

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present a petition on behalf of many residents in the province of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call for an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition are from the communities of Wolseley and Whitewood. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call for an independent public inquiry to find all of the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

These petitions come from the Langbank, Moosomin, Whitewood, and Kipling areas, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have petitions to present to this Assembly and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the Moosomin, Kipling, Langbank areas of the province.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I also have petitions to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the town of Whitewood. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders and wildlife and sportsmen organizations 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.

And these come from people in Spalding, Rose Valley, Saskatoon, Kelvington, Prince Albert. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present today.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Whitewood and Kipling. Thank you.

Mr. Boyd: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have petitions as well to present.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders and the wildlife and sportsmen organizations in the province 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.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions come from Spalding, Annaheim, Naicam areas of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions on behalf of citizens of this province.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains hospital by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

And the signatures are from Glenbain, from Stewart Valley, Swift Current, and other small communities throughout rural Saskatchewan. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also present petitions on the issue of the Plains hospital:

Your petitioners humbly pray that this Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains hospital by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

I so present, as your petitioners come from the Assiniboia, Mossbank, Wood Mountain, Rockglen, and Meyronne and Limerick area of the province.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the closure of the Plains hospital. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who've signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from communities throughout Thunder Creek — Claybank, Avonlea, Cardross, Spring Valley, Briercrest. Also from the city of Moose Jaw. I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding for the Regina Health District so that essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

And the people who have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, they're from places like Assiniboia, Lafleche, Limerick, Mossbank, Glentworth, Gravelbourg, and all throughout the land; and I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the people from Assiniboia.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues in presenting petitions which would bring it nearer the 100,000 that have been presented in this legislature to date. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding for the Regina Health District so that essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed these petitions are from Swift Current, Wymark, and several pages from the Coronach area. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

These come, Mr. Speaker, today mostly from Maple Creek, but there are some from Eastend, and Regina, and Robsart I see as well, and I'm happy to present them today.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to cause the government to cancel severance payments to Jack Messer and to call an independent public inquiry surrounding Channel Lake;

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to cause the government to provide for underground power lines and natural gas for all rural people at original rates;

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to enact legislation to provide natural gas service to northern Saskatchewan at a cost similar to southern recipients; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway, to save the Plains Health Centre, and to ban the practice of night hunting.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that

I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

What are the total funds to date obtained through the fee paid by Saskatchewan customers to the SaskPower reconstruction fund?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to all of the members of the Legislative Assembly, it's my great pleasure today to introduce eight special guests from O'Neill High School. These are work experience students and with them of course is their teacher or chaperon, Bill Allen. I very much look forward to meeting with this group after question period. In fact my note says from 2:30 to 3 o'clock we'll be meeting in the members' dining-room. And I very much look forward to that time. I ask all members to join me in welcoming this group from O'Neill High School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly today a group of nine visitors from the Cancer Patient Lodge in my constituency. I hope that you enjoy the proceedings today. I think it would be fair to say that you'll find them interesting; and we certainly wish you well in your course of treatments at the lodge.

And we'll be meeting in the Speaker's boardroom for refreshments after, where I could answer any questions that you might have about the House or other matters.

And as well, although they may be introduced additionally to myself, I'd like to also introduce a constituent of mine between her international travels, Allie Irvine, and I apologize for not remembering your name, sir, her husband, recently married, and welcome them and hope you enjoy your visit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to introduce to you today a constituent of mine who is in your gallery, Susan McQuarrie. She's joined by a very special visitor to our Assembly today, Mr. Pacifique Manirakiza. Professor Manirakiza is from Burundi; he's a refugee. He is in Canada, has been for about six months now, and was telling me that although the climate is somewhat less hospitable, I think that he is finding our hospitality and the people of Canada most friendly.

I'd ask you to join with me in welcoming him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and members of the Assembly today, seated in your gallery, two individuals who are here representing Nutrition Month. Michelle Klassen, who is a dietician from the Regina Health District, and Julie Johnson, who's the nutritionist from the Regina Health District. And I'll ask us to stand in a moment to acknowledge them.

But this year's theme is . . . our Nutrition Month is: "Making Nutrition Come Alive; It's All About You." And the purpose of Nutrition Month is to help all of us make healthier food choices which fit into our busy lives.

And when I look around the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, there are probably a number of us who can benefit from visiting and speaking with our nutritionists. And making healthy food choices for ourselves and for our children is a wise and simple investment, and helping ensure good health throughout our lives.

So I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the Assembly — if you don't mind just standing — welcoming both Michelle and Julie to the Chamber this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I'm pleased to introduce to the Assembly today a visitor from my constituency, who is seated in your gallery, who happens to be the most beautiful woman in Moose Jaw Wakamow. Her name is Betty Calvert.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Agriculture and Food Week

Mr. Flavel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, March the 15 to the 21 is Agriculture and Food Week in Saskatchewan and it enables us to recognize the contributions of agriculture to our community and our province.

Agriculture has been faced with many changes — especially with the loss of the Crow, rail-line abandonment, and deregulation of the rates. But agriculture has responded to these changes by being innovative and creative, by diversifying with pulse crops, spice, potatoes, and also raising bison, elk, ostrich, and others.

And the Saskatchewan Ag-Food department has responded to this by investing nearly 80 million to this end. Recently, Agri-Food Innovation Fund approved 8.5 million for the launching of the Saskatchewan Food Industry Centre. The beef development fund was established to encourage research in the beef industry. Since 1995 the beef development fund has funded some 22 projects.

Mr. Speaker, ag and food had sales of \$8 billion in 1996 — 60 per cent of those were exports and, Mr. Speaker, 40 per cent of all the jobs in the province are related to the ag and food industry. It is through the hard work, the determination, and the originality of our toilers of the earth that agriculture is, and will remain, the mainstay of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to our farmers. It is because of their quick and . . . their determination to succeed, that agriculture will continue to be a mainstay. To the farmers and the people in agri-food . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. member's time has expired. Statements continue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is both my great honour and privilege to rise today as a member of the Legislative Assembly and also as a member of the agriculture community to recognize Agriculture Week in the province of Saskatchewan.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that the members of this Assembly and the residents of Saskatchewan truly recognize the driving force the agriculture industry plays in this province. As one of Saskatchewan's primary industries, agriculture accounts directly or indirectly for most of the jobs, most of the wealth creation, and a large part of the well-being of this great province.

The men and women associated with agriculture deserve a large show of our appreciation for their efforts during the week. The weather today, Mr. Speaker, with a large snowfall forecast, is going to provide a lot of hope for farmers out in the south-west part of Saskatchewan. In a few short weeks the annual largest megaproject will begin with millions of dollars of inputs going into the ground to provide what we all hope will be a bountiful harvest.

This week we celebrate agriculture's contribution to Saskatchewan and we salute the thousands of men and women for their part in Saskatchewan's agriculture both past and future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Patrick's Day

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to address this House on this very special day, March 17, more commonly known as St. Patrick's Day. And being the member of the caucus here with a name beginning with O, I thought it would appropriate that I just address that event.

A well-known Irish event, Mr. Speaker, is the Irish Sweepstakes. This year the people of Saskatchewan know who won the sweepstakes, although very few of them will be congratulating him. Jack O'Messer has just won \$300,000. Yes, he was a long shot — what odds. But having the luck of the Irish, he was left holding the winning ticket while the rest of the NDP (New Democratic Party) were left holding the bag.

Mr. Speaker, leprechauns are also a big part of Irish myth. They are supposed to be mean, evil little creatures. Perhaps Jack O'Messer is part leprechaun. Perhaps that may explain his pot of gold at the end of the NDP rainbow.

Mr. Speaker, this day was named after St. Patrick, who drove all the snakes out of Ireland. Aye, 'tis a pity that St. Patrick doesn't work for SaskPower — or perhaps he does. If so, he still has a lot of work ahead of him.

But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, this is a day for the Irish to celebrate their accomplishments. In the last couple of years, there's been a great resurgence in Irish music and dancing. The famed *Riverdance* show is here in Regina this week and has been sold out for a very long time. There is no better credit than

that.

On behalf of my colleagues and I, we do sincerely wish the people of Irish blood the very best on this, their special day to celebrate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Nutrition Month

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, March has been declared National Nutrition Month. This year's theme is "Make Nutrition Come Alive; It's All About You."

Nutrition of course, is a key component of good health, as is exercise, Mr. Speaker — and I am trying. The message this year emphasizes that nutrition information such as *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* can be personalized to fit individual needs and tastes.

Saskatchewan Health works with a number of partners to develop policies and support programs which assist the people of the province to eat well. An example of such collaboration can be found in Yorkton. Through a provincial wellness grant, the Yorkton Body Image Group developed the "Body Image Kit." This is an educational tool designed to assist educators when discussing healthy body image in their grade 7 to 12 classrooms. A second provincial grant has been designated for the Lloydminster Health District in my constituency for a similar program.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other ways in which Saskatchewan Health supports and works with nutritionists and dieticians in our mutual quest for a healthier, happier population. We are honoured by the presence of our guests and to affirm to them and the people of Saskatchewan this government's continued commitment to wellness. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Businessman Wins Dealer of the Year Award

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to commend all of those men and women who contribute so much to the agricultural community throughout the world, and more specific today I would like to recognize an outstanding Humboldt businessman, Mr. Gerald Hergott, who has done his share in contributing to that community.

Mr. Hergott, general manager of Hergott Farm Equipment Ltd., was recently chosen as the winner of the Bill Lipsey Merit Award for dealer of the year. The western Canada award is given by Canada West Equipment Dealers Association. Mr. Hergott was one of 12 business people nominated for the award from board members across western Canada. The award winner must be an association member, have equipment business involvement, and be active in the association and in their home community.

Mr. Hergott's community involvement includes having been a town councillor, chairman of the Humboldt Recreation Board, chairperson of the first local housing authority, member of St. Elizabeth's Hospital board, and member of the Carlton Trail

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission.

Mr. Hergott has also served on Case IH committees and the Saskatchewan-Manitoba Implement Dealers Association Board.

Congratulations, Mr. Hergott.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Patrick's Day

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I recently came across an interesting-sounding, scholarly book titled, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. The jacket cover, Mr. Speaker, said that towards the end of the first millennium A.D., western civilization as it had been developed through the Greeks and Romans would have been destroyed by the right-wing hordes of the day had it not been for the courageous and dedicated efforts of a few Irish monks in scattered monasteries around the Emerald Isle.

Today a person with Irish roots like myself would say, yes, and what else is new? After all, we have been saving and then enriching civilization ever since St. Patrick came ashore. Few peoples have a legacy so rich in legend, in learning, in poetry, and in music. At the same time, few peoples in the west have had as sad a history of deprivation, discrimination, and dislocation as the Irish.

All of this, Mr. Speaker, is a long winding road to announcing that today is St. Patrick's Day, the day people around the world celebrate the gift of cultural enrichment given us by the Irish. And it's also the day when those of us who are descendants of the Irish immigrants to this new land of opportunity remember that this contribution has often been in the face of great odds, a fact which makes today's celebration all the more poignant and necessary.

So, Mr. Speaker, as St. Patrick himself said to the Irish on his deathbed to alleviate their sorrow, "Do the rounds and wet the Shamrock." Erin go bragh.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to Allan Blakeney

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, last night the Regina Lodge of B'nai B'rith Canada held its 42nd annual youth services dinner. This year's dinner featured a tribute to the Hon. Allan Blakeney for his outstanding citizenship and statesmanship.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I was unable to attend that dinner, but had I been invited to speak, I would have said the following.

First, as I said in a private members' statement three years ago, Allan Blakeney is a person who by the deeds of a lifetime gave real definition to the term, public service. We sometimes forget that before he was an MLA, then premier, then leader of the opposition, that he was first a civil servant of the highest quality for many years.

To what I said then about his leadership, his integrity, and his inspirational love of ideas and collegiality, I would add the following.

In the last few years Allan Blakeney has shown all of us, with his customary particular precision and absence of flamboyance, that retirement from one field is not the end of a phase so much as the beginning of another.

His international work these days is the source of social democratic inspiration for many, as was his visionary leadership in his three terms as premier.

For a superb statesman and an intellectual giant like Al Blakeney, life just gets more and more interesting. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Sale of Channel Lake

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). Mr. Minister, you've provided only partial answers to the questions we have outlined for you this morning. However you're still withholding vital information and I would like to ask some further questions.

You clearly indicate that in addition to Lawrence Portigal, Ken Christensen and Larry Kram reviewed the draft and signed the final draft. Will these two individuals be fired for negligence, and will civil action be taken against them for recovery of funds? Or are you going to greet them with a big fat severance package as well?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my letter back to the member dealing with the issue and questions that he raised — and I wanted to quote from that letter because I think it's important — I indicated that, first let me observe that your caucus seems remarkably reluctant to proceed with a timely review of these issues in the Public Accounts Committee, and there will be many who will ask why that is the case.

And so it was interesting this morning when the member from Regina Dewdney, the member from Regina Dewdney suggested that March 31, March 31 be the day that we commence the Public Accounts Committee, and that letter was sent to your members and you, sir, as well are a member of that committee. I wonder if you could commit to the House today, if you could answer this question. Will you be there on March 31 to attend that committee meeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, what we need is your commitment to the House that you'll provide the necessary information, and I'll continue to ask for it. Mr. Minister, you're refusing to come forward with some important documents — the legal opinions that point to who was negligent. You cite solicitor-client privilege. You are the client. The people of Saskatchewan should be the clients. And the client only cites solicitor-client privilege when they have something to hide. What are you hiding, Mr. Minister? Will you release these legal opinions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to quote again from the letter because he has the information in front of him. But I'm not sure — either he hasn't read the material I've given to him or he's having a difficult time standing and asking the questions that he should be asking.

