

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of the community of Lampman. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

These petitions come from the Windthorst, Arcola, Carlyle, Lampman, and Kisbey areas of the province. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well to present petitions. Reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the Kisbey, Arcola, Lampman, and Kipling areas of the province. I so present.

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 put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Weyburn, Kisbey, and Arcola. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition. This is signed by people from Carnduff, North Portal, and Oxbow area. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

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

I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition as well. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review into the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Arcola, Lampman, Norquay, and Kisbey, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition 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.

Everyone that's signed this petition is from Spalding.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan relative to the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads:

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.

And the people who've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from Yorkton.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the Plains Health Centre. 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.

Citizens who have signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Aneroid, Ponteix, Pambrun, and the community of Redvers. I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

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, the signatures on this petition are all from the community of Indian Head.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's more significant than ever for me to be presenting petitions on this Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job on behalf of citizens of our province concerned about justice for disenfranchised widows and widowers:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have The Workers' Compensation Board Act amended for the disenfranchised widows and widowers of Saskatchewan whereby their pensions are reinstated and the revoked pensions reimbursed to them retroactively and with interest, as requested by the statement of entitlement presented to the Workers' Compensation Board on October 27, 1997.

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

The people who have signed this today are all from the Regina district, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters: to save the Plains Health Centre; to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre; and to reinstate pensions for disenfranchised widows and widowers of Saskatchewan.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Day of Mourning for Killed and Injured Workers

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, April 28 is the day set aside as a Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job during

the previous year. This day of remembrance was initiated in Saskatchewan 10 years ago by you, Mr. Speaker, and it is now observed right across Canada.

Preventing workplace incidents is first the duty of individuals. Sadly, the victims of the incidents are individuals.

This is a day to remember one terrible number. That number this year is 34. That is the number of individuals killed on the job in Saskatchewan last year — 34 individuals to mourn, 34 parents or children or siblings whose place in the family is empty, whose voice in society is silenced.

Thirty-four is a particularly terrible number because it's five more than last year.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the minister in a few minutes reads the names of those killed and asks for a moment of silence, I suggest that we as legislators consider our duty as individuals and as this collective Assembly to do what we can to stop these senseless tragedies. Our duty is to defend workers' rights and safety through all the legislative tools at our command.

Let us today renew our determination to stop on-the-job carnage. We owe it to the thousands of injured workers and to the memory of the 34 individuals who lost their lives at work in Saskatchewan last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize all Saskatchewan workers killed on the job last year and in years past. This past year we have seen at least two very tragic and fatal falls right here in our capital city.

Under any circumstance, death is difficult to deal with. But if we lose an elderly loved one or an individual who has suffered for long periods of time, their length of life or removal from pain may provide solace to their loved ones. But one can only imagine how horrifying it would be to lose a loved one in a sudden, work-related accident. On average 30 people are killed at work each year.

Mr. Speaker, on this Day of Mourning we should all remind ourselves that it is everybody's responsibility to make sure the workplace is as safe as it can possibly be. As legislators we must be vigilant of occupational health and safety regulations, employers must maintain a safe work environment, and employees must take that extra, life-saving minute to protect themselves.

I would like to take a moment to remind all workers who have been fortunate enough to avoid a work-related tragedy, whether they are working in Canada or overseas, to exercise caution. Take care and come home safely to your children or loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important day and I would ask all the members in the Assembly to join with me in remembering all workers killed on the job in Saskatchewan and around the world. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grant to Big Sisters Association of Saskatoon

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Friday before last the Minister of Education announced on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Government that the Big Sisters Association of Saskatoon has received \$10,000 of casino profits through the associated entities fund. The Big Sisters will use the grant to address the needs of at-risk female children and youth related to family violence.

The violence prevention program will work to decrease or eliminate risk factors for children and youth through support, education, and alternative choices. A portion of the activities will be scheduled based on a family support centre services and programs. Independent components of the program will be scheduled through the Big Sisters.

Mr. Speaker, the government established the associated entities fund to distribute a portion of casino profits for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. To date over \$1 million has been distributed throughout Saskatchewan for programs that support children, youth, and families. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Free Vote on Hepatitis C Victims Compensation Package

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I questioned why the Premier would deny a free vote on the issue of compensating all victims of hepatitis C. After all, members unanimously passed a motion with the same intent on December 15. Following question period today a motion will be put to this Assembly to compensate all victims. The NDP has expressed some concern about a free vote on this issue because it could result in a vote of non-confidence for this government.

Mr. Speaker, providing House leaders can agree, a free vote can take place without this government risking a vote of non-confidence. All this requires is an agreement by the House leaders of each of the respective parties in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I put a challenge to the other parties in this House to work together and reach a consensus before this motion is presented in this House.

Yesterday the Minister of Health told all members of the Assembly to park politics at the door regarding this issue. If he truly meant this, now is the perfect time for all members to do so and vote according to their conscience.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Modern-day Good Samaritan

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, this is a story in which the moral is apparent — the kind of story Saskatchewan people pass over as commonplace but which is anything but normal in the world outside our borders.

Yesterday, while driving to Regina, I stopped in Chamberlain for gas. I stopped at Bennett's service station. MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) may be aware that this station has willingly complied with all environmental regulations and has installed above-ground tanks.

Lyle filled my car with gas and, when it was time to pay, I discovered that I had left my credit card at home. Being a poor MLA, I had no cash with me. My dog, who usually travels with me, has no resale value. This situation was not quite the same as being beaten and left in the ditch like in the parable of the good Samaritan, but it was close enough.

Lyle calmly wrote my name and the amount I owed for the gas on a piece of paper and said I could pay on my return trip. He then asked me if I needed any extra cash for my journey. This too would have been given on trust.

Mr. Speaker, this was a small act of kindness to a stranger by a small-business person who could have been very suspicious of travelling politicians, but his fundamental Saskatchewan goodness overrode any lack of trust. I'm not surprised but I am grateful. This is truly the Saskatchewan way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Political Program on Yorkton Radio

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night I listened to a political program on CJGX radio in Yorkton. Now CJGX usually provides high quality programming, but I have to say that was actually pretty boring last night.

The Liberals bought an hour of air time so Mr. Melenchuk and several of his MLAs could have a phone-in program. It was a good example of how much interest there is in Liberals these days because the first half an hour nobody called. Not one call, Mr. Speaker.

It got so bad that in order to generate some interest, CJGX decided to play a lengthy interview with me. That got some calls going, Mr. Speaker. Four of the six callers, four of the six callers told the Liberals they should have joined the Saskatchewan Party.

One caller noted that Mr. Melenchuk would have joined the Saskatchewan Party, only he wanted to be leader and we weren't foolish enough to let that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I feel somewhat guilty about not sharing in the cost of the radio program because most of it was about the Saskatchewan Party.

And the final caller suggested they should all just join the NDP (New Democratic Party). He said the Premier's quitting pretty soon anyway, and maybe Mr. Melenchuk could run for the NDP Party. That seems to be the best suggestion I heard all night.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell the Liberals I was glad to help out and I'm glad my comments generated some interest and some calls in an otherwise boring program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Nursing Home for Shaunavon

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I attended a sod-turning ceremony at the Shaunavon hospital to

commemorate the commencement of construction of a new nursing home attached to the existing hospital.

The project involves construction of a 44-bed nursing home attached to the hospital as well as renovations to the hospital itself.

The new addition will replace two existing but outdated homes. The new nursing home facility will be capable of providing level 3 and level 4 care. These levels of care were simply not sustainable in the old homes, but perhaps the opposition would like to save those buildings as well.

Of the 44 long-term beds in the new addition, 12 are designated specifically for respite and care of people with dementia. There will be an adult day program; dining and activity areas for long-term patients. Renovations on the hospital itself will focus on emergency out-patient service areas, and the kitchen.

This is a \$5 million project which will greatly enhance the health needs of the people in the Shaunavon district. I was happy to accept my invitation to the sod-turning ceremony; however I am a little perplexed that the member from Wood River did not accept his. Perhaps he was too busy spreading misinformation about Saskatchewan health care to attend what was a magnificent ceremony, celebrating excellent improvements to health care in his own constituency.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Party and Day of Mourning

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on this official Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job in Saskatchewan, I find it interesting that there's just one political party who has chosen not to wear a sticker recognizing this important day.

While they mouth their empty platitudes about being concerned, Mr. Speaker, it is the very policies that they believe in which contribute to the concerns of Saskatchewan people. They are against the trade unions and their ability to represent workers; they are against toughening up The Occupational Health and Safety Act; and they are against a strong Workers' Compensation Board, and they are against a strong Labour Standards Act.

All of these Acts, Mr. Speaker, serve to protect working people in this province and to ensure safe working conditions as they perform their jobs, Mr. Speaker.

