at a distinct disadvantage in telephone services when compared to those in Saskatoon and Regina.

Why is SaskTel proposing to increase local charges by as much as 49 per cent if they can afford to invest \$63 million of the taxpayers' money in New Zealand in a project where they're putting up almost half the funding but only earning 35 per cent of the equity?

SaskTel recently announced that they're looking to invest 150 to \$200 million in foreign equity in Europe, Australia, and in the Caribbean over the next three to five years. Instead of investing this money out of country, why isn't SaskTel increasing SaskTel mobile coverage so that the residents of rural Saskatchewan can be assured of coverage if they're forced to travel along these terrible roads?

Instead of investing outside of Canada, why isn't our Crown Corporation providing services which would keep businesses in rural Saskatchewan competitive with those in the city?

If government isn't willing to invest in a province, why in the world do they travel around the globe trying to find foreign investors to come into this province? If they don't believe in Saskatchewan, if the government doesn't believe in



Saskatchewan, why would anybody else?

Similarly, SaskPower hiked commercial electrical rates by 12 per cent in January of '96 while it lost \$8 million on a natural gas company out of Canada. Will they lose this money in Guyana as well?

SaskEnergy boosted gas rates by 2.5 per cent in June of '96 and now we have another rate increase. And yet last week they confirmed that they will invest in Chile anywhere from 3 to \$5 million. Once again instead of investing in Saskatchewan, SaskEnergy chooses to go outside of the province.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Pursuant to a special order passed in this House on December 15, time on this debate has now expired and the Chair must put the question directly.

The division bells rang from 12:37 p.m. until 12:38 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

#### Yeas — 10

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Draude	Gantfoer
Heppner	Osika	McPherson
McLane		

#### Nays — 22

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Shillington
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Goulet	Upshall	Kowalsky
Teichrob	Pringle	Renaud
Lorje	Bradley	Nilson
Hamilton	Sonntag	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Langford
Murrell		

**Mr. McPherson:** — With leave, to introduce a series of motions, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I ask the House Leader to advise the House as to the nature of the motions that you wish to have leave to introduce.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce motions in regards to changing of members on standing committees.

Leave granted.

### MOTIONS

#### Substitution of Members on Legislative Committees

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Gerard Aldridge be substituted for that of Mr. Jack Hillson on the list of members of the Standing Committee on Non-controversial Bills.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Gerard Aldridge be added to the list of members composing the Standing Committee on Estimates.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Gerard Aldridge be deleted from the list of members of the Special Committee on Regulations.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Jack Hillson be substituted for that of Mr. Gerard Aldridge on the list of members of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Glen McPherson be deleted from the list of members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Glen McPherson be substituted for that of Mr. Harvey McLane on the list of members of the Standing Committee of Crown Corporations.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, with the leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Gerard Aldridge be deleted from the list of members of the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

(1245)

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the leave given, I move, seconded by the member from Melville:

That the name of Mr. Ron Osika be substituted for that of Mr. Glen McPherson on the list of members of the Standing Committee on Communications.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to move a motion which would substitute names of members on standing committees.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, at the end of my brief comments, I will move a motion rescinding some appointments this morning. Earlier this morning, the Government House Leader appointed the member from Saskatoon Northwest, the member from Regina Dewdney, and the member from Cypress Hills to a committee. I'm informed that they have served brilliantly and at least they've made no mistakes and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . As the member from Rosetown says, the time has come to end their appointments, and therefore without an elaborate explanation as to what went wrong, I will move — and I know the member from Prince Albert Carlton is proud to second this — I will move that, the following motion:

That the names of Mr. Grant Whitmore, Mr. Ed Tchorzewski, Mr. Jack Goohsen, be substituted for that of Mr. Bob Pringle, Mr. Maynard Sonntag, and Ms. Lynda Haverstock on the list of members composing the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections — which was adopted earlier this day, be rescinded.

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to move another, complementary motion.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — All is not lost, though. In spite of the brevity of their service on the former committee, we're going to give these folks another chance. The member from Prince Albert Carlton will be seconding the following motion:

That the names of Grant Whitmore, Mr. Ed Tchorzewski, Mr. Jack Goohsen, be substituted for that of Mr. Bob Pringle, Mr. Maynard Sonntag, and Ms. Lynda Haverstock on the list of standing committees composing the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, we'll all wish them well in these new appointments.