But I want to say to you, sir, this. You asked in your earlier question whether or not I was going to fire people in SaskPower. I want to make it clear that that is not the duty of the minister in charge, to fire and hire people in the SaskPower Corporation.

But I want to say to you, sir, the more interesting question is this: why you seem so reluctant and what could be the possible reason that there could be for your party to be reluctant to come to the Public Accounts Committee meeting. Can you tell us today, can you tell us today whether or not you will be there on March 31 in order to conduct the business of the meeting and to ask the questions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The legal opinions that you are hiding speak to the actions of Lawrence Portigal, the conduct of SaskPower officials, including Jack Messer, and who was at fault. The legal opinion dealing with the topic summary deals with who made the mistakes in the final sale agreement. We need that opinion to prepare for Public Accounts.

If you are sincere about letting the Public Accounts Committee do a thorough investigation, then table this opinion. What are you hiding, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, that's about the lamest excuse I've ever heard for a member not coming to a committee meeting. That's the lamest excuse.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I think if you tap the member sitting in front of you on the shoulder, the Conservative from Moosomin, he may be able to tell you why you're hesitant to come.

And I say to you, I say to you, sir, as a member of the Conservative Party, you should come to the committee and ask the questions that you want to ask. But if you're interested about the reluctance, tap the member on the shoulder who's sitting in front of you, the former Tory from Moosomin. He may have an idea why you're hesitant.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, we also need to see the Rob Garden report on the matter of Jack Messer's severance. Jack Messer allowed Channel Lake to speculate in gas contracts in spite of specific instructions by the SaskPower board not to do it. Then Jack Messer hid \$8 million

in trading losses from the SaskPower board. And he lost another \$5 million because he allowed a contract to be signed without it even being read.

Yet you concoct a legal opinion to say he deserves severance. Jack Messer was negligent from start to finish. He shouldn't have gotten one dime of severance. Mr. Minister, why don't you table the Rob Garden opinion. What are you hiding?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I say to the members opposite about their lame excuses for not coming to the committee and asking the question, it gets pretty obvious. It gets pretty obvious. I say again on the severance of Mr. Messer — and I've answered this question as many times as you care to answer . . . to ask it — it's this: Mr. Messer decided to part ways with our corporation on a mutual agreed arrangement arrived at by Mr. Milt Fair and legal counsel — a legal issue and one that you want to make political. And I understand why you want to make it political but try to understand why it's a legal issue from my point of view.

But I want to say to you, sir, the question you should be asking, the question you should be asking the other members of your caucus is why are they advising you not to come to the committee meeting on Public Accounts? Why are they advising you of that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Brian Kenny of MacPherson, Leslie, and Tyerman reviewed the handling of the sale of Channel Lake. And you have now admitted that he found contributory negligence on the part of Ken Christensen and Larry Kram. Will you table that legal opinion and what action are you taking against Christensen and Kram?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I said earlier that the issue of management of the Power Corporation . . . If the members care to listen to the answer, if you care to listen. The issue of other members of the management team at SaskPower, the issue of looking at the management of the corporation, will be dealt with by the new CEO (chief executive officer). And I think you understand that to be the case of how a corporation should be managed.

But I come back to the fundamental question of my letter to you. Why is it, sir, that you are worried about coming to the Committee on Public Accounts where all the questions can be asked?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the contributory negligence has to extend to Jack Messer and the former minister responsible. The responsibility goes beyond the staff of SaskPower; it goes right to the minister's office.

Mr. Minister, will you be recommending to the Premier that the former minister responsible for SaskPower be removed from the cabinet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the government's position is clear. All of the relevant information on the substantial fact has been tabled to this House, to Deloitte & Touche, and to CIC . . . (inaudible) . . . report. It's there.

In addition to that, we've agreed that the Public Accounts Committee should be holding its hearing, as the Deputy Chair has asked, on March 31. That's 14 days from now. We want to have this matter heard openly now and not months or years from now. Why won't you join us? Come and join us for a Public Accounts hearing. That's what he asked you to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Examination of Channel Lake

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, my question is directed at the Premier. Mr. Premier, the minister and yourself have just demonstrated that you have no intention — no intention whatsoever — of cooperating in the Channel Lake investigation.

The legal opinions point to a smoking gun with Jack Messer's hot little fingerprints all over it. And everybody knows it.

We need the answers to these questions in these documents to prepare for Public Accounts, and the minister and you aren't prepared to give them. Why would we expect to get more from Public Accounts than we're getting from you right now? Why would we expect that?

There is no one, there is no one in Saskatchewan who trusts an NDP committee to get to the bottom of NDP wrongdoing. It's a cover-up. It's a cover-up, it's a whitewash, and you know it and everyone else knows it, Mr. Premier.

Will you launch a real investigation into this Channel Lake fiasco? Will you do the right thing and hold a public inquiry and get to the bottom of this thing so everyone in Saskatchewan knows that Jack Messer is fully liable for this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Sir, can you imagine the audacity of that member standing up in his place in this House, and knowing full well that his seat mate, his Saskatchewan so-called Tory Party seat mate, is the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. And the member from Melfort is a member of the Public Accounts Committee, and he says that they have no confidence in neither one of those two members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Chair is having much difficulty being able to . . . Order. The Chair is having much difficulty being able to hear the response being put by the Premier. I will ask all the members to cooperate.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, let's get on with the job now. Fourteen days — let's get on with subpoena-ing everybody. Anybody who is relevant to this case, anybody who

needs to be speaking to this issue, anywhere they're located, no matter what the connections are, let's get the additional data right now. That is your challenge; why aren't you doing it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'll ask all hon. members, I'll ask all hon. members on both the government and official opposition side to come to order.

Plains Health Centre Closure

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the Liberal . . .

The Speaker: — Order! Order. Now I have asked the hon. members from both the official opposition and the government side to come to order to enable the hon. member from Thunder Creek to be able to put his question.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition is hitting a nerve and the NDP is into damage control over the closure of the Plains Health Centre. We understand that NDP hack, Garf Stevenson, will be taking his dog and pony show on the road soon to try and sucker health district boards in southern Saskatchewan into accepting this government's plans to close the Plains Health Centre.

Will the Premier explain why the road show? Why is Stevenson not holding public meetings, so people have a chance to express their concerns?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I could believe it of some of the members of this House, but I have to say quite frankly, not of that member. When he gets up and calls Mr. Garf Stevenson, who has been a long-time former president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, elected by 56,000 delegates of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, directly or indirectly, who has served this province in every capacity, loyally, truthfully, and honestly, has conducted his job as Chair of the Regina District Health Board in close consultation with the public and in full support of the reforms in health care that we've launched in the province of Saskatchewan . . . I find this a very, very sad day for the legislature.

This member should get off the business of trying to destroy reputations of people and get on with the building, of building health care for people. That's what you should be doing.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, this government has shocked the people of Saskatchewan by refusing to listen to the thousands upon thousands who have signed petitions opposing the closure of the Plains Health Centre. Even more disturbing is the fact that there's never been a survey of doctors and nurses — our health care professionals — to determine their feelings on your goal of closing the Plains Health Centre only 230 days from today. They've never been consulted.

Mr. Premier, who knows our health care needs better than our doctors, nurses, and the thousands and thousands of people who signed petitions opposing the closure. Why do you believe that your people in the Finance department and NDP hacks know better?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I urge the hon. member — I urge all members of this House — to understand that the reforms and the improvements that have taken place at Regina General and Pasqua Hospital, the elevated quality of service which is now emerging, the additional space which is there as a result of reforms, makes Regina and southern Saskatchewan, to those areas, coupled with new technology, leading centres of health care for Saskatchewan, if not Canada — part of the same as Saskatoon. That is the reality of the circumstance.

And I want to remind the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that this government has done this all the while that the federal Liberal government has cut back on health care from 50 cents on the dollar to 13 cents on the dollar. All the while that this member gets up and asks the questions, his colleagues in Ottawa have been hacking and slashing at health care, rather than building. Don't direct the questions to us or to Garf Stevenson, direct them to Allan Rock and to Jean Chrétien and your own Liberal party for a change.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier by now knows that Dr. Borden Bachynski, who is the head of orthopedic surgery in Regina for 20 years, opposes your plan just like other health care professionals across the province.

And do you know why? Because he sees the stretchers lying in the hallways of our hospitals. He sees patients having to wait hour upon hour for surgery because there are no beds. In fact he tells us that there's not been a single hospital bed available in the entire city of Regina on at least two occasions in the past 10 days.

Mr. Premier, you're calling for a moratorium on rail-line abandonment — and we support those efforts — but isn't it the health of Saskatchewan people that should be more important? Will you support our private members' Bill which would place a moratorium on the closure of the Plains hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that he's been in support of this government's call for a moratorium on further branch-line abandonment. I tell you, he has been calling it so loudly that I can't hear anything that he says.

The silence of the Liberal caucus is absolutely deafening. It's about as deafening as the silence of the Saskatchewan Party is with respect to whether or not they're going to attend or whether they're going to have to be subpoenaed to attend the Public Accounts Committee respecting the incidents surrounding Channel Lake. It's been deafening.

The member opposite knows full well that it was the NDP, the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), that invented medicare for Saskatchewan. We know what medicare's about, we support it; it was opposed by the Liberals, opposed by the Tories over there — opposed by the Tories and the Liberals — and we're going to defend it and promote it well into the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Board Dismissal Vote

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Will the Hon. Premier, will the Hon. Premier confirm or deny that while Doug Anguish was the minister responsible, the board of Saskatchewan Power voted unanimously to dismiss the then president, Jack Messer?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I can neither confirm nor deny because I do not know the circumstances involved. But I will tell you one thing in any event, if it was there it did not happen. Mr. Messer remained, as we know, the Chair of the . . . CEO of the SaskPower Corporation, and Mr. Doug Anguish remained as the chairman of the SaskPower board and the minister in charge as is par for the case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Note that the Hon. Premier did not deny that in fact occurred. I also note that Doug Anguish in fact did not remain as the minister responsible. He's up in the Northwest Territories the last I heard.

Did that motion to dismiss Jack Messer, and what subsequently happened to make it go away, have anything to do with Mr. Anguish's present residence?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, one would have to ask Mr. Anguish, but I can tell you that when I spoke to Mr. Anguish at the time of his resignation, it had nothing to do with his departure. Mr. Anguish, at the time of his departure, had another job opportunity involving the Northwest Territories and its various agencies, and took it. And I explored that aspect of it.

I would have loved to have Doug remain with us as a member of the caucus, as I would have of Bob Pringle. It was a career decision that he made. That's the simple fact of the matter.

Mr. Hillson: — I thank . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I thank the member for Lloydminster, but I really don't think the whole thing was a plot to get me into the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the government would have us believe that December of '97 was the first time they saw the red flags over Channel Lake, but we know that the auditor said there's some problems there as early as his fall report 1995.

We are told that the Ernst & Young audit report of SaskPower flagged concerns over Channel Lake, '95 and '96. It is clear that in order to prepare for Public Accounts, the Ernst & Young reports on Channel Lake will have to be made available to all members of the committee for review at that time.

Will the minister responsible make these reports available now?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I say to the member opposite that when I made my statement in the House last week — I believe it was last Tuesday — I commented on the fact that when the auditor spoke to the issue of Channel Lake in late 1997, we immediately asked officials at CIC to review the

complete file.

Following on that, Deloitte & Touche did an extremely extensive report which has been tabled here in the House — and excruciating. I say to the member opposite that it was a very detailed study. That was tabled. The report from CIC, all of this material has been referred to the Public Accounts Committee. I understand the meeting is scheduled now or should be scheduled for March 31. And I say to the member opposite, I believe you're a member of that committee and we welcome your attendance, and all and any questions can be put at that time and we'll do our best to answer all the questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teacher Salary Increases

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, I have five school divisions in my constituency, all of whom have either met with me in person or delivered personal messages to me about the same subject matter. It is best described by quoting from one of the letters that I have received, and I'll quote briefly to you.

Madam Minister, I quote:

It is our belief that virtually all decisions of the government's trustee committee regarding the conduct of bargaining and the contents of the new provincial agreement were made by the five government appointees on the nine-member committee. Our biggest concerns with this tentative agreement is the 3 per cent increase in salaries for the 1998 budget year and the further increase of 2 per cent in January 1999.

The Minister of Education has stated on several occasions that any increase to teachers' salaries would be covered by the provincial government. It is our understanding from these statements that such coverage would occur under the foundation grant. Quite frankly, this means very little to our school division in terms of support. I would like to state to your government that this . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. The hon. member has been very lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask the hon. member to put his question directly now.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, are you prepared to address the increase in teachers' salaries by creating a formula which delivers such funds fairly to all boards in the province?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as all members of the legislature will know, we have a tentative agreement with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. I understand that the teachers will be voting on this tentative agreement in the next two days—I believe the 17th . . . (inaudible) . . . and tomorrow; March 17 and 18.

It's our intention to, and we've stated this to trustees, that we are going to cover the cost of the teachers' salary increase by increasing the foundation operating grant in the appropriate

amount, and we will handle that increase in the way that we've handled it in previous years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplemental to the same minister. Madam Minister, you know very well that the foundation funding formula is capped and those people who have reached the cap as a result of increases in assessments will receive no extra money from your government whatsoever unless you circumvent this particular funding formula. The cap makes it impossible for these people to receive their funding.

Will you commit today, Madam Minister, to doing whatever is necessary to make sure that all of the people receive the money that you have promised to them?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I just want to make the point that it is true that there are school divisions in the province that received an assessment-related cap for the 1997-98 school year. It's an assessment-related cap. It does not mean that if the school division is entitled to funds coming from the foundation operating grant for the '98-99 school division that they will be capped.

So I just want you to wait to the budget. And I just want to assure the school divisions that have been capped, it does not necessarily mean that you will not receive a funding increase, because the cap is assessment related and it's not related to other factors in the foundation operating grant.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Supplemental to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, we take it then that you have seen the problem and will correct it on budget day and we take that as your promise. If not, you'll be hearing from us.