It's no surprise to me that we hear no sincerity from the Saskatchewan Party on this solemn occasion. In their hearts they simply do not believe what they are saying because they are on public record with their statements and policies which would weaken, not strengthen, safety provisions for the workers of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, it is now clear that the decision to pay off Jack Messer was made by you — not Rob Garden, not Milt Fair, you, Mr. Minister.

Jack Messer testified under oath that in return for his resignation you promised him a lucrative severance package. John Wright communicated that message to Jack Messer, clearly acting on your direction. Mr. Minister, that is completely different from the story you've been telling this House for the past two months.

Mr. Minister, Jack Messer says you promised him a lucrative severance in return for his resignation or he would have been terminated with cause. What happened? Did you promise Jack Messer this severance package?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, if I could respond to the member, because he has a very selective memory as to what is accurate. In fact even in the committee the words he uses about the individual testifying aren't accurate. But let me tell you that the circumstances were this, and I repeat them for the member.

The board of directors of Crown Investments Corporation and Mr. Messer decided to part company, and the issue of severance was handed over to one Milt Fair to decide severance, if any — if any — would be paid.

I want to quote as well what Mr. Messer said . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now the Chair is having already difficulty being able to hear the answer being provided and I do ask for the cooperation of the members of the House to enable the minister to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Messer said outside of the House, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: "I believe that Mr. Wright indicated that the Acting Chair will have all the latitude that he felt it required in order to make and have a fair settlement." That's what he said outside of the House . . . outside of the committee.

So when you say that he said I was doing the severance, that's not accurate. And you're misleading and you're saying something that isn't honest. And I can understand now why you weren't chosen as leader of even that rump of a party known as the Conservative Party in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, Jack Messer testified before the committee under oath that you directed John Wright to pay him a lucrative severance package and he quoted an example of the most lucrative severance package that it was going to be compared to. And he was told, through Mr. Wright

by you, that if he didn't accept that severance package you would have him terminated with cause.

He testified before the committee under oath, Mr. Minister. When are you going to take responsibility for your actions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that I checked with Mr. Wright only minutes before coming in the House. And he indicated clearly, he offered no severance to Mr. Messer.

Now look, in your scrum — I say to the member from Melfort — you said we have to be careful in the committee not to jump to conclusions, but that there is a clear difference between what Mr. Messer says in other accounts. Now I would urge you to wait until John Wright, the CEO (chief executive officer) of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation), comes before the committee, other ministers who will come. Take your own advice. Take your own advice and not jump to conclusions. Otherwise the committee can't function and can't work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Jack Messer was testifying under oath before the committee and if you're saying that he is not saying the truth, Mr. Minister, that is most unfortunate. Mr. Messer also told us that there is more information about the Guyana deal that hasn't been disclosed. Mr. Messer said that clearly there are legal repercussions potentially against SaskPower and SaskPower Commercial. Mr. Messer said that under oath, Mr. Minister, and it was confirmed by Mr. Christensen.

Will you admit to this House that SaskPower or SaskPower Commercial or the government are at potential legal risk because of your pulling out of the Guyana deal?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the two questions that were asked. First of all, Mr. Wright will come to the committee and he will give clear indication that he offered no severance to Mr. Messer. Now your job will be to listen to all of the comments made, all of the comments made . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now . . . Order. In order for question period to function in an orderly way, it needs the cooperation of all the members of the House. Now I'll ask for the cooperation of the members of the opposition to allow the minister to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say again, Mr. Wright will come before the committee which you are a part of and he will give testimony. And as indicated earlier today, he has indicated to the press and to anyone who cares to ask him that he offered no severance on behalf of the board of directors of CIC to Mr. Messer.

So you're going to have two conflicting opinions on the same set of circumstances. Your job will be, to the member from Rosthern who yells from his seat as usual, you'll have to decide where the truth lies given the set of circumstances that you're

given.

As it relates to Guyana, you will know that it was also indicated, and Mr. Wright will tell you this as well if asked, that our legal opinion in CIC is that we have no legal obligations to the Government of Guyana.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Minister, today under oath Mr. Messer and Mr. Christensen confirmed that there were reports identifying the potential dollar extent to which the government or SaskPower or SaskPower Commercial would be legally liable for pulling out of the deal.

Today we asked for those documents and all related documents related to this Guyana deal — which were clearly articulated as a part of the reason that you terminated Mr. Messer — were to be tabled by the committee, and your majority overruled that.

When will you take responsibility for releasing this information to the public?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — As I said to the member opposite the last time the Guyana issue was dealt with, it was in a committee where you were asking questions about it. You remember that. You will remember that. And then you go on to say, I knew nothing about Guyana.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I will ask for the cooperation of the members. And it is simply not acceptable in question period to be having a continuous commentary, and I will ask for the cooperation, I will ask for the cooperation of all members to enable the minister's answer to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again to the member from Melfort, when he was in the committee dealing with Guyana he did not take an opportunity to say that he was opposed to it, that he didn't like it. He didn't say a word, didn't say a word. In fact he was complimentary to the people bringing the information. He was complimentary, giving indication that he supported the Guyana deal.

Now I just can't understand how Mr. Messer and the people at SaskPower . . . one day you're saying they all should be fired because they're incompetent and today you're saying they're the sole authority on which you hope to build the inquiry's mandate. Now it can't be both. It can't be both. It can't be that Mr. Messer and Christensen are the authority but at the same time a week ago you wanted them all fired. Which is it? Where's your credibility? It's no darn wonder the party didn't elect you. It's no wonder the party didn't elect you as its leader . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my credibility isn't an issue here, yours is. Mr. Minister, when are you going to take responsibility? You have not been forthright with us about Channel Lake; you haven't been forthright with us about Jack Messer's severance; you haven't been forthright

with us about Guyana. Mr. Premier, this man will not be forthright with this Assembly. Why don't you fire him and let someone else deal with this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased to speak to this question. This minister, the Deputy Premier, the government, has tabled every relevant document on its own with respect to Channel Lake — Mr. Speaker, on its own — we tabled 150 pages on the opening day of the legislature. On our own . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the Chair is again having difficulty being able . . . Order.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try one more time, Mr. Speaker, to make my point.

The Deputy Premier, on behalf of the government, tabled on opening day of the legislature a hundred and fifty pages of Deloitte Touche reports, CIC reports, subsequently directed them to go to Public Accounts Committee. They didn't want it to go to Public Accounts Committee, referred it to Crown Corporations; tabled a thousand documents — I don't mean pages but documents — and more that have come to light; a credible television list of witnesses that have come forward and testified in this matter; has answered every question consistently and credibly and has maintained that posture on behalf of the government. This person has told the truth about everything that this government does, as this government has told the truth about this particular matter.

Something that he hasn't, because when he got up in the House, he swore his allegiance to the Liberal Party — swore his allegiance to the Liberal Party — and then betrayed them publicly. This government, this minister, and this caucus never has done that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Compensation for Hepatitis C Victims

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, it is now pretty clear why you don't allow your back-bench members to vote freely. I think it's even a mistake for you to even let them speak. The member from Redberry Lake seems to be suggesting that expanding hepatitis C package would lead to claims from drug users. Mr. Premier, we are talking about people who got hepatitis C through tainted blood, not drug use.

One of the cases that has been brought to our attention is Scott Mamer of Melfort who has been living with this deadly disease all his life. That's because Scott contracted hepatitis C in 1982 through a transfusion he got when he was seven days old, Mr. Premier — seven days old. Not a drug user — a seven-day-old infant. He has lived with this disease ever since.

Mr. Premier, can you explain how it is fair for your government to turn its back on Scott Mamer?

Mr. Premier, will you as well allow your members to vote freely on the motion that will be coming before the Assembly this afternoon. Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to respond again today to the issue that I spoke to yesterday. And I want to advise the members one more time in the Assembly, that this issue of hepatitis C and the compensation package for Canadians across Canada has been viewed and reviewed and discussed and deliberated at length. And it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, but true, that on all occasions, on all occasions the health care system cannot — cannot — compensate for every harm that's brought to people through the delivery of its process. It cannot do that.

And today, like the member opposite, we too feel like he does, we feel like he does and we sympathize deeply with those people across Canada who do not fit within the scope of decision that all Canadian Health ministers and the federal government made.

Now to suggest . . . to have the member suggest today that people on this side of the House have not had an opportunity to debate this or discuss this, or send me away to Ottawa and Toronto, where we've gone to have the debate collectively with ministers, is absolutely false. Because on this side of the House we make decisions that's inclusive, that's inclusive. And it never, in the day that I've served in this government, has there been anything that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I questioned why the Premier would deny a free vote on the issue of compensating all victims of hepatitis C. After all, members unanimously passed a motion with the same intent on December 15 — December 15, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP have expressed some concern about a free vote on the issue; that it could result in a vote of non-confidence in this government. I'm not sure that there shouldn't be one.