Motion agreed to.

## SPECIAL ORDER

### THIRD PARTY MOTION

#### Social Effects of Gambling

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start off by saying that I am pleased to have the opportunity to be able to put forward some of my thoughts on today's resolution, at the end of which I will be proposing a motion.

I've put a lot of thought into this matter, and the more I think about this NDP government's lack of social conscience when it comes to gambling expansion, Mr. Speaker, the angrier I get. During the spring session of this House I introduced a private member's Bill, 211, entitled An Act respecting the Accountability for Costs Associated with Gambling Addiction Rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, it's a long title with legislation for a very simple concept, and that is to ensure that the costs associated with the rehabilitation of addicted gamblers in Saskatchewan are shown separately in *Public Accounts* of the province as an expense of the Liquor and Gaming Authority rather than an indistinguishable expense of our Health department.

You see, Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, after several years of reaping in the fiscal rewards of gambling expansion, the province cannot even answer a simple information request about what exactly it costs to treat those Saskatchewan people who have become addicted to gambling.

After submitting a few written questions on what it costs the Department of Health, or perhaps the health districts, to treat an average addicted gambler, the response I continue to get from the Health department was and is, and I quote, "health districts do not provide statistics to Saskatchewan Health on the average cost of problem gambling treatment services per client."

So, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government, which often boasts about its social conscience, is raking in, raking in hundreds of millions of dollars from Saskatchewan gamblers but simply does not feel the need to keep track of the social costs this expansion is having on our Saskatchewan society. This NDP government, Mr. Speaker, is making abdication of responsibility some sort of an art form. We have seen multimillion dollar gambling expansion in communities across Saskatchewan. But the government does not see the need to examine the effects of this provincially sponsored gambling expansion on Saskatchewan society. The theme of the two ministers of gambling seems to be, act now then we'll think about the consequences later.

Mr. Speaker, as a former RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officer, I cannot even begin to tell you about the number of people I have encountered during my career who got into a whole heck of a lot of trouble for acting before thinking of what the consequences would be or may be. But really when we look at this government's record we should not be surprised. This is a government who slashed budget at the expense of Saskatchewan people.

Shortly after coming into power in 1991 they saw the need to criss-cross Saskatchewan, slamming the doors shut on 52 hospitals. Now their so-called wellness model is causing nothing but pain for the people of Saskatchewan. That's right, Mr. Speaker, people from neighbouring communities are being pitted against each other just to retain the right to access very necessary health services.

In just one year we will see the doors close for what was intended to be the major trauma centre for southern Saskatchewan, a centre of excellence — which it has proven itself to be — a health centre renowned for specialized care. A centre where miracles happen, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government plans to board up the Plains Health Centre even though complaints continue to pour in about the lack of beds in the Regina Health District.

We see this government's commitment to needs-based funding is turning out to be nothing more than a farce. And despite all the evidence that the NDP's wellness model is making people sick, the government still does not see the need for reviewing the true effects health reform is having on this province. Why should gambling expansion then be any different?

Now let's look at how this government has slashed over \$326 million in net funding from Saskatchewan education since it was first elected back in 1991. Mr. Speaker, that is \$326 million less for Saskatchewan classrooms, \$326 million less for cultivating quality education for our Saskatchewan students.

That means that school divisions are being pitted against each other to fight for the same paltry funding. This chronic underfunding of education means that Saskatchewan teachers are embroiled in tense contract negotiations because they are the second lowest paid in all of Canada.

The chopping of \$326 million in net education funding means that now taxpayers are overburdened with funding at least 60 per cent of this province's education funding costs.

Mr. Speaker, we are just finding out exactly what impact these cuts are having on Saskatchewan students. But once again, the NDP government boasts about making high quality education for our children a priority, then at the same time takes away the money that would provide adequate resources in our classrooms. Why should gambling expansion be any different?

We also cannot forget that the government's bottom line has meant the bottoming out for many rural Saskatchewan residents. When gambling expansion was first being promoted by this NDP government, there was a promise to return 10 per cent of profits to Saskatchewan communities — fair enough. What happened to that commitment and to that promise? Mr. Speaker, I can answer that question.