Have you also considered the possibility of reimbursing people in the education system for the increase in costs that are naturally going to flow to janitors and secretaries and directors of education and all other people that are involved in the education system. Once you promise somebody 3 per cent in one area, automatically everybody in the system wants the same increases. There is no allotment for those kinds of expenses that are going to increase the mill rates and the costs to the people who own property.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The member is asking a budget-related question. What I can tell the member is that it's our intention on budget day, which comes on March 19, to indicate to all school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan what their funding will be for the 1998-99 school year. And I know that the school divisions are waiting very eagerly because they have to set their mill rate.

So I can say to the member that on March 19, as the budget is being read in the legislature, all school divisions in the province will receive their grant information for the '98-99 school division year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 230 — The Plains Health Centre Preservation Act ("Save the Plains")

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 230, The Plains Health Centre Preservation Act, short title, "Save the Plains," 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.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I rise pursuant to rule 46 to seek leave of this Assembly to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity.

The Speaker: — The hon. member for Thunder Creek requests leave under rule 46. I'll ask him to very briefly outline why he feels the Assembly should set aside its regular business and to advise very briefly to the House the motion he wishes to have us consider.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Closure of Plains Health Centre

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just propose to read the text of the desired motion. It reads as follows:

That this Assembly call upon the provincial government to act decisively to save the Plains Health Centre from imminent closure, currently scheduled for 230 days from today on the afternoon of Saturday, October 31, 1998, by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health Board; so that the winding-down of services and procedures at the Plains may be halted in order that the Plains Health Centre may continue meeting the health care needs of people in the Regina Health District and all of southern Saskatchewan by returning to its fully active status as the area's single standing trauma centre as well as the centre for cardiovascular care, surgery, neurology, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, and urology; so that the unacceptable delays in surgery now being suffered by Saskatchewan residents may be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, the main reason why this is of such pressing and urgent necessity is one that I outlined earlier in question period; the very fact that within the city of Regina in the past 10 days, there's not been a single hospital bed available for a sick person. That in itself indicates the pressing and urgent need for this debate.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To continue with the discussion that we worked through yesterday on the Speech from the Throne. Since then, there's a few other things that have come to light that I think need to be brought to the attention of the House.

We talked briefly about the health situation in Saskatchewan, and I would suggest that it would be a good idea for all members of the House today sometime to take a copy of the *Rosetown Eagle* and find out what's really happening in our health care, when you have people who need an operation that lasts approximately an hour — can't be done in Saskatchewan. They're sent to Edmonton, they stay there for days and weeks waiting for the operation, spending tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to do an operation that is not very expensive and doesn't take a long period of time. Something is way out of whack, Mr. Speaker.

And when I talked yesterday about our health system having not just two tiers, as the Liberals go for, but many, many tiers, I think this is what it's all about. When we take our people in Saskatchewan, we can't deal with them, we send them out of the province, and we spend a fortune taking care of them some place else when we should be able to do that in our own particular province.

Another interesting point that's showed up since yesterday. It appears that the government, on the Young Offenders Act, is slowly coming onside, deciding that something needs to be done.

But the question, Mr. Speaker, is: after it's become so blatantly evident across this province that the Young Offenders Act has to be dealt with — and we know it needs to be dealt with, and bit by bit people have been coming on side from the other side of the House after they realize that it needs to be worked through — why, Mr. Speaker, do we have to spend money on a government poll trying to find out what the Young Offenders Act actually is as far as the people of this province are concerned and whether they want to go ahead and support that?

They knew that, Mr. Speaker. It's a waste of money. That time and effort should have been spent taking care of the Young Offenders Act.

Mr. Speaker, this morning when I showed up, I found out that I had some e-mail. And I would like to read some of that and I will make some changes, Mr. Speaker, because where it refers to a specific member in the House, I will insert the constituency that he comes from. And the letter's not long, but I think it states and goes to the hub of the issue that we've debated today. It says:

(1430)

I've never written to an MLA on any issue before. The Jack Messer payment totally outrages me. I have written to the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood this morning to express my displeasure. What contempt Roy and his band of cheats and liars has for the people of Saskatchewan. No new money for health care and highways, but for their friends, there is no limit.

The man squanders almost a million and a half on offshore deals that were doomed from the start, and then untold millions in the Channel Lake deal. And Roy tells us they have learned from their mistakes and it's time to move on. Well it's time for Roy, Eldon and Dwain to move on. Keep up the fight for Saskatchewan taxpayers that has to pick up the tab . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member has quite respectfully volunteered in the beginning of his statement to not refer to hon. members by their proper names, but then has reverted to doing that, and I'll just simply caution him. I think the hon. member knows the guideline for debate, and I know that he'll want to do it within the rules of the House.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that bit of help. But I think the key line was the last little part that says, "Keep up the fight for the Saskatchewan taxpayer that has to pick up the tab for all of this incompetence."

And I think, Mr. Minister, that's what we've seen the last couple of days, is this blatant incompetence that seems to permeate the other side of the House. When we had questions asked on Jack Messer, and when we actually had answers to those questions, answers that weren't pleasant at all, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Saskatchewan, back-benchers tended not to applaud. And I don't blame them, because they knew they had to go back to their own constituencies and face those people, trying to answer that question.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we had some more answers on that issue, but they didn't divulge any more information. They basically said that information isn't going to be given. And now suddenly we have a stream of applause and enthusiasm from the back-benchers out there again, feeling so good that maybe all the stuff that's out there won't actually come out.

Those are the things that have happened since yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and it's time to go on with the other things that I need to say on the Speech from the Throne.

As I intimated yesterday, there was very little there except a lot of huff and puff. When we looked for details that were going to help deal with the problems, come up with solutions, those weren't there.

And I'd like to deal with one and that is the effort of the idea and the concerns that exist in Saskatchewan about hunting, about game management, about gun laws, and all those sorts of things. It's a topic that is still very alive throughout Saskatchewan. I believe the government would hope it would go away.

On night hunting, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are not in support. It is too dangerous. It is too dangerous to expect that someone, regardless how much natural light there happens to be out there, can go ahead and fire firearms into bushes and brush and hope that in that dark bush and brush there's not going to be something that shouldn't be hit. That's too dangerous. That needs to be stopped. It needs to be stopped completely.

And along with that same topic, Mr. Speaker, are the

populations that we see in our province for game management, how those populations are dropping. We had the antelope season, Mr. Speaker, shut right down this year because there weren't enough to be hunted. I was out the previous year and I knew the numbers were way down, and I wasn't surprised. And in spite of that, Mr. Speaker, there were people hunting antelope this year — people who this government has said, well if they don't need a licence, so be it. That's not good enough.

When we have the populations of our game in Saskatchewan brought down to the point that their very existence becomes critical, then we need to say that takes priority over anything and everything else.

Another similar example is the moose population in north-eastern Saskatchewan where there are certain tracks that used to be very highly and heavily populated with moose. The moose are almost gone. And aircraft flying over these days see snowmobile tracks still out there and kill sites still in place in an area where the moose are just on the verge of extinction. And yet, what is this government doing about that? I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that on those issues, they're doing absolutely nothing.

Yes, they may not be selling any more hunting licences, but there are still people hunting. There are moose still being taken. The population is still being destroyed, and this government continues to do nothing. We need to look at that. We need to look at that.

Meanwhile, we have people chirping from the other side about politics. I suggest to those people that a moose cannot tell an NDP apart from a tree on the average day, except when the last one goes, they may put that mark on the last moose's tombstone: guess who is responsible for killing the last one of us?

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at this issue of hunting, of night hunting, of game populations, there are other provinces that have systems that work. We need to use those. They are there for the taking, those ideas.

As I mentioned yesterday when we were talking about the disastrous results of the math scores, this government wasn't prepared to look anywhere else for an answer. They again seem to be willing to look nowhere else for an answer.

We need to realize, Mr. Speaker, that if we're going to protect the game in this country, make sure that we have that part of our natural resources protected for ever and ever, we need to make sure that, under certain situations and for some of these things that I have mentioned, there is no hunting without a permit, by anyone. And do what happens in other provinces, that people who feel they need that hunting privileges for a matter of sustenance, that they have to prove that need for sustenance.

And I believe, Mr. Minister, in those cases we need to look at our social services and other areas, that we do provide those living funds that are needed, that hunting does not have to be a part of that. And especially, Mr. Speaker, when it destroys a wildlife, as it is doing.

And while we're on that issue of wildlife and hunting, I think this government needs to look at some other regulations that are a disaster presently. If in fact, Mr. Speaker, we are going to allow people in this province to hunt at any time of day or night, at any time of the year, where does that leave the rest of the population that may be out there in nature for photography, for a walk, for a drive, for all kinds of other very legitimate recreational reasons.

We're out there walking with the kinds of wearing apparel that we wear outside of hunting season — our browns and our greens and our yellows. And yet at the same time there's people out there that are hunting. Mr. Speaker, during hunting season we very specifically require that anyone out there hunting wears the protective gear with the coloration that needs to be there to protect them. And yet by letting people hunt at any season, any time of day, all year round, all the rest of society is suddenly put at danger.

And there are many little quirks within our regulations that we have that do need to be addressed, and I would hope, Mr. Speaker, as we go through this session, we'll address those as well.

One other little one that came to mind in the past two, three days is someone who's on a quad-runner hunting, needs to wear the protective colouration of gear, but he's also suppose to wear a helmet due to safety regulations. Now which law supersedes which law? And which one is he going to break? Because he can't keep them both. So those things need to be dealt with.

Okay, back to my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And I was covering certain areas in my constituency yesterday and I'd like to continue with that.

One of the areas that needs to be addressed, and we're spending some time on highways, is the intersection that takes place at Warman Road and Highway 11. There's a cut-off there where you turn off Warman Road to get onto Highway 11, and the signage is terrible. All that has to happen, Mr. Speaker, is for someone to go through there and see all the skid marks of people who go in the ditch because the curve is there and yet there are no proper signage . . . there's no proper signage there for that.

It's going to end up costing some lives, Mr. Speaker. I brought this to the attention of the Highways minister at another time and at this point nothing has been done. Those kinds of issues we hope will be taken care of in this session. If all that we hear about the rest of this session is the same kind of information that we've got from the Speech from the Throne, it won't be happening.

Highway 312. I gave this government a compliment yesterday on the twinning that's taken place on Highway 12 and Highway 11, and that's good. But there's also Highway 312 that needs to be looked at. It's a highway that's riddled with potholes because it hasn't been finished. And when it's patched, if it's patched, only the holes are patched and the area around it, which is sinking — it's soft — cannot handle that traffic.

Highway 312, Mr. Speaker, has a lot of traffic. What it doesn't have in numbers it has in weight. Because the people that bring

or haul their grain from between those two main highways that go through my area, basically all of that grain comes out along Highway 312. Also with the area across the river to the east, with the fact that their elevator system isn't intact to the same extent that it was, that the railway track is now for sale, a lot of that grain, Mr. Speaker, comes across the river, down 312 and onto Highway 11.

And so that Highway 312 is a great feeder system, Mr. Speaker, and it's been let go, literally in this case to pot after pot after pothole. It's full of them. And it's going to be worse. It's going to be worse.

Highways 11 and 12 may be among the better ones in the area, but Highway 312 is going to get much worse if it isn't finished off and taken care of properly.

The grid roads in the areas which feed highways such as 312, Mr. Speaker, the RMs (rural municipality) are responsible for and, as we well know, with the tax structure that's happened to them, the funding that's gone down, the fact that they can't do major projects, where they can do three-year projects in one year to get some good bids on it, has resulted in the fact that the grid roads are also suffering. And if we can't even keep up with the maintenance of them, which that means that in a number of years they'll be virtually destroyed and almost have to be rebuilt. And I suggest that we need those kinds of things dealt with.

We have some unusually heavy traffic, Mr. Speaker, on Highways 11 and 12, specifically on Highway 11, and that's traffic that's been designated a special situation going up to uranium mines. These, Mr. Speaker, are nine-axle trucks. They are allowed to be overweight and there's a funding agreement between the companies that run them and the Department of Highways so they do put some of the money back into the system.

And I think we need to be assured, Mr. Speaker, that all of that money goes specifically to that highway and that the money that comes in is adequate to cover the extra heavy usage that those highways suffer because of that traffic. If that is the case, then the program may be warranted because, especially when they go further north on frozen roads, that weight may be allowable.

Mr. Speaker, it was mentioned this afternoon on a number of occasions about this being Agriculture Week. Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, is one of the true creators of wealth in this country because for decades people have taken that land, put seeds into that land, raised the crops, and put money into our economy. And so as we spend some time talking about agriculture this afternoon, I think we need to realize that it is one of the key things in this particular province.

Not only key in the fact that it is the basic source of creation of wealth in this province, it also happens to be a very exciting part of wealth creation in this province, and also has the other component that we've long looked at, and that is one of those things that families tend to do together. And I think that's one of the things that almost everyone in Saskatchewan supports in a major way.

Farming has become very difficult, Mr. Speaker. It's become difficult because our transportation system is in decay and part of that blame goes to the federal government and what's happened with the railways. It means that the highways have to pick up that slack and we have to make sure we stay ahead of that program, because the further behind we get, those are costs that tend to escalate very rapidly if the roads eventually get totally destroyed.

The farm community is a totally different community, Mr. Speaker, than it probably was two or three decades ago, decades ago where people used the same piece of equipment year after year after year. They used it, Mr. Speaker, until it was worn out. Well in an effort to go ahead and keep their head above water, financially speaking, Mr. Speaker, farmers have had to have been very innovative in the last numbers of years.