Mr. Speaker, providing House leaders can agree, a free vote can take place without the government risking a vote of confidence. Once again, Mr. Premier, will you allow your back-benchers and all your members to vote with their conscience?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the members of this party, the members of this government, always try to act with our individual conscience; we try to reflect the public interests with the best conscience that we can in our decisions.

The hon. member quotes the resolution of December, which resolution was acted upon. The resolution that we voted for was acted upon. It was acted upon by his Liberal federal government. It was acted upon by all the provincial governments and the best possible settlement in very difficult

circumstances. An offer of settlement, as the Minister of Health has indicated, has come forth under very difficult circumstances.

We have acted on the resolution. We act on our consciences; we act in the public interest with the best conscience and compassion that we can exhibit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Health Information Network

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, more than 200 representatives from health districts and other organizations are meeting today in Regina and tomorrow to discuss priorities relating to the development of the Health Information Network. A news release says these discussions will, and I quote: "... help guide initial implementation of the SHIN technology and software over the next year."

Mr. Minister, you're only now determining what SHIN (Saskatchewan Health Information Network) might look like in its final form but you've already spent in excess of \$7 million on technology and software which may not even fit the final requirements. Mr. Minister, don't you think you've put the cart before the horse?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, that we have been consulting with the public since November of ... from 1997. We've been consulting with the public and we have received a variety of different information from the public across Saskatchewan telling us what they want to see in the new piece of legislation that soon I'll be bringing to this Assembly and sharing with this Assembly of which we can debate and discuss at length.

And again the member indicates that today we have 200 more people who are here discussing the value and the process of how we're going to enrich the services across Saskatchewan through the new information technology.

Now we have set aside \$40 million in this province, Mr. Speaker, over the next couple of years to bring to fruition the initial stages of SHIN, like our partners to the east and west. Only in Alberta they're spending 300 million and in Manitoba they're spending 200 million over the same period of time.

But we're proceeding on a different path, Mr. Speaker, although we want to achieve the same objectives. We're doing it cautiously; we're doing it in consultation with Saskatchewan people to ensure that we have the best services, particularly, Mr. Speaker, for rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, privacy seems to have become an expensive second thought to this government. The master services agreement for SHIN states that \$7 million has already been spent and several irrevocable decisions will have been made regarding technology and software. At the same time SHIN chairman, John Grossman, admits in a February 11 letter

to the deputy minister of Health that, and I quote, and that's this letter here, Mr. Speaker:

The right of an individual to request non-disclosure of portions of a record will create significant technical challenges for SHIN.

Mr. Minister, you've spent millions on technology which may not meet the needs of SHIN. You've got major privacy concerns that you haven't yet addressed.

Mr. Minister, given the track record on NDP investments, will you get a clear picture of what the end product is going to be before you toss away millions more dollars?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I brought to the attention of the member opposite on several occasions what the intent will be in Saskatchewan at the end of the day when we have in this province the technology system that provides a broad range of services to Saskatchewan people, and demonstrated that through the examples of telehealth, of which he's had some experience to see and witness and realize, what it will provide for Saskatchewan people particularly in the rural part of our province.

But keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that this isn't only a Saskatchewan initiative; this is a Canadian initiative. And just recently, Mr. Speaker, in Alberta, in Edmonton, of which the member opposite and his party were invited to attend, the federal Liberal government had a large convention, bringing people from across Canada together to demonstrate, Mr. Speaker, to demonstrate what health information can and will do into the future.

So if the member opposite is suggesting for a minute that there has been a useless expenditure, of where I hear him say, in information technology, he should be standing up ... or going back to his desk, writing a letter to the federal minister, Allan Rock, and tell him that the investment that they made in information technology for Canadians today is useless.

So you should get up and send that letter to them, Mr. Speaker, but in Saskatchewan we're going to promote and grow this province and health services in the way in which Saskatchewan people are accustomed to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, on April 2 the Deputy Premier assured this House that the reason Jack Messer was paid severance was because there was a legal opinion recommending it. Now we find out that the truth is completely different.

The decision to pay severance to Jack Messer was made one week before the opinion of MLT (MacPherson Leslie & Tyerman). What's going on here?

The Deputy Premier told the House at the same time that I was faking it and should apologize for even asking him why we were paying severance. For the past two months nearly, he's been standing in this House accusing everybody of fibbing and

misleading and lying. Will the Deputy Premier now admit that he is the one who is misleading the House and he is the one who should apologize?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite . . . and I think he's referring to the minute from the CIC board meeting, which we released to the committee, for March 3 which says:

John Wright is to meet with Mr. Messer and indicate to him his resignation unconditionally was required by 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 4.

Further, John Wright was not authorized to discuss any issue of severance with Mr. Messer.

I think that's key to the questions that were asked earlier.

And Mr. Wright has indicated that Milt Fair, the Vice-Chair of SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) board, would acquire the services of an outside legal adviser, such as a retired judge, to work out any package that would be appropriate in terms of severance.

I don't know how more consistent that can be with the fact that we turned the file over to Mr. Milt Fair with the distinct approval of his to work out severance, if any.

Now if you ask Milt Fair, you ask John Wright, they will confirm this to you over and over again. There's absolutely nothing inconsistent with this minute and the concept that I've relayed to you over and over again — that this decision was made independently by Milt Fair with independent counsel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, Alice in Wonderland was right. This just keeps getting curiouiser and curiouiser.

This morning it was revealed that Brian Topp, senior adviser to the Premier, was in attendance at the CIC board meeting to discuss Jack Messer's severance. Mr. Topp was obviously there on the Premier's instruction, to act as his ears and eyes.

Can the Premier tell this House what was the debriefing given to you by Mr. Topp regarding the discussion? What instructions did you give regarding what was to happen about Mr. Messer's severance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Again I say to the member opposite, and I can't be more than clear, that the issue of severance was not dealt with by the board of Crown Investments Corporation.

The minutes show that. The minutes show that. I have said it. If you ask Mr. Wright, our chief of staff, he will tell you that — that the issue of severance was handed over to the Vice-Chair of SPC board of directors, Mr. Milt Fair, who in conjunction with legal counsel decided the rate of compensation, if any, that

should be paid to Mr. Messer. And that is absolutely as it happened.

As to the presence of the Premier's staff at CIC board meetings, it's common. If we go back in the history of CIC, it is absolutely normal and common that members of the Premier's staff would attend on those occasions. And that's often the occasion where they would be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Prostitution

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the third legislative session that I have risen in my place to appeal to the Minister of Social Services to sincerely address the problem of the sexual abuse of children through the child prostitution slave trade. But alas, it has been to no avail.

To the Minister of Social Services: why won't you act? What are you waiting for? And when can Saskatchewan's child victims of sexual abuse count on you?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it is refreshing to have a member from the opposition stand in her place and raise in this House an issue of substantial concern. In response to her question, I'm not sure where the member has been, Mr. Speaker. If she will review even this year's most recent budget, she will see in that budget, three-quarters of a million dollars — \$750,000. That's one-half a million dollars more than last year dedicated — dedicated entirely — to meeting the needs of these children on our streets who are being abused by adults.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking some of the most progressive action in Canada by working with the communities of this province in addressing this tragic situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, why am I not surprise that this minister is treating this issue so very frivolously when he has made it clear to me in front of one of his colleagues that his government does not consider the issue of child prostitution to be a top priority this session. How, Mr. Minister, can you and your government marginalize this serious human atrocity?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I endeavour to remain calm. It is clear to all, except perhaps the member from Humboldt, that this government has taken a very, very proactive stance in working with communities to address the issues of those children on our streets who are being abused. In regard to all children and all families in this province, this government has taken a very proactive stance.

Now what the member refers to is a draft of some legislation that she would like to see passed in this session. That's what she refers to — her personal Bill. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have assured that member, I have assured that member that this Bill is being reviewed by our Department of Justice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask that member, has she taken her Bill to the aboriginal community of Saskatchewan? Has she taken that Bill there? Does she have their support for this piece

of legislation? Has she taken it to the various community groups in Saskatchewan? Has she been and consulted people? Because that's the way government should function. That's the way we function. We talk to people before we bring legislation into this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the minister that yes, I have. I have talked to some of the aboriginal community. I have spoken to the police force in all three cities. And, Mr. Speaker, the time for this rhetoric and these empty gestures and feeble initiatives is long past due. And time for action by this administration is long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, in July 1997 the street project of Regina Health District estimated that there are approximately 150 prostitutes 16 years and under in Regina, and an additional 140 between 17 and 19 years of age. Saskatoon and Prince Albert also have serious child prostitution problems.

Mr. Speaker, to substantively address this problem I have introduced this Bill entitled The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act. In addition there are many severe penalties that would be imposed on johns and pimps.