The promise to return 10 per cent of VLT was blatantly broken and then conveniently forgotten by the NDP government. But no, they did not stop there. Just to make sure they were properly wreaking destruction on rural Saskatchewan's way of life, the minister of municipal gaming has employed methodical axing of funding to municipalities. After axing tens of millions of dollars from local governments, the minister is hoping she will starve them into submission so they will amalgamate.

Let them pool their resources, she says. So now what we see, Mr. Speaker, is four RMs getting together to pool their paltry financial resources just so they can maintain a few kilometres of grid roads.

These savage municipal funding cuts are having a devastating impact on the people who live in rural areas. And sadly enough we won't know just how harsh these consequences will be for years to come.

So once again we see this NDP government acting on behalf of their bottom line and ignoring the consequences their actions are having on Saskatchewan families. Why should gambling expansion be any different? In fact, Mr. Speaker, this government is taking gambling expansion to new levels.

Every month that passes by, we learn just how passionately the minister responsible for CIC feels about gambling. He's a high-flying, high roller. Despite having seen millions of dollars lost at the table on the NST deal, he continues to feel the need to wager tens of millions of dollars at taxpayers' expense.

We've all figured out this strategy for making the wager. The riskier the venture, the higher the stakes, the more exciting, and the more he wants to play. Right now he's involved in what one may call a high-stakes poker game in Guyana. But hey, what's \$31 million here and there. After all, Mr. Speaker, it only comes out of the pockets of the Saskatchewan taxpayers. Who cares.

Now he's placing bets on SaskEnergy's ventures in Chile, and SaskTel admits that it will also likely invest hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign ventures during the next couple of years.

But do you know what? The minister is not concerned. He's got a heavy bankroll behind him. And even if the chips do get a little low, not to worry. He just announces another back-door tax increase — SaskPower, SaskEnergy, SaskTel, and even SGI. After all, he's got to feed his habit.

But are the minister and his NDP colleagues evenly remotely concerned — even remotely concerned — about what impact these risky ventures and constant rate hikes are having on Saskatchewan people? No sir, none at all. Why should gambling expansion be any different?

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Pursuant to rule 3(1), and a special order of the House passed on December 15, the debate on this motion has now expired and I will require the hon. member, the Leader of the Third Party, to propose his motion directly.

(1300)

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You really missed a good speech. I thank you. I would like to present the following motion, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly call upon the government to launch an independent inquiry into the effects of provincially sponsored gambling on the people of Saskatchewan; with particular attention paid to the social consequences of gambling, including the problem of gambling addiction,

the impact on the family structure, the decreased availability of discretionary monies formerly available to charities and service groups and communities, and the impact on crime rates and on utilization of health care services within Saskatchewan.

Seconded by the member from Wood River.

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

The division bells rang from 1:02 p.m. until 1:03 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

**Yeas — 7**

Krawetz	Toth	Osika
Hillson	McPherson	Belanger
McLane		

**Nays — 28**

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Wiens
Shillington	Tchorzewski	Johnson
Whitmore	Goulet	Lautermilch
Upshall	Kowalsky	Teichrob
Pringle	Koenker	Renaud
Lorje	Bradley	Scott
Nilson	Hamilton	Stanger
Sonntag	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Langford	Murrell
Thomson		

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask for leave to move a motion with respect to the resumption of sittings on adjournment.

Leave granted.

**MOTIONS**

**House Adjournment**

**Hon. Mr. Shillington:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my comments I will move the usual motion. Before doing so, I have a couple of comments I want to make, one about the session I think.

We experienced in this session a degree of unanimity on the unity motion which, if not unique in my 22 years here, is very close to it. I think all but one member voted for it. In so doing I think we all hope that we might do something positive for Canada and let us hope we . . . at the end of the day we will have.

The rest of the session was marked by good debate, sharp divisions. But in all cases I think the rules of engagement were respected by all members. And I think this session has perhaps taken another small step towards the re-establishment of the reputation of this institution, which it so badly needs and which I think this province so badly needs.

So I congratulate all members on what I think has been a

session which has reflected well on all of us.

Before moving the motion, I want to wish all members Merry Christmas. And in a personal way, if not a political way, I want to wish you all a good New Year. And we will look forward to seeing you again when the session resumes in a few weeks for the spring session.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That when this Assembly adjourns at the end of the sitting day, it shall stand adjourned to the date and time set by Mr. Speaker upon the request of the government, and that Mr. Speaker shall give each member seven clear days notice, if possible, of such date and time.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few comments before we take a moment to vote on this motion brought forward by the House Leader.