(1445)

And any time another piece of equipment that comes along, that means they can just squeeze an extra penny out of those already very thin margins. They're almost forced to use those, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily because they always want to spend the money on updating, on equipment, but because of the possibility of being able to go ahead, as I just finished saying, squeeze a slightly larger margin out of their operation. They are forced to go to this new equipment. That has put a great strain on the finances of our agriculture communities.

The input costs, Mr. Speaker, that farmers have to deal with are horrendous. The cost of fertilizer, chemicals, herbicides, continue to escalate rapidly. And unfortunately we've seen this year that the price of the product is actually going in the other direction. It's going down, which means that the margins have virtually disappeared.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne, as I recall, said next to nothing about agriculture, and I'm very worried that as we go through this particular session, this government in the Speech from the Throne and in its budget, will not have anything for that segment, the segment that is so critical to our well-being as a province, so critical also to our lifestyle, not just to the financial welfare of this province. And I believe that this government needs to spend some serious time looking at that.

I would like to spend a little bit of time, Mr. Speaker, on the SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) situation. I have in my constituency, as we all have in our constituencies, people that have suffered from this concept of no-fault, which must be a misnomer, Mr. Speaker, because it seems that somebody should be at fault.

We know when there's an accident there's some fault there. We know when someone has some fault to bear, there's some payment that's needed. And we have people who are suffering, Mr. Speaker, because of accidents that they had no fault in. And yet no one seems to be taking any responsibility for that and they're left with very poor care, a very poor settlement, settlements that basically sometimes say, as I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, just go down to the local spa and get some care. It's happening.

While we're dealing with roads and traffic, we need to say a

word about STC (Saskatchewan Transportation System), Mr. Speaker. STC performs a very important service in our province, especially when we're dealing with rural Saskatchewan. It provides an opportunity for people in some of our communities to get out of those communities and to travel to cities if they need some medical care, which has become a much bigger issue in the last year or two than it ever has been before.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we have a system such as STC and that serves a purpose, then we find out that it's run in such a way that the bills aren't even being sent out. And then we wonder why it runs in the red. And how are we going to cover the cost? Well we'll just go ahead and hit the taxpayer up. And whenever STC falls short, we'll just cough up the difference — taxpayers will just get after it; they'll take care of it. That is not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

In a private industry, when that sort of thing happens, the company goes broke and goes under and someone comes along and replaces it and gives good service and maybe better service. If that doesn't happen, they can't just run up to somebody else and say, we'll increase the prices, because some competition will come along and do the same job better and for less. And yet STC is allowed to do that. Not to send out the bills, Mr. Speaker, and then to expect the taxpayers to cover up the cost — it's not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

I spent a little bit of time yesterday going around my constituency and explaining to members of this House some of the strengths that are out there. And I'd like to continue with that briefly this afternoon as well.

Some very exciting communities in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And the fact is, if we compare the communities in my constituency with most other communities in Saskatchewan, we'll find something unique in that these are communities that almost without exception are growing communities — communities in rural Saskatchewan where the population is in fact increasing. And why is that, Mr. Speaker?

There are many reasons for that, but I'll suggest probably one of the most obvious reasons. This constituency, Mr. Speaker, has never voted NDP. And I wonder, Mr. Speaker, when we look at that particular fact and say, does that have something to do with the ability for those people and the insight of those people to go ahead and ensure that their communities grow and thrive? That ability to do it themselves.

It's a shame that sometimes they have to do it themselves. It's a shame that sometimes this government chooses to dole out money to other communities and leave some of these on the short end of the stick, and we'll mention a few of those as we continue this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Martensville, close to Saskatoon, has always been one of our faster growing communities in Saskatchewan. A rapidly growing community because of the way this community sticks together, creates facilities for its young people, the schools that it has, the teachers that are there. It's a community that people want to live in, and that's why it's grown, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately one of the benefits that has always been there for

Martensville, and that's that the tax incentives will always be lower, is one that this present government has removed from them with the assessments, increased costs of education that are there. They're suffering through that taxation thing as every other place in this province is as well, Mr. Speaker. And it's really hitting rural Saskatchewan.

One of those many titles, as my colleague says, is called downloading. And I guess the word down is probably the key part of that. It's just a real kick, it's a put-down to the people that live in those particular communities.

Not long ago, Mr. Speaker, I believe within this last month, I spent some time in the community of Warman. I looked at some of the facilities they needed and I went to a fund-raising scheme to provide some of those recreational facilities for their community. Warman's another one of those exciting communities that's growing. Unfortunately they needed some of these facilities; there was no help there again because it seems if you live in rural Saskatchewan there is no money there for them, and they were again trying to do this on their own.

A great community, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope that one of these times we can go through the community of Warman with that program for our students as well because I'm sure you would enjoy that community.

Osler, a small town that's grown very rapidly, had another major expansion this last year, and I believe almost all of the lots that they had opened up for expansion are already taken. And yet, I had an expression of frustration from the people in Osler in the last two or three weeks.

That community, totally on its own, Mr. Speaker, has raised some money, a lot of time and effort, into their own museum. And as this government has, there's a bit of a program for grants for museums. They applied for it, the grants were sent out, Osler museum was given none. Maybe they're too small, maybe they've done too much on their own, we're not sure, but they're very frustrated. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they're very bitter, those people in the community of Osler, because they put all that money into it and they see other museums getting benefit for their communities but nothing going to this particular community. And that isn't fair, Mr. Speaker.

We talk about industry in our small communities in rural Saskatchewan. The community of Hague — would you drive through that on the highway, will see there are a number of new businesses right on the road. There used to be a car dealership that isn't there any longer. The building stood empty for a short period of time and a major facility, business, moved into there, building structures for farming communities and for business. A good idea that they had there.

A new welding shop is coming up. It's an area where there's growth; there's enthusiasm. And that's because they've got the attitude that if they have to do it by themselves they probably will. It's a very independent community, Mr. Speaker, and they're surviving.

I come to my own community, Mr. Speaker, and as I mentioned with the other ones, my town, the town of Rosthern, is also on a fund-raising scheme. It seems that every town in rural

Saskatchewan is raising funds one way or another just to try and stay alive. What do they need? Well, Mr. Speaker, they've needed this facility for decades. It's a gym for their elementary school.

They have no gym in the elementary school; didn't even have a play area inside. It was just all classrooms. At one time they didn't even have an office for the principal. He was basically in a dust closet and they just had to renovate and work with that. And yet every time they applied to the provincial government for help for building, it seemed some other community gets ahead of it and Rosthern is left trying to do it on their own again.

An Hon. Member: — Like every other community in the province.

Mr. Heppner: — That's right. And so they've spent the last two years trying to raise funds for an elementary gym. They need that, Mr. Speaker. The Education minister has received numerous calls to say that this facility needs to be at the top of that list, not at the bottom of the list. But for some reason it always seems to stay down there, and the funding for that gym, after decades, Mr. Speaker — not just years but decades — still is not in place.

And then we move slowly down Highway 312 because that's the way, in my constituency, we travel down Highway 312, is slowly. And you'll notice that I didn't even use the word, drive. I used the word move, because you're never sure if you're skidding or rolling or what you're doing, but you manage to get from end to the other eventually.

You get to the community of Laird. It has a very neat slogan. It's a community that pulls together, and probably more than any other community in Saskatchewan. It is one of those that works together 100 per cent for everything that happens there. I attended a time of recognition for one of its citizens there, Mr. Speaker, about a month ago, for a Mrs. Hinz, who spent numbers of years working on their housing authority, and as so many other people in Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan, working on those kinds of organizations to help make their communities a better place to live. And Laird is doing that as well.

Community of Waldheim, Mr. Speaker, the community of Waldheim has had a few key issues that have crossed their table in the last year. Issues that aren't solved to this particular point. They need a skating rink, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Speaker. They are looking at different ways of raising funds for that as well.

But they do have another problem. They have a home in there for some of the citizens of this province that we've seen fit, and I'm proud to say we have seen fit, to take care of. It's the Menno Home.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a very special situation in Waldheim where the clients who live in the Menno Home can just go down the street a short distance to another facility called Menno Industries and provide meaningful work, things to do to give them a feeling of self-worth, a feeling of confidence in themselves. It's been a source of pride for the people of Waldheim, what they've done there for these individuals. Now

what's happened is, it seems, that through some of the conclusions of groups such as social services and health, have decided that the Menno Home needs to be closed.

Well the first conclusion they came up with was, well these people will have to go wherever there is room. Well the community of Waldheim is also a growing community. There weren't any empty homes for these people to go to, so they would have to leave the community of Waldheim, which would mean, Mr. Speaker, they would have to go to communities where there weren't facilities such as Menno Industries, where the only life would consist of getting up in the morning, sitting in front of the television, waiting for night to come and go back to bed.

And we have members from the government side saying they could have the little lunch in the afternoon called faspa. Well I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that just to tell these, because they get faspa, that that's enough to go ahead and carry them through and that's enough dignity in life — I suggest not, I suggest not.

In fact, as I would . . . it would be nice, Mr. Speaker, if that particular member could go down to the community of Waldheim and tell them that faspa is enough for these individuals and I would suggest they would strongly disagree with them.

(1500)

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, bit by bit it seems that the organizations that are responsible, health and social services, have changed their minds so many times on this issue that the community isn't sure exactly where it is at, and I would hope that as we go through the Speech from the Throne and we look at the budget, that there is something in there that tells these people: no, we're not going to take you from the home that you've lived in, with the Menno Industries where you've worked, where you've found some value in your life. We're not going to take you suddenly and just throw you around the province and say, there you are, that's it, we've done our duty.

The duty is to let these people be in a community where they are accepted, where they can go down to the rink and watch a hockey game. They can go down to the local coffee shop and have a coffee. They can go down to local churches and attend a service. And in all of those, the people of the community accept them.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of being principal in that community for a number of years, and one of the things that the high school does on a regular basis is basically set up a field day or a sports day for the clients of what has been known as the Menno Home. And I was proud of those kids, Mr. Speaker, because they spent the whole day with them in various kinds of activities, had a good understanding and appreciation for everyone in this society — something that I think is very unique in this province and very special in that community.

And I hope it's not lost because this government doesn't know what it's doing with social services and doesn't know what it's doing with health. And anyone that questions that statement, Mr. Speaker, should go to the community of Waldheim and find out some of the difficulties that they're having there.

We had a statement made earlier on this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, about the Pool elevator system and people that have worked there. Well if we go to the community of Hepburn, we will find a museum that's dedicated to the grain industry; an old Pool elevator that the local community has put . . . kept and developed into a museum of grain so that our young people will be able to go to that particular location and see what it was like for people in decades gone by and how their grain was handled and how it was taken care of. A fine facility; a fine community.

And need I say something on schools? Their school is actually in such sad shape in some places they had to close down a classroom recently because people were actually falling through a hole in the floor. And the Department of Education had no money for a better facility.

The last community in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, is Dalmeny, which probably the best word to describe that community is just it's a pretty community. The development that's taken place there, the housing that's taken place, the planning has been such that it is just a beautiful town to be in — a town that has a lot of spirit, a lot of faith and pride in itself. And they will do well and they are doing well.

Mr. Speaker, mine is a constituency of hope but it's also a constituency, Mr. Speaker, of frustration — frustration that when they hear a speech like what we heard in the Speech from the Throne, they would say, there's nothing there. There is no leadership; there is no guidance. There is no plan. There are no ideas.

And that, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the point of what the government is all about. They are devoid of plans; they are devoid of ideas. The only hope that's out there, Mr. Speaker, is in the hearts of the citizens of this province hoping that someday this government will not be there.

And that's where there's a light at the end of the tunnel, Mr. Speaker. Because these people know out there in Saskatchewan that the days of this NDP government are numbered. And when that time comes — and it's coming very quickly and it will be here very soon — it'll be a glad day for all of Saskatchewan.

Because I mentioned earlier, my constituency, Mr. Speaker, has proudly never voted NDP and never will. And the rest of the province is looking at that constituency and saying, there is a model constituency where there is hope and there's development; if we go the same way, Mr. Speaker, we'll be able to do that. All the way from Hepburn down to Herschel, they know that's the truth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity of addressing this House and the people of this province that were watching via television. And hopefully that as they continue to watch, they will see that there is hope, there are ideas. But they're over here, they're in the Saskatchewan Party, and that will bring this province into the future that they're hoping for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, it is with appreciation that I rise in

the House today. It's a great privilege and honour to address you, the entire Assembly, and first and foremost the people of Saskatchewan, in my response to the 1998 throne speech.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I wish to welcome the new pages and also to express my gratitude to all of the legislative staff and constituency assistants who support our work. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I commend you for the fair manner in which you preside over this Assembly daily.

Mr. Speaker, when citizens of this province elect governments, they entrust that government as a custodian of the public purse and the public good. This is indeed a sacred trust. And each and every one of us, Mr. Speaker, that are elected members must never forget that we sit in this legislature through the goodwill and the grace of our constituents, the people of Saskatchewan, and we are duty bound to respect those people regardless of their political coloration. We must respect their intelligence and knowledge and their ability to digest and deal with the issues which face government.

Mr. Speaker, I am not convinced that this NDP government and the ministers have that respect. As an example I refer to the recent mismanagement of the NDP government regarding the Channel Lake fiasco. And I ask that the Premier and the minister responsible do not insult the intelligence of the people of this province by claiming that you had no recourse other than to pay Jack Messer \$300,000 severance.

How, how can a president and a CEO, who gets paid over \$200,000 in salary and emoluments, be found to be anything but negligent and liable for the \$5 million Channel Lake loss, when he and his management team do not bother to read a contract before signing it. This severance, Mr. Speaker, is nothing but a political payola, pure and simple. Every person in Saskatchewan knows this.

Where, where is the management and ministerial responsibility and accountability? Mr. Speaker, I have stated before in this legislature that government members exist to serve the people, not to line the pockets of their political henchmen through patronage appointments to positions for which they have little or no qualifications.