Mr. Minister of Social Services, I ask you once again, will you please support this Bill? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I'm going to ask the member from Humboldt to stand now in her place and apologize to community groups in Prince Albert, to community groups in Saskatoon, to community groups in this city, to people across this province, when she describes what these individuals and groups are doing as feeble efforts. Mr. Speaker, she should stand in her place and apologize.

Mr. Speaker, across this province, service clubs, for instance, last year joined with us in communicating a broad public relations strategy. We have a group of people in Saskatoon known as the Communities for Children who have worked . . . been working day and night on this issue. We have workers in Prince Albert, right on the streets of Prince Albert, working with children who are being abused.

For her to stand in the House, to stand in the House today and describe these as feeble efforts, is a shameful behaviour and she ought to stand and apologize to those groups.

Mr. Speaker, we have not done enough. We are going to continue to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 227 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1998 (FREE VOTES)

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 227, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1998 (FREE VOTES).

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request leave to make a statement of importance to the people of Saskatchewan concerning the Day of Mourning.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And when I say thank you, sir, I mean it in every sense of the word, for it was you who, about 10 years ago, introduced the private members' Bill to this Assembly which allows us to take this day to reflect on the risks Saskatchewan men and women face every day on the job. The Bill you introduced, and which was passed by the Legislative Assembly of the day, made Saskatchewan the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize a Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

Once again Saskatchewan's lead has been followed by others, and jurisdictions across Canada now recognize a Day of Mourning. This is an accomplishment for which you, Mr. Speaker, and this Assembly can take a great deal of pride.

Every day in our country someone is killed or injured in the workplace. and every day the rest of us carry on at our jobs as though nothing has happened. Well obviously something has happened.

Today is the annual Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job — the one day of the year when we don't carry on as though nothing has happened; the one day of the year when we consciously and actively remember those people and their families. Today those families are grieving and we grieve with them. Today we solemnly reflect on the loss these families are continuing to experience and the loss everyone in society experiences when someone is killed on the job.

Today we also remember all those who have also been seriously injured or contracted an illness at work, and we remember those men and women who have been left with a permanent disability as the result of accidents at work.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot undo the past. We cannot ease the grief of the families who have lost a loved one. We cannot ease the pain of someone who has been hurt or become ill. What we can do is reaffirm our commitment to the ongoing promotion of prevention and safety programs in the workplace. We can reaffirm our support for the enforcement of occupational health and safety rules and regulations. And we can state unequivocally that even one death is too many, even one injury too grievous.

Mr. Speaker, 34 people died as a result of workplace accidents in Saskatchewan in the past year. I would like now to read their names into the record, that all shall remember.

Louis Adamyk, Dean Anderson, Vic Begrand, Tony Culic, Neil Cunningham, Lorne Czinkota, Peter Dizy, Mark Edwards,

William Fedek, Ann Francis, George Gallagher, Larry Hamlin, Wayne Hicks, John Hill, Dennis Irlen, John Kemp, Lorne Kovach, Daryl Larsen, Jim Leech, Thomas Lupanko, Wayne Marcoux, Anton Margetts, Diane McLaren, Howard Miller, Peter Poworski, Shannon Reinhart, John Sarauer, Trevor Schlosser, Kevin Stones, David Wallace, Todd Wharington, Clifford White, William White, and Tyler Wirachowsky.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all the members of this Assembly to rise and join me in observing a moment's silence.

The Assembly observed a moment of silence.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to comment on the ministerial statement, please.

The Speaker: — It was not a ministerial statement, it was a statement made with leave. The hon. member for Saskatoon Greystone requests leave to make comment on a similar subject.

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to all of my colleagues in the House. The significance of this Day of Mourning has been heightened for me, Mr. Speaker, since I have listened recently to far, far too many tragic stories of families who have lost a loved one in a work-related accident. Not only is the fatality itself tragic, but the disrupted lives of those left behind are immeasurably changed for ever. Wives without husbands, husbands without wives. Children left without parents, parents left without a child. Colleagues minus a team mate, and friends left without one more person to rely upon. And illness and injury devastates the normalcy of day-to-day living just as much, Mr. Speaker.

The greatest message of concern and caring that this government could make on this solemn day is to assure the widows and widowers who lost their spouses before 1985 and then remarried before 1985, that they could have their pensions returned to them. Their deceased loved ones deserve this honour, and their loved ones who have had to struggle without them deserve this as well. And I hope that this particular day will bring this government to do the decent and right thing.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to make some comment on behalf of the Liberal opposition with respect to the Day of Mourning.

Leave granted.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me an opportunity on behalf of my caucus to comment on the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

This is a day when we remember not only those who have lost their lives or have been injured as a result of their work, but it's also a time for us to express our sympathy to those families who have lost a loved one. We also would like to express our wishes for a healthy recovery to those families whose family members were injured on the job.

Last year 34 workers died here in Saskatchewan as a result of workplace accidents — 34 people who will no longer be coming home to their families and loved ones.

We have to ask, Mr. Speaker, is enough being done to ensure that workplaces are becoming safer. Is enough being done to prevent these needless tragedies from occurring again in the future. I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, that the answer is no. Not enough is being done.

On a per capita basis, in Saskatchewan we are amongst the highest in workplace fatalities and injuries in our country. Among the highest, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the government's promises and commitments, made to the working people, that they would be proactive.

The rewrite of the occupational health and safety regulations that this government promised when it came to office took years to do and it's still not complete. The mining regulations under occupational health and safety are still not finalized.

They cut the programs and staff of the Workers' Advocate office. Their cuts hurt the Department of Labour inspectors, and only now are they starting to recognize the problems. There are still problems with the Workers' Compensation Board. And it goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. And it's all on the shoulders of this government.

Every year in Saskatchewan, between two and three dozen workers are killed at their job. Another one hundred or so workers are permanently disabled at their job. Injuries which result in only a temporary disability number approximately 15,000 a year in Saskatchewan.

Are we doing enough? I don't think so. Do we need to do more? The answer is yes. Preventing accidents simply makes good sense for all of us.

It doesn't matter whether you are an employer or an employee, time away from work costs everyone. There is the time off work, medical attention, drug costs, and rehabilitation costs. These are not just the costs of doing business; they are a cost to society.

It's in everyone's interest to promote safety and safe workplaces for the working people of Saskatchewan, not just on this Day of Mourning but throughout the year. That's what I believe in, that's what the Liberal opposition believes in, that's what our party believes in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 2:29 p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

Bill No. 9	-	The Parks Amendment Act, 1998
Bill No. 18	-	The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 1998
Bill No. 24	-	The Wascana Centre Amendment Act, 1998
Bill No. 28	-	The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 1998

Bill No. 1 - The Arts Board Amendment Act, 1998

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

Bill No. 34 - The Appropriation Act, 1998 (No. 2)

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:32 p.m.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I wish to table, pursuant to section 14 of The Provincial Auditor Act, the *Report of the Provincial Auditor* to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on the financial statements of the Crown agencies for the years ending in the fiscal year ended March 31, 1997.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on Seventy-five Minute Debate

The Speaker: — And also before orders of the day, I wish to make a statement regarding the application of the rules to the seventy-five minute debate.

Upon review of the record of the last seventy-five minute debate on April 7, 1998, the Chair has recognized that I erred in the application of rule 17(5) when I stated that the 65-minute portion of the debate had to end early in order for a vote to be held after the question and comment period.

It should be understood that the seventy-five minute debate has two parts, a 65-minute period of address followed by a maximum 10-minute question and comment period. Should either portion not consume the maximum time provided, then the question shall be put.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — I hereby submit the answer to question no. 53.

The Speaker: — The response to question 53 is provided.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And, Mr. Speaker, in the tradition of open, accessible, and responsible government, I also table the answer to question 54.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 54 is also provided and tabled.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Compensation for Hepatitis C Victims

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I count it an honour to be able to stand in my place this afternoon and speak a few moments to this motion that I will be presenting a

little later that encourages the provincial government to work with the federal government to indeed address a very serious concern.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly appropriate that we're raising this question today, not only because the question we raise, and the motion, coincides with a similar motion that is being debated in Ottawa at this time and will be voted on later this evening, but as well, Mr. Speaker, when we think about the fact that just a few moments ago we paid tribute to those who have lost their lives or have been injured in the workplace, and it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, the question we raise today is of similar significance.

Today will be remembered as an historic day in the Canadian House of Commons and it will be remembered as an historic day in this legislature. It is the day where federal parliamentarians and Saskatchewan legislators will be voting on a motion to compensate all victims of hepatitis C infected through the tainted blood supply system.