I would like to certainly indicate, on behalf of the Official Opposition, that we were more than pleased to have been invited to a fall session, that we've certainly recognized the importance of Canada. I think we all feel strongly about our nation, and the debate that took place in this Assembly and certainly over the past number of months regarding our country and about its unity, I think was certainly important and significant. And we were pleased to have been a part of that.

And we trust that certainly our words have . . . will not go unanswered, that they'll just fall on deaf ears; that indeed all Canadians will recognize that we do live in a great country.

I would also like to thank the government members for the fact that they have called us in the fall and brought us together and recognize that a fall session has a part. And we certainly invite and open our arms to further fall sessions in the future. And we thank the government for recognizing that.

We also want to just say, while it's been a short session, certainly I think it's been an indication that there are still strong divisions amongst all the political parties but we're able to place our views very strongly and have, at the end of the day, recognition for those differences but a respect for each one of the members in this Assembly.

And in that regard, Mr. Speaker, to you and to all the members of this Assembly, and certainly all the staff of this Legislative Building, my colleagues and I extend a very hearty Merry Christmas and healthy New Year. We trust that this will be a special time for each and every one as you get together with family and friends. And may you just enjoy this time; best of the season, we look forward to gathering together again in the spring.

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

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to add the voice of the third party caucus, the Liberal caucus, to those that have already been spoken. I would also like to recognize and thank sincerely once again . . . I appreciate the opportunity to thank the people in financial services and the

Legislative Library; those folks that we don't see here but are out there and they're constantly working on our behalf. And I want to express our sincere appreciation to them, and all the staff that returned with us for this very, very important week and this important session.

I know that this time of year, each and every one of us remember friends, family, and we want to be with them. I want to acknowledge our staff who are sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of our Liberal Party as well. And on behalf of each and every one of us and on behalf of our leader, I too would like to express to each and every one of my hon. colleagues here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, to yourself, to all the staff, and to all the people of Saskatchewan, may you have a really peaceful Christmas, happy holiday season. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — Before declaring adjournment, the Chair would request leave to make a few brief comments. Would leave be granted?

Leave granted.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair appreciates the opportunity to make a brief comment.

I listened very carefully to the comments made by those who spoke to the previous motion, and members may take interest in something I learned just a few moments ago, that the CPAC (cable public affairs channel) channel is intending to replay in its entirety the debate on the unity resolution that took place in this House on Tuesday of this week. And the best information I have is that it'll scheduled to play in Saskatchewan on Sunday at 12 o'clock noon. So members may want to take note of that and pass that information along to your constituents who may be interested in seeing that debate.

Hon. members, you may or may not be aware that our pages who are assisting us during this second sitting of this session of the legislature have been not only serving in this House, they've also been serving in some of their capacities in other ways in this building, and several at the same time have also been writing final exams this week. And I know that you would want to express your appreciation to Daniel Abramson, Rebecca Fiissel, Kristina Potter, Graham Condo, and Aamna Afsar.

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

**The Speaker:** — As has been said already by members, and I would say that I concur, that in the week that we've been here today, members have conducted themselves with dignity and with great respect for this institution and for one another, and consistent with the principles of parliamentary democracy. And I want to express the appreciation of the Chair for having represented your constituents with a love for your province.

I wish also as well, on your behalf, to extend Christmas greetings to all the members of the Legislative Assembly Office staff throughout the building, some of whom have come on short notice and some of whom that are not normally seen — have been former staff members — who came back to fill in the

gaps during this week. And I know that you'll want to extend on the record your best wishes to all of them for the Christmas season.

On behalf of the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair, and on behalf as well of the Clerks and their office, and on behalf of the staff in my office, I want to extend to all hon. members the best wishes of the Christmas season. I hope this is a time that you're able to enjoy some quality time with your families and your friends, with your constituents, and that it will be a season that will find much joy in your homes and much peace in your hearts.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, all hon. members, having wished to each of you a very Merry Christmas, I now declare this House adjourned until the call of the Chair.

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

The Assembly adjourned at 1:14 p.m.



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