Mr. Speaker, I have stated before that government exists to serve people and not to dictate to them. An administration that acts in a high-handed manner, knows-it-all manner, big-brother fashion, does so at its own peril. The arrogance, Mr. Speaker, of the Blakeney administration, with its family of Crown corporations, and its failure to inform, consult and truly listen to the people, led to its stunning electoral defeat in 1982. And, Mr. Speaker, this administration is heading down that same slippery slope at breakneck speed.

Mr. Speaker, the members of this Assembly represent different political parties, but constituents expect all of us, at all times, to act with integrity and competence and to safeguard the interests and the well-being of all Saskatchewan people regardless of race, creed and colour.

And in particular, in the true Saskatchewan spirit of compassion and caring as reflected in the immensely successful Telemiracles, we are entrusted to look out for and help those

less fortunate. This is what Saskatchewan is all about — people helping people. Communities and individuals cooperating and sharing common values and working towards common goals. Empowering individuals and communities is the key to carrying a strong, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Saskatchewan past the fast approaching millennium and into the 21st century.

“... times they are a-changin' ”, sings that '60s troubadour and icon, Bob Dylan. I have been continually amazed at how the last two and a half years have been for me, both a tremendous challenge and an unbelievable privilege and blessing to serve my constituents and all the people of Saskatchewan in general.

The winds of change blow constantly through our personal lives, our communities, our province, and our great country of Canada. There are many issues that daily confront our people — health care issues, education issues, unsafe roads, and social services. But regardless of what issue our people may identify, the key to survival will be always the local community — vibrant, increasingly autonomous and self-reliant local groupings of people that emphasize sharing, cooperation, and living in harmony with Mother Earth and those around us. They will enhance their ability to survive as a healthy, happy, and caring people.

It is therefore incumbent, Mr. Speaker, upon leadership within provincial and federal governments to support and encourage both rural and urban communities in their efforts. With their requisite financial and human resources base, communities are perfectly capable of identifying their needs and their problems, and strategically planning and executing plans suitable and tailored to their requirements.

Mr. Speaker, regrettably this government has gone in the opposite direction. It has balanced the budget on the backs of Saskatchewan taxpayers, and by downloading with vengeance on local governments and communities. Community infrastructure is in shambles, our roads are killer roads, and scores of people face life-threatening waits for a variety of medical treatments and procedures.

It is only because of the resilience, the perseverance and the eternal optimism of Saskatchewan's people, that our province has not been drastically depopulated. As it is, in these so-called good times that the government keeps telling us about, our young people and our future are leaving for challenging and well-paying jobs in other, neighbouring provinces.

In the words of the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, communities are the bedrock of Saskatchewan. Yes, fine words, but considering the wealth of our human and natural resources, and the income generated by these, not to mention the ill-gotten gains from gaming, it is amazing and it is shameful how the present NDP government has failed to recognize and support the needs of the bedrock of Saskatchewan prosperity and progress, namely, our local communities.

In spite of this government's neglect, Mr. Speaker, communities, through their own foresight, ingenuity, and their hard work, are making headway, because people have faith in their future and they know that only by investing and creating job opportunities with their children and grandchildren will they stay, resulting in vibrant and sustainable communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that there are a number of such communities in the Humboldt constituency. My constituents have inherited and exercised the entrepreneurial spirit and tradition of their grandparents and parents, and are in turn passing it on to their children and grandchildren.

At the core of their work and celebration of life, are their shared values and firm belief in the innate goodness and decency of people. They believe in the building of their communities through mutual respect, mutual benefits for each other, and the preservation and conservation of the environment of which they are a part.

And some examples of that entrepreneurial spirit are Bourgault Industries, and Free Form Plastic Products in St. Brieux; Hillcrest Farms of Bruno; Bell Pulse in Bellevue; Horizon Seeds in Aberdeen; CIM Manufacturing; Feed-Rite; Humboldt Flour Mills in Humboldt. These businesses, as well as a myriad of businesses in the Humboldt constituency, contribute to the economic and social well-being of their employees and others each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, David Suzuki states that the need for community and its rituals is an ancient need. It has been built into the human psyche over thousands of generations and hundreds of thousands of years. If it is frustrated, we will feel alienated and that will result in many, many problems.

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat bemused by this NDP's administration's incessant assertions that good times and happy times are here again, or as the throne speech states, and I quote:

... the people of Saskatchewan. (They) have overcome a dark period of our history, and inaugurated one of its brightest, in a few short years.

The rhetoric simply does not match the reality as evidenced by the many problems frustrating our communities — lack of health care facilities, rail-line abandonment, elevator closures, school closures, and underfunding of our school system, undrivable roads, problems which you are ignoring and you are neglecting.

(1515)

Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing from my constituents as needed from this government is financial assistance from the province for farmers to set up short-line railways; accelerated road repair programs; accessible rural health care; moratorium on school closures; and proper funding for education; job opportunities for young people; and more than part-time and minimum wage jobs; lowering of personal income taxes and surtaxes; ensuring the testing of rural water supplies; the review of the Young Offenders Act; improved social structure for the well-being of our children.

Mr. Speaker, in all these areas my constituents give the government a failing grade. I note with interest, Mr. Speaker, the commitment in the throne speech to press the federal government for reform of the young offenders system. There is certainly a province-wide ground swell for a reform, and I personally welcome it.

At the same time, I urge the Minister of Justice to consider

carefully and with an open mind a community-based, restorative justice approach for first-time and non-violent offenders rather than simply incarceration, which often does nothing to promote healing and reconciliation. Whitespruce near Yorkton was a good example of that kind of facility, of that kind of justice. But it is now closed at the direction of this NDP administration, an administration that is more concerned about VLTs (video lottery terminal) than preventative drug treatment facilities.

It gets another failing grade in supervising its Crown corporations. The sorry spectacle of this government's mishandling of Guyana and Channel Lake reinforces the crying need for a public utility review board. Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in North America without one and probably in the world, except perhaps for some banana republics. The continual refrain of this lackadaisical administration has been that a public utility review board is too expensive. Well, Mr. Speaker, such a review board cannot possibly be more costly than the multimillion-dollar Guyana and Channel Lake fiascos.

Perhaps the members opposite will come to their senses and put in place a review mechanism to ride herd on a seemingly incompetent and illiterate SaskPower management, to prevent it from entertaining and entering into any further hare-brained schemes.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more to talk about and reflect on about the state of affairs and the future direction of Saskatchewan, but that will have to wait until after the budget because, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. Suffice it to say that the people of Saskatchewan expect and deserve greater integrity and competence from this administration than displayed by the sorry spectacles and debacles of Guyana, Channel Lake, and Jack Messer's unconscionable severance package.

For, Mr. Speaker, for these reasons and the government's inability to truly empower communities throughout the province, I cannot support the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am happy to take part in the Speech from the Throne. But first, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to wish the member from Saskatoon Eastview well in his endeavours. I'm sure that government side of the House is going to miss him for a good job that he's done.

An Hon. Member: — Well the other side will miss him too.

Mr. Langford: — Right. I would like to compliment the member from Regina Wascana Plains constituency; the seconder, the member from Estevan constituency, for such a great speech, also those colleagues that have spoken. They will be very tough to follow. I would like to tell my colleagues, it's great to be back in session with them again. I would also like to welcome back the opposition Tories, the third party, and the independent party.

I want to welcome you back, Mr. Speaker. You have done a

great job in conducting the House in the past, and I know you will do well in the future. I would like to welcome the young men and women who are our pages; hope you have an enjoyable time working here. I would also like to welcome the Clerk at the Table and the Sergeant-at-Arms, as well as the commissionaires. Also I would like to welcome back the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on the work you have been doing in the province, working with young people. I have had the pleasure to be with you on three different occasions — that was in the Birch Hills School, Wesmor School in Prince Albert, and the Choiceland School. I would like to say, I was very impressed and entertained. I know the teachers and students also felt the same way.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am happy to be here on behalf of the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers. I would like to describe my constituency and how it has diversified.

First, there are a number of small towns, farmland, a national park, provincial parks, farmland, and lots of lakes and bushes. I welcome everyone to come and tour the beautiful part of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Rivers constituency extends around Prince Albert, boundaries Birch Hills to the south, the national park to the north, MacDowall to the west, and White Fox to the east. There are five reserves in the constituency — Little Red River Reserve, Sturgeon Lake Reserve, Wahpeton Reserve, Muskoday Reserve, and James Smith.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, this constituency is very diversified. There is a number of game farmers that raise ostriches, elk, buffalo, and wild boar. There are feedlots and hog farmers; also a lot of specialty crops grown in the area such as peas, canola, key weed, potatoes, and feed grains.

There is a number of ways people are employed in my constituency. First of course is agriculture. We have the pulp mill; also there is a number of small saw mills mostly along the forest fringe — places like Tweedsmuir, Smeaton, Choiceland, Garrick, Love, and White Fox. There is also manufacturing such as shakes and shingles in the Candle Lake area. Tourism is a great big industry also in the Saskatchewan Rivers constituency.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of explains the constituency. Now I'd like to turn to some of the issues that are taking place in my constituency. I would like to first talk about rail-line abandonment. This has put pressure on our local roads and our provincial highways, which meant there was no more grain going out west.

Just on rail-line abandonment, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago the line from Meath Park to Henribourg was abandoned, which meant there was no more grain going west from Meath Park to Prince Albert. Then the line was taken out from Paddockwood to Henribourg, then between Shellbrook and P.A. (Prince Albert). This meant no more grain going west of Prince Albert. Then the line between Henribourg and White Star was taken out. That meant about 100 kilometres of rail line had been taken out.

But that isn't all, Mr. Speaker. Now the rail-line companies

want to abandon the line from Meath Park to Choiceland. This will mean another 50 kilometres. Also the rail line company is abandoning the line from P.A. to Birch Hills. This is the shortest line from P.A. to link up with the rail line that runs to the Port of Churchill. Mr. Speaker, the federal government will not listen to the farmers, the local government, or the provincial government as . . .

An Hon. Member: — Nor the people.

Mr. Langford: — . . . or the people, as they have asked to stop abandoning rail lines until a plan can be put in place to look at short-lines, roads, and highways.

The federal government has protected the railroad companies and has forgotten about the farmers. Farmers have to haul their grain farther to the elevators, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has not only protected the railroad companies and allowed the rail-line abandonment, but they are asking the people of Saskatchewan and the farmers of Saskatchewan to pay for all the road damages.

The federal Liberal government does not even look after their national highway system. Mr. Speaker, not only is the federal government not saying anything about the national highways, but also the opposition Tories or Liberals are asking the people of Saskatchewan to pay for the national highway system.

Mr. Speaker, just before I take my place I would like to say a few words about our Crowns. We heard from the Tories and Liberals about government not being able to manage our Crowns. Let's talk about some of the good things that the government has done — all the good things the government has done. For instance, the Cameco shares.

Let's look if we would have caved in to the pressure of the Tories in November of 1991. The Tories have dispensed already 11.7 million Cameco shares, selling 6.4 million shares for 12.50 apiece in January 1991; another 5.3 million shares at 14.75 apiece in 1991. Ottawa also unloaded 4 million shares in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of pressure to have the NDP again to unload the Cameco shares for \$20.50 after Ottawa sold their 5 million shares in May of 1993. That was the Liberal and Tory governments. In 1996 uranium prices were going through the roof. This government chose to sell 10.5 million shares at \$71.50 a share.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — And at that time, Mr. Speaker, Ottawa had sold their shares for less than half. Cameco shares are selling now for less than \$42.50.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Husky oil upgrader, something Tories and Liberals were wanting this government to sell the same time as the federal Liberals and the Alberta government had sold. That was for 7.5 cents on the dollar.

Mr. Speaker, we have sold our share and recovered every dollar that we've invested.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the *Daily Herald*, Murray Mandryk:

The NDP, as government, has developed an uncanny knack for selling things at precisely the right time. The NDP-run Crown Investments Corporation's record here has been nothing short of amazing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — He goes on to say:

And if anyone thinks it has just been dumb luck, consider how foolish they'd have looked had they followed the lead advice of other provincial governments, Ottawa, or our wizards in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the Tories opposite are making a lot of noise. They are a new Tory Party and they say they are listening to the grass roots people. Well first, Mr. Speaker, I think they should all resign and go to the grass root people and take their chance of being elected to the new Tory government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Langford: — They are only kidding themselves when they think people don't know what they are up to.

Mr. Speaker, I know there is much more I could say, but I will leave that to my colleagues. I support the Speech from the Throne and will oppose the amendment.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to certainly welcome you and the Speaker to another session of the Legislative Assembly. I know that your guidance and wisdom will add greatly to the demeanour of this House, and I know that it will be run in a very proper . . . and conducted in a proper manner.

I also want to thank, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the mover, the MLA from Wascana Plains, and the seconder, the MLA from Estevan, I think for setting the tone for this Throne Speech, and the tone for this government in terms of where we are going to be investing in the province of Saskatchewan; in terms of some key areas of transportation, in the areas of people, in the areas of families, in these areas that are critical to the people of Saskatchewan.

But the advantage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you get to a throne speech is that you do have the latitude to speak on many subjects. And a subject that I wish to speak about today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has a bearing on the throne speech. Yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a sad, I consider it a sad day in the House, when a friend of mine, Mr. Bob Pringle, the MLA from Eastview, stepped down from this Legislative Assembly.

The member from Eastview, before his political career at this

House and throughout his political career here and will be after he leaves this institution, has been a voice for those people who have not had a voice. He has dedicated his life to do this, and to me, this is a very positive message for the life that he has led in terms of the way he continues to deal in terms of those people who suffer in our society.

And he's played an important role in this throne speech. The member from Eastview, I feel, as being a very dear friend, has always stood for very important principles and values. And these principles and values that he stands for speak in this throne speech today.