It should have been a day for elected officials to vote from their heart and not from their sense of what is right . . . and not from fear of the harsh NDP whip. But to use the words of Dick Proctor, the NDP's federal cousin, the Prime Minister has placed a muzzle on many of his back-bench MPs; and in my words, I expect the Minister of Health and the Premier will do the same today.

Mr. Speaker, I would plead to what is good in all of the members opposite to listen to the two examples I will give you today. One is the story of a man infected by hepatitis C in 1991, and despite the fact that the Red Cross has admitted they knew in 1993, he wasn't diagnosed until 1995 when he took it upon himself to be tested. The other story is about a baby boy born quite prematurely and in desperate need of a blood transfusion.

Mr. Speaker, the blood that saved Scott Mamer's life is the same blood that will most likely take it away. Think about it for a moment. Think about it and then decide for yourselves if these two individuals deserve compensation. And if the answer is yes, how can you deny that there are thousands of other stories out there just like this.

Think about it and ask yourselves, how would my constituents want me to vote on this motion. Before I continue I also want to plant one further seed in the minds of the members opposite. Think for a moment about the emotional, physical, and financial hardship this disease and your government's refusal to fairly compensate is having on these victims and their loved ones.

Not only have many of these people been forced to accept the fact that they may die from hepatitis C, but their lives have been turned upside down. Some have lost their jobs, some have lost loved ones, and some, yes, Mr. Speaker, have already lost their lives waiting.

We see today a situation as Canadians we never wanted to see, and I'm sure the members opposite still refuse to see — a situation where innocent victims are forced into bankruptcy because they fell ill.

Mr. Speaker, these are people just like you and me — proud

people who never thought in their wildest dreams they would have to accept social assistance from the government or be stripped of their ability to support their families. Yet this is the situation many victims find themselves in today. This is the dignity you have granted these victims in the last days of their lives.

Now I want to return to the arbitrary parameters that your Minister of Health helped develop and continues to support. Mr. Speaker, 1986 to 1990 is not an appropriate time frame, and if the Premier were listening during question period, the Premier would know that.

Mr. Speaker, I will assume not, and repeat these examples for you now. I would like to begin by saying the individual who was infected in 1991 does not want his name released because his case is currently before the courts, and I respect that. It is before the courts because, despite the fact that he has been written an admission of guilt from the Red Cross, the government will not compensate him for this wrongdoing.

Here we have an individual who received many blood transfusions in the early 1990s after he received a liver transplant. In 1995 when the Krever inquiry was under way, he asked himself whether it was possible that his blood had been infected. When he was tested in 1995 he learned this was exactly the case. But how could this be the case if the Red Cross was testing for hepatitis C after 1990?

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you how it happened. It happened because in 1991 the Red Cross began testing blood with what is referred to as the first generation test. But in 1992 they changed their testing methods to what is referred to as the second generation test. Why the change? They changed their testing method, Mr. Speaker, because the first generation test was far, far from foolproof.

Let's return to my example.

The blood unit received by this individual in 1991 tested negative for the first generation test. So did three other units provided by the same donor. But the donor of these four units tested positive in 1993 using the second generation test. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that the members opposite don't need to believe me. My details all come from data received by this individual during mediation with the government, the federal government, and the Red Cross.

So what does this information tell us? It tells us lots. It tells us that the Red Cross knew he was infected in 1993 but failed to tell him. It tells us that there are likely three other individuals who received this tainted blood, who are infected with hepatitis C and quite possibly don't know it. It tells us that the first generation test wasn't good enough. It tells us, Mr. Speaker, that 1990 is simply not an appropriate parameter for compensation.

I would also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that this individual that I have made reference to has a clear letter from the Red Cross stating that he was implicated by the blood supply. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this was a bureaucratic slip. I believe the Red Cross never intended to release this information, but it did. And here it stands as proof.

In realizing their error, Mr. Speaker, the Red Cross sent him another letter stating that notwithstanding the fact that he received a unit of blood which tested positive for hepatitis C in 1993, there was a possibility that the donor contracted the disease before he made the donation. Mr. Speaker, here we have a recipient with hepatitis C. We have a donor with hepatitis C. What are the odds that this is a coincidence?

Despite this clear evidence, what has this government forced this victim to do? Mr. Speaker, he's been forced to go the courts. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that this is their strategy. If victims have to go to the courts for compensation, maybe enough of them will die before they have a chance. Shame, Mr. Speaker. Shame.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to the other example I cited earlier regarding those infected prior to 1986.

But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the Assembly the member from Redberry's rare quotation in today's *Leader-Post*. He said he was concerned that these people had contracted hepatitis C through drug use, not the blood supply. Mr. Speaker, what an absolutely insensitive comment. Nobody in this Assembly is suggesting for a minute that we compensate hep C victims who contracted the disease through outside means.

Mr. Speaker, the question before us today is about people who contracted hep C through the blood supply. End of story.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite, that he give Mrs. Mamer of White City a phone call and repeat his insensitive comment to her. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Mamer's son, Scott, contracted hep C when he was seven days old — from the blood supply.

Mr. Speaker, would the member opposite say that Scott is dying of hep C because he abused drugs? I don't think so.

I think that is the crux of the problem today. I believe, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite believe the rhetoric they are being fed instead of using their heads and using their hearts. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe even in Ottawa today we will see members listening to a Prime Minister who has become very insensitive to the needs of the people he has been elected to serve.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, I find it very . . . somewhat interesting to see the Prime Minister's standing and raising the issue of human rights in a country where we all believe they've been abused. So we ask, what is the Prime Minister doing today to raise the issue of the rights of hep C victims? Mr. Speaker, we see the Prime Minister muzzling his members. I ask the Premier, will you allow your members to vote on this issue freely?

Today, Mr. Speaker, as I raise this question, as I bring forward this motion, as I think of the numbers of the injured workers that we just talked about a moment ago, I hope and I pray, Mr. Speaker, that we do not forget the hepatitis C victims outside of the years 1986 to 1990; that we recognize that they are facing the same circumstances, same problems that individuals

through the 1986-90 period are facing — that they face the same health problems, that they face the same financial problems, and, Mr. Speaker, may not have the privilege of enjoying life to its fullest as you and I have the privilege of doing.

Mr. Speaker, just before I move the motion, I have to say, as we were chatting with one person . . . or a couple of individuals, they have raised it very clearly with us and have been very forthright in bringing forward the fact that the costs that they have had to face, the enormous waste of the . . . weight of the financial burden upon them has put them in a position where they almost feel like beggars. They feel like second-class citizens in our province. A province where I believe, Mr. Speaker, men and women across this province look at where the NDP proudly . . . or would like to stand proudly and say that we have one of the best health care systems in the world, and certainly in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, if that is indeed the case, if indeed we are going to show the compassion and understanding of how we would reach out to those less fortunate, I would ask all members of this Assembly to read the motion very carefully and to allow an opportunity this afternoon to stand in their places and vote in favour of this motion.

I therefore move, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That this Assembly urges the provincial and federal governments to act on the recommendation of Justice Horace Krever to compensate all victims who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am wanting to tell the Assembly that I stand here today to speak freely, and I will be voting freely, on the motion this afternoon.

I want to start by saying I am deeply offended by some of the comments made by the member from Moosomin, who says that members on this side believe the legal case should be carried out so that people will die before their cases are dealt with. It's shameful, disgusting, unacceptable comment on the part of the member from Moosomin.

But I want, Mr. Speaker, to deal very specifically with some of the issues that we are dealing with today, because these are very important, very serious issues from a very dark period. I want to tell you this is a very important debate for me personally because, like others in this Assembly, I know people who have been affected and infected by tainted blood that was in the system.

I know people who were dependent upon our blood system, were not only infected by it, but were misled and deceived into believing that the system was safe. So like many members in this Assembly, I have to tell you this is a very personal debate. I say that also in part because I am one of the people who is dependent from time to time upon the blood system in order to deal with a somewhat unusual blood disorder I have.

The result is that from time to time bumps become bruises, and from time to time in the case of injury, I've had to rely on the system to ensure that blood products are available to stem serious bleeding. In my particular case, I'm fortunate to have rarely needed these products. But I know many, many people who are not so fortunate. For some people with more severe blood disorders like hemophilia, the need for blood products, particularly clotting agents, was a regular and necessary part of life.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that these people, myself included, were never told the blood we were receiving was not tested against HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or hepatitis C. We were not told that there was a risk of potentially contracting AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) or developing liver disease as a result of these blood products.

By the mid-1980s there was certainly some discussion, particularly around HIV, that it could be spread and be contracted through blood, but we were told that here in Saskatchewan the odds were a million to one that you would ever get the virus. Unfortunately the odds were not a million to one; they were much worse.

The fact that not only did the Red Cross and the governments know that there was a risk of infection from these diseases, but they knew that there were tests available at the time and not being used, is unbelievable and unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that I think that great progress has been made by doctors and researchers during my lifetime to better understand and treat the strange blood disorders and the many ailments that people have. And as a result, lives of many people, myself included, have been improved.