(1530)

And I can go directly to those areas by which it is a measure of the MLA from Eastview's mark, that being Mr. Pringle. The area that I want to go to is the area, investing in families. And I want to quote directly from the throne speech in a statement in terms of there.

My Government will introduce amendments to *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act* to implement the **Building Independence — Investing in Families** strategy. Through this fundamental reform of welfare, we will be creating:

a new **Child Benefit**, . . .

a new **Saskatchewan Employment Supplement**;

new supplementary **Family Health Benefits**;

and **training programs** . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these programs can clearly be shown to be the initiative of the MLA of Eastview when he was the minister of Social Services and carried on by the present minister. And to me, these are important initiatives, initiatives in terms of the child tax credit that will have national implications.

And as the days unfold in this government, the other initiatives that I talked about today will change the face of welfare reform in the province of Saskatchewan and nationally; that this province will be a leader in dealing with the people that are on welfare and dealing with the people that are on low income, Mr. Speaker. To me this is the . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whitmore: — This is a very important step. And that's why I say these are one of the initiatives that the MLA from Eastview can be proud of as being part of that team that put it together, as a strong spokesman in terms of providing the voice for these people, as I've said.

We talk about the question of support for people on low incomes. And I always think from a personal point of view, what would our family life be like at home if we suffered under these kind of conditions. I consider us blessed right now, Ruth and I with our four children, that, you know, we live a good life. But what about those people out there who don't?

And I try and place myself in those situations and how I would

react to them and how I would feel. I could certainly feel the frustration, the frustration of trying to meet day-to-day commitments. I could certainly feel the anger, the anger of trying to lash out at the rest of society, trying to deal with what's going on and the pressures that are going on. And I could feel the depression, the depression that it doesn't seem to be getting any better.

And when I put those things all together, to me it isn't fair — it isn't fair for elements of our society to suffer in this way, and we need to do things about that. And that has been the message from the MLA from Eastview in terms of what he's told us as a caucus and other members of this caucus as a team. And now we are embarking, I think, on a program that is going to shine the light in that area. And I say to the opposition members: watch where we are going to go because we are going to see the dawning and that sunlight coming up for those people that suffer in society.

Talking about serving these people in a meaningful way — in a meaningful way — not simply by giving cheques out. But to me it will be a system that will be far better than we've ever seen.

Another area that I want to talk about that I believe has a direct relationship to the work of the member that I referred to, deals with, is in the area of democratic reform. There is a small piece in the throne speech that talks about:

... further progress (as I quote) towards democratic reform, my government will introduce legislation to make the **Chief Electoral Officer** an officer of the Legislature (and) appointed through a non-partisan process.

Mr. Speaker, these are initiatives that have begun with this government when we came to power in 1991 — many initiatives. And the MLA I spoke of was one of a team of MLAs that had put forward democratic reforms for the province of Saskatchewan in 1989-1990. Things that talked about by-elections every six months — by-elections every six months. Before then, there were no rules. If one can remember, the seat of Kindersley went for over two years without a representative. North-east, one year. This was not fair to the people of Saskatchewan.

We have seen major electoral reform in The Election Act — major electoral reform to deal with these kind of problems that have existed in terms of allowing people proper conditions in terms of voting, allowing for the proper recording of expenses in terms of elections, and defining the responsibilities of those people that are involved in the election process in order that we can put faith back into the democratic system. If there have been problems before 1991 in this House and in the House of Commons when we had Brian Mulroney as prime minister, it's that people grew tired of politicians because they used the system, they destroyed the system and destroyed the faith of people of Saskatchewan in the faith in the political system.

We have had to legislate back into the system integrity and honesty and truth into the system which disappeared under the government previously in 1991. That can be ... (inaudible) ... That can be shown to be directly related to the work, as I said, of the team but of the MLA also of Eastview, Mr. Bob Pringle.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about democratic reform in terms of dealing with the orderliness of the electoral system, we have come a long ways — we have come a long ways. Have we come far enough? I don't know. But we have instituted the conflict of interest legislation for members. One of the most thorough pieces of legislation in North America in terms of dealing with the members of the Assembly and dealing with the question that there is full disclosure in terms of what goes on so the public has full confidence in those people that they elect to this Chamber. These are important things to recognize, Mr. Speaker.

As I've talked about, Mr. Speaker, this is a throne speech about investment as I talked about the investment in families; as I talked about the other initiatives in terms of democratic reform, the other investments are in health care.

Mr. Speaker, I am saddened to hear when I hear reports from other provinces of what's going on there. We see emergency centres in Edmonton and in Calgary plugged. We see the same kind of situation in Ontario. We see the extent now in Alberta where in Edmonton hospitals they have cut back health care so bad that they are now shipping patients to Saskatchewan, to Saskatoon.

An Hon. Member: — No.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes. The opposition says no. God forbid, I heard it on the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio. Two weeks ago on CBC radio I heard about the program where they were shipping patients to Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that I've hit a nerve. When we hear what goes on in other provinces where budgets have been cut in health care, particularly when the federal government had cut back in transfer payments, this province had not cut back. Not cut back 1 cent in terms of the budget of health care. And when the feds pulled out, we moved in.

And some of you say, well, that's not true. Well take the line-to-line documents in terms of estimates, in terms of money that's been spent. And further to that, we invested last year \$40 million into the system in addition to what we said in the budget. To me, this is putting more into the health care system. This is an investment into the health care system. Mr. Speaker, it shows this government's commitment to health care and it shows this government's commitment to the people of Saskatchewan.

I have to talk about my favourite subject, Mr. Speaker, to close: investing in transportation. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about transportation in general in terms of putting a system together, this government is working with the people of Saskatchewan to develop plans in terms of how the grain handling system is changing. And it is changing rapidly. We are seeing other alternatives being looked at in terms of short-line railways.

We are hearing now from opposition parties maybe there's need for more regulation in the system to now protect producers. It would be less than five years ago that I heard the same opposition parties say, when they wanted a change to the method of payment, that we needed less regulation. Less regulation will move the grain, will save the producers money,

and it will mean larger grain handling systems and fewer railways.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have it. We have more terminals; we have fewer railways. The cost to producers has gone up and, the example of last year and even this year, the ability to move grain by the railways has stalled. And these are the friends, you know, of the opposition parties now calling for regulation, now on the bandwagon that maybe we should be protecting the railway system.

The MLA for Kindersley was at the group of farmers who were loading an off-track loading of grain in Eston-Elrose along that track, thinking it's a good idea that that track should stay there. Before it would have been, you know, deregulation, let's get rid of it. Now we need more regulation to protect that track.

But what gets me, Mr. Speaker, you know what the gall of this whole system in terms of the railway system is that we've got to buy it back from the federal government.

(1545)

That track that travels from Delisle to the Alberta border was bought and paid for by the people of Canada and the people of Saskatchewan with a branch rehabilitation program from the '70s and '80s. That track has the same high standard of steel that the main track has going through Rosetown-Kindersley, and we have to buy it for scrap? The producers have to buy it for scrap from CN (Canadian National) in order to do this?

It is time, Mr. Speaker, that we tell the federal government's producers in this province that we want control of the transportation system. It is our turn to take control. We're tired of experts telling us from Ottawa this is the thing we need to do. We're tired of organizations like the Western Wheat Growers saying that we should get rid of these branch lines and have the most efficient system possible. It's not fair and it's not right.

But we've come full circle. The opposition parties have come full circle. They've come to join us in this area. Now this is amazing, Mr. Speaker. This is simply amazing.

But we are acting; we are working with those groups out there through the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Highways, that we can develop a system not just for grain handling but for all our commodities in Saskatchewan. And also develop a transportation system that meets the needs in terms of economic development for rural Saskatchewan and for urban Saskatchewan, because this is a partnership of growth. This is a partnership of growth and this is what is the most important issue. And we are dealing with it. And we are committed to that.

And what is the commitment? — \$2.5 billion over 10 years to the highway system alone in order to improve it. We know the commitment that has to be made to the highway systems. But the question has to be asked is that, where do you make those investments? And we are working with partners in this province to make those kind of investments.

I think, Mr. Speaker, I think the opposition want to play politics. I think they want to determine what roads they want

built and they don't want built. I think they have an agenda that, I want to build this road here and that road here but they don't want to bring them together.

But you know planning, and positive planning, will be the success of this. And the people of Saskatchewan will have the system that they need. Despite what's going on around us, despite what's going on around us, we will have that system, we will have that system that will meet the commitments of the energy needs of this province in terms of energy production, in terms of mining production, in terms of grain handling, in terms of our manufacturing system. It will take time but, Mr. Speaker, we will do it.

Mr. Speaker, we will do it. I have confidence in this government, Mr. Speaker. I have confidence in this throne speech, Mr. Speaker, and I will be very pleased to support the throne speech today. I will not support the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 3:50 p.m. until 4 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 7

Krawetz	Toth	D'Autremont
Boyd	Draude	Heppner
Goohsen		

Nays — 34

Flavel	Van Mulligen	Wiens
MacKinnon	Shillington	Tchorzewski
Johnson	Whitmore	Goulet
Upshall	Kowalsky	Calvert
Trew	Lorje	Bradley
Scott	Nilson	Cline
Hamilton	Stanger	Sonntag
Wall	Kasperski	Ward
Murray	Jess	Langford
Murrell	Thomson	Osika
Hillson	McPherson	Aldridge
McLane		

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh I'm glad the members opposite are so enthusiastic in looking forward to what I've got to say. I just hope they are just as enthusiastic after I am finished with what I've got to say, Mr. Speaker.

I want to begin, Mr. Speaker, by saying to you . . . Obviously they're not going to be.

I want to say first of all, Mr. Speaker, in beginning my comments here this afternoon, how proud I am to rise and speak in this debate on behalf of the constituents of Regina Dewdney. I have the honour of representing Regina Dewdney, and prior to that, it was Regina Northeast, now since the fall of 1985 and the constituents of that riding have been a great people to work with. They've provided me with all the advice that I need, the

patience when it was necessary, and the understanding, which is so important when one is in the legislature having to deal with issues that are important but sometimes difficult.

I think that it is important that we all listen to our constituents. And I want to say that in listening to my constituents, I know that this throne speech reflects very well the thoughts and the understanding, the aspirations and the hopes for the future of Saskatchewan people. This is what people in Regina Dewdney, as they have throughout Saskatchewan, have said to me before the throne speech was delivered by the Lieutenant Governor in this House. And it is what they are saying now that the throne speech or the Speech from the Throne has been presented and they have had an opportunity to know what it was saying.

And because of that, Mr. Speaker, I will have no hesitation in supporting the Speech from the Throne and the motion . . . the move by the member for Wascana and seconded by the member for Estevan.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that both the mover and the seconder spoke eloquently and passionately in moving that motion. I say that, and I did say it to them after they spoke, that they were one of the better movers and seconder speeches I have heard in this House in all the years that I have been here. And I want to pay that compliment to them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, their speeches set a very high standard for this debate. And I want to join my colleagues who already have done so in congratulating them for their important contribution to it.

I also want to commend all the members who have spoken for their presentations here in this debate. I note that members opposite have been reluctant to take part in the debate, which is somewhat surprising for opposition members because I recall the days when I was on opposition, one of the most important things that members wanted to do is get up and carry on the debate and say what needed to be said about what was not and what was in throne speeches or in budgets.

So I'm somewhat surprised at the reluctance of members opposite to get involved and to take part. But for the few who have, I want to assure them — and if they are not here to listen then they can read it in *Hansard* — I want to assure them that I will have some things to say about what they have said, in the remarks that I am about to make.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to express my best wishes to you as you guide all of us through this session of the legislature. I know that yours is not an easy task. But even when some of us may show some impatience or frustration, please be assured that you have our utmost respect for how you carry out your responsibilities.

Others have noted your important work throughout Saskatchewan by speaking to students in our schools about the legislature and how it works and its importance. And I commend you for that, as I have in my previous opportunities to speak in debates like this.

Hopefully your efforts will not only provide important knowledge to students but would also inspire our schools and our teachers to make a stronger effort to teach our young people about our democratic system, about our democratic institutions, and of our democratic system of government. And how important it is for them, when their day comes, when they become adults, to get involved and take part in that system.

But the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, spoke about the recent Olympics and the tremendous achievements of our Canadian and Saskatchewan athletes. They were nothing short of outstanding. And if other people were like me, and I'm sure there were many thousands who were, I'm sure they too were up at 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning to see our athletes perform and put pride in our hearts about not only them, but through them, in our country in which we live.

A strong nation is built in many ways. And the pride that Canadians feel in the performance of our very best athletes, or whatever field our Canadians may be taking part in, but in this case our athletes in events such as the Olympics, that is an important part of developing a strong sense of nationhood. And so I want to honour, in my remarks today, the contributions that our Canadian athletes made in the Olympics of 1998.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the Speech from the Throne acknowledges the fact that we live in a world of change. Only if we recognize this can we as legislators come to grips with what is happening and mould it in the interests of people. If we don't, then people will be forgotten in that process and that rapid change that's taking place. And the rich will continue to get richer while the poor will get poorer and their numbers will grow.

And if governments don't do their part, our democracy and the democracies of the world will become subservient to the decisions made in boardrooms of the world's largest corporations in the world — the boardrooms in places like New York and in Bay Street and in Zurich and so on. And fewer of those decisions will be made in the legislatures of Alberta or Saskatchewan or Manitoba or countries wherever they may be.

So there is no doubt that those decisions will not take into consideration, Mr. Speaker, the needs and the dreams and the aspirations of people. Now the recent developments in the economies of the countries like South Korea and Indonesia and even in Japan — one of the strongest economies of the world — should be a wake-up call to all nations about what people who control investment capital around the world can do to a nation and its people if they can set their own rules that suit only themselves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I think, Mr. Speaker, what is happening in the world today and particularly in the Pacific Rim is worth noting as we look at the kind of changes that are taking place.

The member from Humboldt asked an important question about the MAI (multilateral agreement on investment) negotiations which are presently taking place in the western world. And this is an issue so important and can have such wide-reaching implications for the future, for the future well-being of people,

the environment, and the ability of the democratically elected governments to exercise the will of their citizens who elect them, that to have it put in place without full involvement by the people of Canada in that decision would be one of the greatest betrayals of trust by the Liberal government in Ottawa in the history of our country.

It is not acceptable for our federal government to negotiate in secrecy without consulting Canadians and not explaining what it is doing in any deal that can have such huge implications. And the least they could do is have a parliamentary committee hold hearings in all of the provinces of Canada so that Canadians can ask for explanations and express their views.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members of the new Tory Party and the Liberal Party refuse to recognize that those major changes are happening. One only has to listen to the debate that they have carried out in this legislature in the last week or so. I regret that the members opposite — both the Tories and the Liberals, the third party — in their remarks have reflected their desire to look to the past and propose ideas that have not worked in that past to try to deal with the problems that we face in the present and in the future.

They seem to believe that government has no role in a democracy. They have the view that we should let the chips fall where they may. Just leave it to the interests of the lobby groups like the taxpayers federation and all will be okay, is what they seem to be saying in the remarks that they have made here.

I think it's instructive to look at comments that the Leader of the Liberal Party review ... made and revealed a very fundamental flaw in his party when he made some very significant remarks soon after his leadership. On September 26, 1997 — this is when I saw it in the *Leader-Post* — he said, I quote: "In fact, the Liberal strength may be that the party has no particular ideology."

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the life of politics that's like having no soul. It means never having to develop nor ever having to explain where your political party would take this province or country if it ever got elected in government.

It is no wonder that on March 9, the *Leader-Post* again commented on the state of the opposition parties when it was written in that newspaper, and I want to quote again:

Our beef is with both opposition parties that make costly promises without providing credible explanations about how they will pay for them. The Liberals want to inject untold millions into health care and the Saskatchewan Party wants to cut untold millions in taxes. And both are laudable goals, but what's the trade-off? Tell the public now or your credibility problems will get even worse.

(1615)

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a very telling statement. And if this is the test of credibility, then certainly we have seen an experience in this House that shows that they have failed the test.

I've listened to members in this House opposite say many things. They've said them in this debate and they've said them

outside of the House. I want to talk about some of those things because they tell you about the position of the different political parties in this province on issues.

The member for Kelvington-Wadena— well she made her new Tory Party's position quite clear on how they view the world in the *Leader-Post* on October 14 of 1997 when she was struggling to explain why she would not resign and run in the by-election after betraying her constituents who elected her as a Liberal in 1995. And she said that she and her colleagues, and I quote:

... didn't resign and run again in by-elections because no new policies had been developed for the Saskatchewan Party yet. The MLAs wouldn't have been able to answer voters asking what do you believe in and where are you going.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that says a lot. It says that the former Liberals and the Tories who now have joined under a new name, hoping to cover up their past, don't know what they believe in nor do they know where they're going.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Official Opposition said in the debate in this House, Mr. Speaker, "The eight of us who put our political careers on the line and decided to leave our former caucuses did so with an idea of creating something new on the political landscape in this province."

Well, Mr. Speaker, if they really wanted to put their political careers on the line when they did what they did, they should have resigned and asked their voters to make judgement upon them in a by-election, and they didn't do that. They betrayed their constituents; they betrayed the people who worked for them; they betrayed the people who voted for them; and then they did what they did and try to make excuses.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I didn't say this, the member for Wadena said it, and she said it on behalf of all of her colleagues who sit with her on that side of the House. Now, Mr. Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan knows that this new party is nothing more than the old Tory Party of Grant Devine trying to hide from his past and hoping to pull a political fraud on the voters, to get hopefully elected yet one more time.

Just look at it, just look at it. The same back-room people and hangers-on who were there when the former Tory government under Mr. Devine, under the leadership of Mr. Devine and Mr. Berntson, were in power. The same people, the same office staff who were there before the change in the name, and who were mostly there as executive assistants in that former government in the 1980s; former Liberal MLAs, elected in good faith by their constituents, who at times in the past not only supported but also worked for the Tory Party which was elected in the 1980s — not one of those MLAs were elected to be part of this new party.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a combination of disaffected and disgruntled Liberals who have no idea of what the word loyalty and teamwork means, and Tories who could no longer withstand the public scrutiny and the shame of this party's past.

And, Mr. Speaker, this new party was secretly born in the dead of night behind closed doors. It's the illegitimate child of crass opportunism and political chicanery. Well the member for Canora should patiently wait because I have something to say about some of the things he's had to say, and I'm sure, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that he will be interested in hearing what it is that he once said about all of this.

But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you a story, and I want for you to tell the House a story. I want to tell you a story about my father. Mr. Speaker, my father used to tell me and my eight brothers and sisters that if you made mistakes — speaking to us — he said if you made mistakes or if you got into trouble and you learned from those mistakes and that trouble . . .

Ah, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we have touched a chord here, and it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the new Tory Party under a new name are a little touchy about the truth. But they can shout from their seats all they want. Today they're going to hear the truth because, Mr. Speaker, it needs to be said.

Mr. Speaker, my father said to his children, if you get into trouble or if you make mistakes, as long as you learn from them, that he would forgive us. And he was always true to his word, and it was good advice.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, he also said something else to us. He said that if we ever lied to him or anyone else, it would be difficult for him to ever believe us again. And he was right on that too. And this is the truth. That's exactly what he used to tell us, Mr. Speaker.

And to this day I remember that advice and I have always remembered it and it has served me very well. And I believe that most Saskatchewan people would share that view, and that's why I suggest that this Tory Party, under a new name, will find it hard to convince Saskatchewan people that it can be trusted.

Let's examine some of the important history around all of this, a history which Saskatchewan people know only too well, Mr. Speaker. In the Liberal leadership convention in November of 1996, the member for Canora-Pelly said, and I quote, it comes from the *Leader-Post*: "If you committed yourself to be part of a team, or part of a project, you did it."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think, Mr. Speaker, that this was before he was defeated in his attempt for the Liberal leadership at the convention. Because then in 1997 after a three-hour caucus meeting, the new Liberal leader, flanked by the member of Saltcoats and the member for Canora, went before the cameras to say all was well in the Liberal caucus. The Liberal . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. All hon. members will recognize that there are rules that we abide by in conducting debate in the House, and that the one that should be heard most clearly should be the member who's speaking. It's not in order for all other members to be shouting their advice back and forth to one another. And I'll ask the cooperation of all other members to allow the member for Regina Dewdney to be heard.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberal leader said in that interview before the cameras in 1997 after this important caucus meeting, I quote, here's what he said:

"There is no merger. (He said). No future talks will be entertained with the PCs," Melenchuk told reporters.

And this seems to reinforce statements made by members for Saltcoats and Canora, Mr. Speaker, so obviously they all had to agree very sincerely, the statements which they had made on April 3 in 1996. The member for Canora said — and I won't mention his name, although it's in the article — so asked about crossing the floor, he said:

"It's totally false and nothing but an attempt by the Tories to grab media attention. We have (listen to this, because this is really important. He said: We have . . .) a signed document from all members and I can say unequivocally there is no truth to it."

Star-Phoenix, April 3, 1996.

Well what did the member for Saltcoats say on that same day, Mr. Speaker? — No, not the same day; this is a little later. This is on April 10. On April 10 the member said:

"As ludicrous as these reports are I want to assure you, the people of Saltcoats (he's now talking to his constituents. I want to talk assure you, the people of Saltcoats) constituency, that I remain committed to you, (I remain committed to) the Liberal party and my caucus colleagues.

And:

As further sign of my loyalty and that of my colleagues, we have each signed a document in which we unequivocally deny any intention of join any other political party.

Now the story didn't end there, Mr. Speaker, because on August 8, 1997, both of these members then announced that they were going to back on those . . . going back on those solemn promises and they're going to join the Tory Party, pretending to be something else under a new name.

But I wouldn't want to just pick on those two, Mr. Speaker. I just wouldn't want to pick on those two because there were others. There was the member from Melfort-Tisdale, who said on April 2 of 1996, no, absolutely no, not with the Tory Party or any other party. I am a Liberal member of the legislature from Melfort-Tisdale and that is what I will stay.

And then he went again when he was asked about crossing the floor, he said:

I absolutely can say I have never even considered, never mind participated, in any discussions (quote, in quotation marks) 'to cross the floor'. It's almost too ridiculous to imagine. I was elected in Melfort-Tisdale as a Liberal and will continue to represent Melfort-Tisdale as a Liberal, and none of our members have initiated or participated in discussions with any political party.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's interesting to ask, it's

interesting to ask — if people in Saskatchewan heard this and if they read about it, which they have — when this so-called new Conservative Party goes to the polls, whenever the election might be, and says, trust us, here is our word, here is our platform, is it fair to ask that it would be unfair if people of Saskatchewan to be just a little suspicious about those promises and just a little doubtful about whether they are going to be the truth?

Now it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that by August — I could go on because I have others but I think the point has been made — it's interesting that by August of '97 all of these had broken their promises and allowed themselves to become part of an attempt to hide the mistakes of the Tory government of the 1980s behind a new name.

There's nothing new here, Mr. Speaker, nothing new here. It's the same political party that caused cynicism about politics, the same political party that gave politicians a bad name and caused governments to mismanage and bring provinces like this one to the brink of bankruptcy in the 1980s. Same political party, same organization, same back-room people, same politicians.

Mr. Speaker, politics is about trust. It's about being honest. It's about keeping your word. And that does not only apply in politics, Mr. Speaker, it applies in life. And people once misled by a political party or by individual politicians will not easily trust that party or that politician again in the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, now that I've got the attention of the members opposite, now that I've got their attention, Mr. Speaker, I want to now go on to say that the throne speech spoke about a lot of important things. It spoke about this government's commitment to investing in families and jobs and education and training and health care and transportation. And I've heard no disagreement with this strategy. I've heard from members opposite some disagreement in degree, and the amounts, and this kind of thing, but no disagreement with the overall strategy.

Nor should there be, because these are the priorities that Saskatchewan people have said to us are their priorities. These are the kinds of priorities governments and legislatures are expected to identify and to pursue. And this will be done while balancing the budget yet once again so that we don't further mortgage the future of our children, as the old Tory government did in the 1980s.

(1630)

And I'm especially proud of the commitment that the government has made to invest in families, Mr. Speaker. Here is an initiative that will finally begin to deal with the poverty of our working poor, and child poverty, as well as reforming a welfare system which does not recognize the changes that have taken place in our economy and the workforce since the 1960s.

And most people would rather get a pay cheque, Mr. Speaker, we all know that. Most people would rather get a pay cheque than a welfare cheque. And the trouble is that the present system puts obstacles in the way and forces some parents, Mr. Speaker, to choose welfare in the interest of the well-being of their children.

And just as it took a CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government to introduce medicare in 1962, Mr. Speaker, it is an NDP government that is once again providing the leadership for Canada in reforming our welfare system and providing hope and a better future for thousands of low income families and their children.

And, Mr. Speaker, the comments on this initiative by the Leader of the Official Opposition were somewhat interesting, and I'm glad he spoke to this issue because it's an important issue. But once again, if I may comment on those comments, once again he exposed the party, his new Conservative Party, as not understanding how our economy and how our society has changed.

He opposes this new reform and he says so in his speech. He opposes this new reform and he says, why not simply invest in families by reducing their taxes. That's what he said. How simplistic. How unthinking. How simplistic, Mr. Speaker, that he does not recognize that most of the people who are going to be helped with this, these working poor don't make enough money to pay taxes.

It's the traditional historic Conservative approach to solving the problems and the dilemmas of the poor, Mr. Speaker. They say cut taxes is going to help the poor, even those that don't have taxes. And in the end all it does is make them poorer, makes more people poorer, and makes some of the people who are extremely rich even richer.

And the member from Canora might ask his high-priced research staff, the leader . . . well not any more the leader of the Liberal Party. I almost forgot that he had moved over there. But he might ask his other research staff in his new party, the old Conservative research staff, to do some more adequate research into this. And they would advise him that that system that he proposes on behalf of his party has never worked since the 1930s in the Depression, and will not work, unless you have some programs that are targeted specifically to help these people and deal with the kind of problem which they have to deal with in their lives from day to day to day.

He may want to vote against this measure in the throne speech and in the budget when the details of it come out. And members opposite may want to do that. But I say to them, that would not surprise me and it would not surprise the people of Saskatchewan. Because just as Liberals and Conservatives fought against and voted against medicare in 1962, they probably will fight against and vote against the most important social measure to help our working poor, and our poor and hungry and poor children in 30 years in Saskatchewan when it comes up for a vote here today. So it would not surprise me.

But I would challenge them to reconsider because it is an important measure, and it's going to help literally thousands and tens of thousands of families and people who need to have that kind of help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another important issue raised in the Speech from the Throne is transportation. And for a province like this it is extremely important. Not that it's not extremely important for all of Canada, because in our country it is. Because our country depends on transportation in order that our economy can

function at its best, because we are an exporting nation.

Investing in transportation is also investing in people. And this government increased spending in highways in 1997-98 in the budget by nearly 20 per cent and made a commitment over 10 years to our highways of \$2.5 billion. And this is a major commitment of dollars that must be allocated throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, not on one stretch of road.

But it's a major commitment that has to be allocated throughout the province and that's why it's important to work in close partnership with the rest of the community so that these funds are invested wisely. And where we have, Mr. Speaker, in this province 185,000 kilometres of roads and highways, a distance that many people have said before that would circle the world four and a half times around the equator.