I want to tell you though that none of that — none of that — mitigates the fact that the people responsible for the blood supply system did not inform patients adequately of the risks and did not take steps to test for the terrible viruses when the tests were available.

Many people in my position did not have the option of refusing blood products. When faced with profuse hemorrhaging, or the risk of such during surgery, you simply accept the blood products available. Fortunately most of the blood in the system was not contaminated. I'm indeed fortunate to never have received poisoned blood. Others, Mr. Speaker, others I know very well, were never so lucky.

Mr. Speaker, I am very angry about the way the blood system has been managed. I am angry people died because the system didn't safeguard the supply of blood. I am angry that people are going to come down with diseases because the tests weren't done on the supply. I'm angry that we were lied to and misled about the consequences and the problems in the system. And I'm angry that it took a public inquiry to force those responsible and in charge of the system to accept the responsibility. Mr. Speaker, I am angry about this and I think we all have a right to be angry about this.

But I want to tell you, in terms of the Krever report, to me the single most important finding of Krever was, in fact, that someone was at fault. The problems in the system didn't just

happen; they didn't just occur. It wasn't inevitable, once testing became available.

It happened because it was allowed to. The fact it was a Tory government in charge in Ottawa and in Regina at the time, to me is irrelevant. I have to tell you that the fact it has taken our own government some six years to accept responsibility, is to me now water under the bridge.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I believe every member here today, agrees that the government, not as a political entity but as a legal entity, must bear its share of responsibility. The question now is, what should be done about it.

Compensation is a necessary component of that. It's necessary because the government and the blood supply system were negligent in not testing the supply when those tests were readily available. But compensation in and of itself does nothing to mitigate the results of that inaction.

I received a phone call from a constituent a few days ago who will now be compensated as a result of the agreement reached by the ministers. That person asked me simply: what now? What's the appropriate thing to do with the compensation? It can't be used to prolong a person's life. It's not going to ward off the advance of the disease. It's not sufficient, likely, to offset possible loss of income, and it isn't needed to provide medical care. So what's appropriate? What do you do with this blood money?

Well I guess the question was somewhat rhetorical, but I think it drives right at the heart of the debate today. Certainly compensation is a necessary part of the solution when testing should have been undertaken and wasn't. The government was and should have been able to protect the blood supply system during those five years from 1986 to 1990, when testing was readily available elsewhere, and as such it is responsible.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the government has a responsibility to deal with the issue of culpability by providing compensation to those it could have and should have protected. The courts may indeed in time decide that the definition of culpability has been too narrowly applied, and nothing in our debate today precludes that action. But the question of compensation addresses solely — solely — the issue of culpability. It does not address the issue of compassion.

I believe that we as a legislature, as a government, have an additional responsibility as a guarantor of the blood supply system, as protectors of medicare. Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to ensure that now, after all is said and done, now that all victims will have access to the best quality health care available to deal with the illnesses. We have a responsibility to ensure that a new blood supply system is developed. And we have a responsibility to ensure that this never happens again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, like others who have depended on the blood supply system in the past, I know there are things that government cannot protect us from. I know there are things that we will learn in the future about new viral threats that may put the supply at risk again. But I also know that today we have

an opportunity and the ability to act surely and supportively to ensure that quality medical care and services are available to all the victims of this virus, whether they attain it through the blood system or through other means.

That latter question, the question of providing free medical services to all victims regardless of culpability, regardless of the means of infection, that to me, Mr. Speaker, is the true test of compassion. As such I want to move an amendment to the motion.

I want to move an amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all words after "Assembly" and substituting the following therefor:

expresses its compassion for all victims of contaminated blood; recognizes the agreement between Canada's governments to compensate victims who became ill because of negligence or fault; reiterates Saskatchewan's commitment to provide the best possible health care and expanded services to all hepatitis C patients; and urges a continuing dialogue between governments and patients to ensure the best possible health care is provided.

I so move, seconded by the member for Estevan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair would like to take a moment to review the amendment to ensure its admissibility. I find the amendment in order.

(1500)

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join this debate today. I'm also pleased to speak in support of the government amendment on this very serious matter.

Our provincial Health minister is to be commended for the good work he has conducted as Chair of the national committee, knowing that this is an important task to undertake, but also knowing that it would be a thankless task in many ways.

In spite of knowing how the oppositions would latch on to the issue as a political football, our minister knew that this issue was too important to ignore. He chose to do the right thing in spite of the political risks involved. This is the kind of government that we are and I am proud to be a part of a government with these ideals.

Thanks to the efforts of our Health minister and the time and energy he has devoted to this issue, we do have a national package of financial assistance for people who may have received tainted blood or blood products between January 1, 1986 and July 1, 1990.

Let me repeat this. Because our minister was so determined to find support and agreement amongst other provinces and their governments, because he persisted on this issue, today we have an agreement to pay victims where no agreement or package existed previously. The package that was agreed upon by all the other governments is reasonable. It uses common sense, and I

know that this is something that the members opposite are allergic to.

I want to assure Saskatchewan residents that the ministers of Health across the country have worked collaboratively on this very important issue. We will continue to work together to ensure a safe, secure, and accountable blood system for the future.

Transfusion-related HCV (hepatitis C virus) infections prior to 1986 are tragic, but the scientific knowledge and technology available at that time was not sufficient to have prevented the tragedy. We feel deep sympathy for those who may have been infected before 1986.

When governments provide financial assistance in the health sector, it must be done on the basis of clear rationale. It would be unrealistic to expect governments to provide financial assistance for misadventures that occur in the health system through no fault of any person or agency.

Does being reasonable please the members opposite? Of course not. They don't want anything to work in health care because they would rather see the system destroyed. They do not believe in universal, publicly funded health care. Criticizing the hepatitis C package is just another way for them to destroy public confidence and create fear. They are trying to tell people that our health care system is failing. They are creating panic where there should be considerable pride.

The fact is Saskatchewan does have the best health care in Canada. And Canada has one of the best health care systems in the world. Anyone who had the misfortune to be ill or has had a loved one who has gotten ill outside our borders will tell you that.

Does that mean that things are perfect or that there is nothing left to do? Of course not. But I know this. In their negative scare tactics, the members opposite are either naïvely or deliberately trying to take our health care apart.

I was listening with some amusement, but mostly *déjà vu*, as the members opposite play Chicken Little whenever they talk about health care. So much of the debate in health care issues today is exactly the same as it was in 1962. The Tories and the Liberals went kicking and screaming into changes to health care then, just like they are now.

If you talk to people involved in the great medicare debate 35 or so years ago, they will tell you that it was the same *Chicken Little* story then — the sky is falling, the sky is falling. If you don't do this or if you don't do that, the sky will fall in on health care. That was the story from the Liberals and the Tories in 1962, and that is the story from the Liberals and the Tories in 1998.

In the story of *Chicken Little*, the main character, Chicken Little, was just quietly minding her own business pecking at the ground when an acorn falls from a tree and hits her on the head. This had never happened to her before. So she goes in a panic to all her friends and warns them that the sky is falling in.

So Chicken Little, Goosey Lucy, and several others began

running in circles telling everyone they came across. They didn't have any solutions of course, but they were scared and didn't know what else to do.

Until they came across Foxy Loxy. He listened to their story and he had a solution. He offered to protect the whole barnyard troop in his sturdy rock lair. So Chicken Little and all the others followed Foxy Loxy into his lair. And sure enough, Chicken Little and the other did not have to worry about the sky falling in. Foxy Loxy ate them all for dinner.

Now I'm not entirely sure who on the other side is Chicken Little and who is Foxy Loxy. But it doesn't really matter. The end result is the same. There are people who want to gobble up health care. They want to have an American-style, for-profit kind of health care where if you have the money, you get treated, and if you aren't rich, you go without health care.

These people know that the only way they can get private health care is by destroying the public's confidence in what is truly a great system. They have to convince the public that the sky is falling in. As a result, they will attack and criticize anything and everything in health care.

That is why the opposition is making such an issue out of the Plains hospital. They know their position doesn't make any common sense, but that doesn't matter to them. They are only concerned about scaring people about health care. That's why they shout so loud when we try to interject some facts into their fearmongering. That is why they shout to drown out the facts about an issue like the Plains hospital.

The hepatitis C issue is very similar to the Plains issue. To listen to the opposition, the sky will fall in when the services at the Plains are transferred to the General and the Pasqua.

And members of the government realize these are very emotional issues for a lot of people. And emotion is very easy for the opposition parties to tap into, for they can say anything they want; because as long as they are in opposition, they never have to worry about doing anything. They're not burdened by the little things like balancing the budget or providing other services like education, social programs, highways, and interest on the debt. Their whole issue is to spend more on health care.