And we should know that establishing the right priorities for the future is important. And it's a tragedy to me and I'm sure it's a tragedy to most other people that this country's future economic development is so dependent on our transportation system, but our federal government refuses to recognize it. Canada is the only country in the western world that does not have a national highway and transportation system. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's a tragedy for our nation.

This is not to say, Mr. Speaker, this is not to say that the federal government doesn't spend money on highways, because it does spend money on highways. And in spite of what the Liberal cabinet minister for Regina and Saskatchewan says, the federal Liberal government spends money on highways, and lots of it.

But Liberals need to explain, Mr. Speaker, Liberals need to explain why 98 per cent of the money they spend on highways, about \$500 million is spent only in eastern Canada. Now that's good for eastern Canada, Mr. Speaker. It's part of my country and I hope that they can get all the help that they need. But that's not the way a country based on cooperative federalism is supposed to work.

And even more specific, Mr. Speaker, most of that money has been and continues to be spent in New Brunswick so that former Liberal cabinet ministers like Doug Young and his company can have the federal government, with taxpayers' money, build a road so that their management company can manage it and charge whole fees and benefit from it.

And Liberals, besides that, Mr. Speaker, need to explain why between 1991 and 1996 the federal government contributed only 5.4 per cent of all money spent on municipal roads, highways, and airports in Saskatchewan, a sum of some \$74.7 million while the province spent \$1.29 billion on 94 per cent. The tragedy goes further than that.

As my colleague from Rosetown . . . Saskatoon Westmount . . . Saskatoon Northwest — I'm sorry — was referring to a little while ago in his speech, the federal government has done things that have done a great deal of damage to our transportation system and put pressures on it that are going to have a big price to pay particularly by our producers.

It has eliminated the Crow benefit for farmers without any consultations — \$320 million. It has allowed rail-line

abandonment and changes to the grain handling system that have meant increased loads on our highways. Federal deregulation has led to decisions by the railways that pose a fundamental threat to our existing grain handling system and to the economic well-being of Saskatchewan grain producers, and offload traffic onto our rural and road network.

And all that we hear from the Liberals in this legislature is a defence of their Liberal cousins in Ottawa. Saskatchewan's Liberal cabinet minister in Ottawa comes up with a big goose egg. Doug Young comes up with \$500 million. And when he is asked at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention, why don't you put on a moratorium on the rail-line abandonment, what does he have to say? He says that would not be appropriate. He says he can only say that introducing legislation to restrict abandonment now is just not an option.

He should have listened to what Mr. Estey, his commissioner said only about three days before then when asked by the media about rail-line abandonment. While he is doing his study, Mr. Estey said . . . Mr. Estey said, it's not my responsibility, it's a matter of policy by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, this is a cop-out. It is an unforgivable shirking of responsibility by the minister from Saskatchewan and by Liberals. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, there is no political will on his part or that of the federal government to deal with this issue. They appointed a commissioner to study their whole transportation system. They have refused to allow . . . to put in a moratorium, so that by the time the commissioner finishes his report there may very well be no branch lines left on which something can be done in order to accommodate the report that he might present.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that tells you a lot about what is wrong with this country. And that tells you a lot about why in some parts of this country there are some people who sometimes think that — and I think they're wrong; I think they're wrong — but sometimes why they think that they might not be better to be part of the country, but go their own way. It's because of these kinds of decisions by a national Liberal government, which is not something new. It's something that has been taking place in this country for as long as the Liberal government have been in power, and they've been in power in this country for much too many years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to close briefly and quickly now to make some comments on an issue which is, and has been for a long time, very close to me and very important to me. And I want to close my remarks today by talking about what has been happening in Canada for far too long.

In December this legislature did something historically significant, something very special. All members put aside their political . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. Members opposite ask, is it the unity issue. Well I want to say to the members opposite . . . I want to say to the members opposite, yes. Because unlike some members, I consider it to be an important issue. And I think most members in this legislature consider this to be an important issue.

And that's why I'm prepared to stand here because members

did not have an opportunity to do it in December. The leaders did, and that was the way it should have been. But what was done here in this legislature in December was extremely important. Our members put aside their political partisanship and considered a set of principles called the Calgary Declaration, a framework for discussion on Canadian unity.

And it was my hope that this might begin some recognition by all members that some things are so important to the future of our country and our province that they could rise above partisanship. And I still hope that there is some of that sentiment and understanding and that although in our parliamentary system of government, party positions and party beliefs and ideology and philosophy may differ — and probably should differ in order that all sides of all issues can be debated and considered — that sometimes that in some debates, such as the one in December, legislators could share a common vision because something very important is at stake. And I want to commend the opposition parties, the independent members as well as the government on what was done here in that debate and in that resolution.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, you must be surprised to hear me say that I was somewhat disappointed and saddened to hear the member from Kelvington-Wadena say on March 12 in this Assembly, “Why did you spend thousands of dollars to deal with the national unity question when it was not necessarily your jurisdiction?” And I want to say to her, Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to her through you that the future of my country, of your country, of our country is everyone’s jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker. Whether our country stays united should not be as much concern to the member for . . . should be as much concern to the member from Kelvington-Wadena, and I’m not suggesting it’s not. I really think it is. But it should be as it is to me or any citizen anywhere in Canada or to a Member of Parliament in Ottawa.

It is unacceptable for anyone or any member of any party who is in any capacity in this legislature to support the process last fall and then be party . . . and be party to a unanimous vote on the seven principles because it may have been politically expedient at that time, and three months later try to dredge up old resentments and old prejudices in order to try and make a political point.

I was disappointed in that. Now this country in its future, Mr. Speaker . . . this future, Mr. Speaker, is important, is too important for that kind of politics. History will speak very well of what happened here last December and I hope future generations will look at what we did and what other provincial legislatures did and be able to say that those actions and dreams were an important part of why their country is — our country — their country is united and strong and prosperous and have a place so good in which to live that Canada was still the envy of people in nations around the world.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say this very sincerely, if some politicians on any side of this House or any political party think that immediate political gain and opportunism is more important for their short-term political ambitions than a united country in the long term, all that was gained in December may be jeopardized.

And so I hope that all members here will think about this sincerely and decide to renew the commitments made in December. That when it comes to the unity and future of Canada as a nation, we can put aside partisanship and instruct our speech-writers and those who write questions for the opposition members accordingly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, events are taking place in Ottawa and Quebec surrounding the leadership of the Liberal Party of Quebec which may change the political landscape in Quebec but also in Canada.

(1645)

And if Mr. Charest decides to return to Quebec it may give the federalist forces in that province some new-found strength. And the present separatist government may be defeated in the next election. But we all know that the sands of politics can shift very quickly and nothing is certain.

If Mr. Charest decides to make the move, I for one will wish him well. It’s not my decision, it’s not our decision. It’s his decision. But if that’s a move, Mr. Speaker, that can help to unify this country, I wish him well. But I will do so, Mr. Speaker, knowing that this alone will not settle this debate on national unity which has plagued this country for far too many decades.

It will take the kind of goodwill that we saw in our province in October and November and December to determine and put into place an acceptable solution. It will require the kind of strong national leadership that the nine premiers and territorial leaders showed in the Calgary Declaration, and the mistrust and the tarnished egos in Ottawa must end.

And the Prime Minister will need to rise above poor personal relations of the past, and other national leaders will have to rise above those poor personal relations in the past and recognize that in this country, cooperative federalism works, cooperative federalism works. It has worked in the past and it can work to unite this country in the future.

In his speech at Harvard University, our Premier quoted from a speech to the Canadian Assembly on June 22. He quoted in a speech from George Brown, who made the following remarks on June 22 of 1864. And he was commenting on the almost unanimous endorsement of a coalition aimed at a new vision for Canada and a major step towards Confederation. And here is what he said:

“But party alliances are one thing, and the interests of our country another . . . let us try to rise superior to the pitifulness of party politics . . . let us unite to consider this question as a great national issue, in a manner worthy of us as a people.”

The next day, on June 23, the Quebec *Canadien*, a newspaper, wrote the following:

Yesterday’s session opened up a new era in our political existence . . . ranking among the most memorable in our parliamentary history.

And as our Premier said of the Calgary accord, Mr. Speaker:

In moving forward this way, we may have rediscovered a small piece of the original genius of Confederation itself.

The Calgary Declaration is genuinely a message from the people of Canada outside Quebec. The people of Canada are getting their say about the message they want to send. We have, perhaps as much by accident as by design, found the route on this that we have not previously found.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the political leaders in Ottawa have taken note and have learned from this, and I hope that we all have. And I hope that in the near future, newspapers and television and radio and the Internet will be able to report a story similar to that that was reported on June 23 of 1964 in that *Canadien*, after Mr. George Brown spoke and after that Assembly had taken its vote.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that because this throne speech, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, reflects the views and the opinions and the wishes and the aspirations and the dreams, to a large extent, of Saskatchewan people — it talks about health care, it talks about education for our children, it talks about training for people so that they can get the new jobs that are being created today. It talks about transportation, it talks about reforming our welfare system and helping our working poor and our poor children — and so, Mr. Speaker, because it does all of that, it is my intention to support the motion moved by the member for Wascana and the member from Estevan, and I urge all members of the House to join me in supporting that motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise here this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in Regina Sherwood and enter this throne speech debate.

But before I start, I'd first like to bring greetings again to yourself and add to the compliments of many other hon. members, the outreach work that you have been doing. We were pleased to have you at St. Mary School a year ago up in our constituency, and I must compliment you for the work that you have been doing there.

I also want to welcome the Clerks and the assistant Clerks, our Sergeant-at-Arms, the new pages, and all the members of the Legislative Assembly staff. It's great to be back and it's great to be working with everybody again.

To the people of *Hansard*, I promise when I do a speech in French or German or Polish, I'll supply a translation this year, and I set a good example yesterday in that. So, *Hansard*, don't sweat it, I'll make sure I give translations.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to take a moment, which I didn't have a chance to in our session in December, to thank the constituents of Regina Sherwood for their participation and input during the unity consultation process which took place in November. And I especially wish to give thanks to Francoise Stoppa, my citizen Co-Chair from the constituency of Regina

Sherwood. Your input was well received and a credit to the whole process that this Legislative Assembly engaged in last November.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise here this evening, or this afternoon, to support the Speech from the Throne which was moved so eloquently by my colleague, the member from Regina Wascana Plains and seconded by the member for Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech, "Investing in People", is something that the people and my constituents in Regina Sherwood can relate to. But my constituency of Regina Sherwood, Mr. Speaker, consists of the communities of Mount Royal, Prairie View, Normanview, Normanview West, and Walsh Acres. It is an area of the city of Regina that I and my wife have lived in for almost 23 years now. It's a great area. People with good . . . hardworking people with good, common values, who value the cooperation and sharing.

Mr. Speaker, this is a speech that they can relate to, and I would like now to take a few minutes to start to go through the various components of this throne speech which I think sets very well or continues very well the course first outlined by this government a little over a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, "Investing in People", building on our common values, the speech outlined from the 1998 Speech from the Throne, is a clear vision of our government's plans for the future. It is a vision and plan that is well thought out in cooperation with all the people of Saskatchewan, from all walks of life, in close consultation with them. And I think, Mr. Speaker, it represents a very important blueprint to put Saskatchewan in line for the new millennium.

Mr. Speaker, but first, as outlined by His Honour in the Speech from the Throne, there are six major components to the "Investing in People" program. These components, Mr. Speaker, the first one outlined by His Honour, described investing in families. Mr. Speaker, this is one of our major, major priorities.

I would like to take a couple of minutes and perhaps talk about what accomplishments have been made in this area in the past year, and before I talk about the thrust of the year to come. Mr. Speaker, in the area of investing in families, I'd like to . . . people should know that funding for the action plan for children was doubled during the last fiscal year, which meant \$13.3 million in expenditures in helping children and families.

During this year as well, 6 million of transitional funding was targeted to fight child poverty immediately instead of waiting for the federal program which will start later in 1998.

The Family Income Plan was improved, Mr. Speaker. Benefits to low income families increased by \$15 a month per child. Family income threshold to receive maximum benefits increased from \$725 to \$850 a month. Children of families, Mr. Speaker, receiving family income benefits now receive the same supplemental health benefits as those on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the province provided 1.3 million to help youth at risk, including community-based projects to help youth safely

off the street; a restorative youth justice program and coordination of services for youth with challenging behaviours.

Mr. Speaker, a comprehensive and firm strategy to combat child prostitution, including street outreach services, strict law enforcement, public education, and tracking and monitoring their perpetrators, has been implemented.

Money has been provided for school expenses to families on social assistance. Tougher penalties, including the authority to suspend drivers' licences for people who refuse to meet child support payments, have also been implemented. The basic care rates to foster parents has increased more than 8 per cent in the past year, Mr. Speaker. Since 1992, more than 3.7 million has been targeted to expand and enhance child care services in Saskatchewan.

In the last fiscal year, 150,000 of additional funding was provided to key . . . (inaudible) . . . centres, 500,000 of wages of child care workers, and 1 million available for renovation and improvement of facilities and equipment. The province is working with first nations also to help establish their own child and family service agencies.

Mr. Speaker, that's not all. Two community projects are in place in Saskatoon and Prince Albert to assist low income families to purchase their own homes in core areas of the city. Over three years, 8 million will be used to develop adequate, affordable housing for northern residents of our province.

The prevention of social assistance fraud has been improved through computer registration and by sharing information with other provinces. Mr. Speaker, this government's strategy is a success. Since May of 1997, more people are working and social assistant case-loads have dropped steadily. Mr. Speaker, this is a trend that is continuing to go.

Mr. Speaker, there are other elements of the throne speech debate that I'd like to get into, but seeing it's getting to that time of the afternoon, I would at this moment move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

In *Hansard* No. 6A, Monday, March 16, 1998, 1:30 p.m., the date on page 2 onwards should read, March 16, 1998.

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