They have submitted petitions every day in the House telling us to provide adequate funding for the Plains. This is very easy to say, but not once have they said where to take the money from — take it from Education, take it from Social Services, Justice, Highways. Or maybe they're just going to go back to deficit financing or raising taxes.

Every day more than 35,000 people make contact with the health system. Can we do more? Of course we can. Are we doing more? Yes, we are.

In '96-97 we performed 469 more angioplasties — that's a 109 per cent increase. In '96 we performed 4,600 more cataract procedures than '91 — that's an 81 per cent increase; '96-97 we performed 430 more total hip and knee replacements than we did in '91-92 — that's a 30 per cent increase. And also, Mr. Speaker, we are increasing the number of MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans. We didn't even have an MRI scan in

1991 and this year we will perform 5,300 in this province alone.

I am proud to say that we are investing in quality health services for Saskatchewan, unlike the federal Liberals, who have cut our funding from 50 cents on the dollar to 13 cents.

And, Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about how ethical and courageous our Health minister is. He did the right thing and coaxed and led our nation into an agreement for hepatitis C victims. This is no small feat in itself, to get the provinces and Ottawa to agree on anything, particularly where money is involved. But our minister achieved the impossible and did get agreement on this issue, even though there were certain political risks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I cannot believe what I am hearing coming out of the mouths of the members opposite. It's absolutely astonishing. And for the folks that are watching here today, I can imagine what they are saying to themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the 200-plus spin doctors that the members of the government have in their back rooms write out a speech, bring it out, hand it to them, and like trained seals, Mr. Speaker, they stand there and they read it. The last member doesn't even know which motion he is on, for heaven sakes, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about compassion for hepatitis C victims in the province of Saskatchewan, across Canada. And he's blabbering on about the Plains Health Centre and the wonderful things that he and his minister and his government have done for the people of Saskatchewan. Absolutely ridiculous, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring the House back to the topic of the day, which is the issue of tainted blood, and to a resolution that was brought forward in this House back in December. And I think for the sake of the members opposite, if I could, I'd like to read into the record the two resolutions/recommendations that were unanimously accepted by all members in this House, Mr. Speaker:

Firstly (that) the Governments of Saskatchewan (and Canada) consider, as soon as possible, setting up a compensation plan for victims who were given contaminated blood or blood products, including the victims of hepatitis C; including interim compensation to be provided until the final details of the compensation program are agreed to;

And secondly:

That the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada consider including secondary victims in the compensation program; establishing the program so that other social benefits received by the victims are not compromised; and ensuring that there is access to care and to just and equitable allowances established according to the severity of the disease, following a consultation with the organizations representing the victims.

Mr. Speaker, that is the resolution, a motion that was moved in this House by myself, seconded by the member from North Battleford, on December 15 and agreed to by all those members opposite. Very, very easy to stand up and echo hollow words, Mr. Speaker, in this House to get out of a situation; say yes, we're all for looking after these people.

And what do they do? Now they stand in this House today and say that we're going to be compassionate. We tell everybody we're compassionate. But when it comes to looking after them, they're on their own. Let them go on their way. If they follow the arbitrary boundaries that were set up by that Minister of Health, who was Co-Chair of that committee and the rest of the provinces, the Government of Canada, Mr. Speaker, so be it.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, someone that's contracted this disease on the last month of 1985? And they're being told, no, because you should have waited a month to get the disease. Or if you contracted something a month after the year 1990 was over: oh, sorry, you know. Does it make any sense, arbitrary guidelines? Arbitrary dates never make any sense, Mr. Speaker.

The interesting part about this whole debate right across Canada, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that all different stripes of governments across Canada voted for this package. Their ministers went into a room some place and decided this is what the governments could go for. Looked at their budgets; and certainly governments have to be accountable to the province on economic issues, but they forgot about compassion.

They didn't bother talking to the member who just spoke from Estevan about what they should do, what he was hearing in his constituency. They didn't talk to him; they didn't hear that. They went down there, they made the deal on behalf of the government, and that's what they're sticking to.

The other interesting thing, and it's come to light in the last couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that all oppositions across Canada of all stripes are against this thing. They're against it. They're standing up now. People are coming out, their constituents are telling them, hey, the governments have made a mistake. We want you to go and stick up for us and look after our sick; the ones that through no fault of their own have contracted a disease because of tainted blood.

Mr. Speaker, where's the compassion? I ask the members opposite: where's the compassion? It's great to stand up and protect the Health minister and say what a wonderful job he did, and how he marched down with the ministers and the government and stood up for his government and his members. But he should have been standing up for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Show some compassion.

The interesting thing as well, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that day in and day out we stand in this House, sit in this House and talk, and we're away from our constituents at great lengths of time. And it's easy to kind of lose that touch, lose that sense of compassion with the people that we serve, the ones, the very people, that elected us, Mr. Speaker.

But I'll tell, when a member of your community comes down with this disease because of tainted blood it hits home. It hits home, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you what hits home more, is

when people are coming to you and saying, Mr. So-and-so received tainted blood. He doesn't fall into these arbitrary guidelines; therefore he's not going to be helped. And they're saying to me, that's wrong, that's totally wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And so maybe these members need to go out and talk to their community. Maybe they need to go out and talk to their constituents and come back and vote and talk to us with their conscience. Talk to us about what they feel in their hearts, what they feel is right. Money isn't the end all and be all to everything, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd ask the members across the House, who've modified the motion today to completely change the meaning so that they could say yes, we want to feel compassion and sound like yes, we're feeling compassion for the people in this province . . . We're not going to help them but we feel sorry for them. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't hold water. And I hope that they'll come to their senses and do the right thing. Thank you.

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And for the benefit of my friend, the member from Arm River, I would like to say that I stand here and speak freely. In fact I have never felt any other way but that what I stand and say here are my own thoughts, and certainly that's the case in the few comments that I want to make today, Mr. Speaker.

I know that members of the House, members of both sides of the House, indeed all people in Canada, care very deeply about the people that have been infected by hepatitis C through some most unfortunate events in the blood system which were so eloquently outlined by my colleague, the member from Regina South.

(1515)

Some months ago therefore, members of all governments, provincial ministers of Health from B.C. (British Columbia) to Nova Scotia, ministers from the territories, they came together to make a decision on a compensation package on this important issue. Ministers of Health worked collaboratively and the package that was announced in late March reflects a collective decision.

Thirteen governments, Mr. Speaker, announced a compensation package of \$1.1 billion for people who contracted hepatitis C through blood in the 1986-1990 time period — we realize that during this period some infections might have been avoided because testing was available then — and the Government of Saskatchewan stands solidly behind this package.

I'd like to quote the minister, who was Chair . . . who is Chair of the provincial-territorial council of Health ministers, and like my colleague from Estevan, I'd like to commend him on the work that he's done. But this is what he said on April 6:

As Health ministers from every province, we worked together to reach a consensus on this very difficult issue. This was not an easy decision to reach. This is a very complex issue and we have come up with an approach that is national in scope, fair, and reasonable.

That's what the minister said. I'd also like to quote from, briefly

from a *Globe and Mail* article of yesterday, April 28, and it says this:

All victims of hepatitis C deserve our sympathy and the best care that the health care system can provide, the best care that the system can provide. And that means medical care, hospital care, drugs, and help through social assistance.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are working to provide that care. We have worked with the people of Saskatchewan and health care professionals to ensure that health services are there when we need them; that they're there for people infected with hepatitis C and that they're there for all Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, before I take my place, may I just remind all of us here of some of the health initiatives in this last budget.

This year's Health budget is \$1.72 billion, which is an increase of \$88 million. Total funding to district health boards has grown to \$1.1 billion, which is an increase of \$30 million. And changes this year include increased payments for physicians and new funding for emergency physician service in rural areas; expanded specialized services outside major centres, including renal dialysis in Tisdale and Yorkton; operation of a new MRI in Regina and a CT (computerized axial tomography) scanner in Prince Albert; increased front-line staff; growth in home care services; training and new technology for emergency services; and development of the Saskatchewan Health Information Network.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the motion, the main motion presented by the member from Moosomin, but I will be supporting the amendment presented by the member from Regina South. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleague from Moosomin in this important dialogue regarding compensation for hepatitis C victims. I think that he has very clearly demonstrated the artificial parameters this government has created when they excluded victims infected before 1986 and after 1990.

I would also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I was extremely disappointed with the member from Redberry yesterday when he suggested these people may have been infected through drug abuse. We are not suggesting for a minute that we compensate everyone in Canada unfortunate enough to have hepatitis C.

For goodness sake, Mr. Speaker, the only group in this Assembly that is concerned about protecting taxpayers' dollars is the Saskatchewan Party. But we have before us a situation where thousands of innocent people have had their life turned upside down because of a negligent government organization, and compensation must be paid to all victims of tainted blood.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a minute to talk to the Assembly about another compensation situation. Do the members opposite remember the time when their colleague, the minister responsible for Municipal Government, received \$95,777 in compensation for diseased chickens?

Let's look at this, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite have zero compassion for people who have had their lives turned upside down, for people who will likely die because they were infected with hepatitis C by the blood supply. They will not compensate these human beings, these innocent victims, but they'll give almost a hundred thousand dollars in compensation to one of their own to destroy a flock of chickens.

Mr. Speaker, she received compensation based on 80 per cent of the value of the birds destroyed and 66 per cent of the other costs associated with the destruction, clean-up, and disinfection. And what are we giving victims of hepatitis C that don't fit in the arbitrary parameters? Nothing. Absolutely nothing!

I want each and every one of you to think about this for a minute because, Mr. Speaker, this is truly a disgusting display and an absolute lack of compassion for human life.

Here we have a government who compensates for the loss of the life of a chicken but will do nothing for a human being, and what does this say about the value they place on human life? What does this say about their priorities?

Mr. Speaker, today a number of victims infected by tainted blood supply joined us in your gallery to hear what the members opposite have to say about their future. We spoke to many more victims who wanted to be here today but they just couldn't because it would be too taxing, both physically, emotionally, and financially on them and on their family.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on at length, but I will say to the members opposite that when you get up today to speak and when you get up today to vote, you're not only speaking to us but you're speaking to the guests in the gallery and the people who are watching us on TV, our guests and those people whose very futures rest on your shoulders, and what will they do? What will you do?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move a subamendment, seconded by the member from Rosthern:

That the following be added after the word "provided"

and that all persons who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood prior to 1986 or since 1990 receive compensation from provincial and federal governments comparable to the compensation offered to victims of tainted blood from 1986 through to 1990.

The Speaker: — Once again, not having had previous notice of the subamendment, the Chair would like to take a moment to reflect on its admissibility.

Order, order. Although the debate is not proceeding, the Chair does request the order in the House, please.

Order. Having reviewed the subamendment, and I first of all would remind the Assembly of the words of the subamendment:

and that all persons who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood prior to 1986 or since 1990 (and I underline the words) receive compensation from provincial and federal governments comparable to the compensation

offered to victims of tainted blood from 1986 through 1990.

It is one of the characteristics of a private members' resolution that it cannot require the expenditure of funds. It may urge but it cannot require the expenditure of funds, and as I review the words of the subamendment, the two words that draw my attention are the words "receive compensation" and for that reason the subamendment is not in order.

Debate will continue.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested to listen to the comments from the member from Arm River, and to begin with, anyone who has known me during my lifetime would never consider me a trained seal. I stand here today freely and the opinions I express are my own, and I certainly will be supporting the amendment made here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put into the record some facts on the hepatitis C compensation package and how it came to be. Yes, it is true with the member from Arm River said, we did all agree in the House to do something about the people that received the tainted blood, and our minister took a lead throughout this country to do something about it. And to get 10 ministers across Canada and the federal minister and territorial ministers to come to an agreement was quite an achievement.

But I'd like to put this into perspective by laying out some facts, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure Saskatchewan residents that the Minister of Health, the ministers of Health across this country, worked together on this very important issue. And I think we will continue to work together to ensure a safe, secure, and accountable blood system for the future. And I agree with the member from Regina South when he said it was a sorry day when we didn't have a safe blood system and we will do anything we can in our power to assure that it is safe in the future.

The governments recognize that January 1, 1986 to January 1, 1990 some of the infections might have been avoided. Financial assistance is therefore being offered to people who were infected as a result of the administration of blood or blood products during this period. Transfusion-related HCV infections prior to 1986 are tragic, but the scientific knowledge and technology available at that time was not sufficient to have prevented the tragedy.

While we feel deeply for those . . . sympathy for those that were infected from 1986, when governments provide financial assistance in the health sector it must be done on the basis of a clear rationale.

There are potential risks and benefits associated with virtually every aspect of the health system. Risks must be balanced against the often lifesaving benefits of the various medical procedures that are performed in the health system. It would be unrealistic to expect governments to provide financial assistance for misadventures that occur in the health system through no fault of any person or agency.

It would be difficult to justify introducing no-fault assistance to blood recipients only and not for individuals who experience

other health care related misadventures such as drug, vaccine reactions, and surgical problems, Mr. Speaker.

1986 to 1990 is a time period during which some measures might have been taken to reduce HCV infections through blood transfusion. Prior to 1986, Canada followed the testing and screening standards in place in other jurisdictions to reduce blood-related infection.

(1530)

In 1986-87, American blood banks began to use surrogate testing for liver function tests, etc., to screen blood. This protocol was not introduced in Canada. It has since been found that the surrogate testing may have prevented a number of the transfusion-related infections that occurred between 1986 and 1990. By 1990 the hepatitis C virus had been isolated and testing of donated blood for the virus was implemented in Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, those were just some of the facts that I thought we should relate in the debate. I want to say that, like the member from Estevan said, we always wish and feel that we could do more. Governments have set aside up to \$1.1 billion. The federal government will provide up to \$800 million and the provinces and territories up to \$300 million.

In addition to the financial assistance package, provinces and territories will provide medical, hospital, home care, social assistance, and other services. It will cost . . . (inaudible) . . . an additional \$1.6 billion over the next 30 years, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is important to note that this government spends \$1.72 billion on health in this budget, the most that has ever been spent in Saskatchewan — \$88 million more than last year. Through all the cuts made by the federal government across Canada, \$8 billion, we have made up all the cuts to us.

Hepatitis C victims, along with all Saskatchewan residents, can rely on us to provide the best health care possible. I'm proud of the system that the people of Saskatchewan and their governments have been able to develop. Health care workers, administrators, volunteers, municipal governments, senior governments, have all developed one of the best health care systems in the world. Let us make sure that the blood supplies that we have today are safe for our people in the future.

Saskatchewan people are compassionate. And we will do all our best to support hepatitis C victims. So, Mr. Speaker, I will support the Health ministers across Canada for doing their best.

Now as the member from Regina South and the member from Estevan have said, if there is any possibility of us doing whatever we can to assure the best service to victims, we will do that.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me assure you that I speak freely on this. And in our caucus, I think . . . Maybe we should educate the opposition as to how it works. The reason you see a unified caucus like ours is because we have many, many discussions, many votes, and many fights among ourselves, and we try to come up with the best government policy that we can.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place and support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I guess it's been a rather interesting discussion we've had, and I would support all government members to support our original motion in the first place.

There's a few things here that need to be underlined. We've heard a bit of rambling over there about the freedom that's over there. We know the freedom may be there in their minds, but after they've been NDP for so long they've been told that that's freedom, when someone else tells them what to think. And they think that way. And so that isn't overly impressive.

I think a couple of key things have to be pointed out with the debate that we're dealing with on tainted blood. I think the concept of saying that we're going to pick a particular date and anyone that falls outside of those dates gets no coverage, is totally immoral. What they need to do is look at somebody who happens to have contracted any of those difficulties before or after the dates that they've arbitrarily picked and say I'm sorry, we're not going to do anything for you. Mr. Speaker, this is unthinkable.

It's just too bad we can't just have a little bit of an event over here and bring Tommy Douglas back and see what he would say to the members who are sort of following his party in some way, shape, or form, and say this is supposed to be universal health care. Universal health care, Mr. Speaker. When we pick a date in time and say if you picked the disease the day after, you get help from this government; you pick the disease the day before, you don't get it — that's universal health care, Mr. Speaker? I think not. I think it speaks to the hypocrisy that we are seeing from this particular government.

And then they want to take credit by saying our minister went to some conference some place and led the other provinces to this decision, and the federal minister. Well if that's the kind of situation that we have, that the minister was sending out, to come with a conclusion like this, I think we're in major trouble.

It's the whole concept that we're dealing with of compassion. There is no compassion there, Mr. Speaker, it's just pure and simple — a date in time they pick, and if you fall into that . . . It's much like going down to your midway on the fair — you'll probably go there this summer — and they'll spin the wheel. If it comes up right this government will say, for compassion we'll give you the prize. That's about all it amounts to. If it happens to fit in, then it's compassion.

Mr. Speaker, the discussion that we've heard from the government's side against the motion that we presented is unthinkable; it's unsupportable. There have been lives that have been lost. There have been costs that have been incurred, and the one thing that they haven't dealt with at all to this particular point are all those people that are outside of those dates. Not just the personal agony that's there because of the disease that they have, but the other part that's there is that their whole lives are financially destroyed. Their families are suffering because all the financial resources they have are now being put to

maintaining a life.

Now this government needs to support those people. This government needs to go ahead and take its responsibility. This government needs to be responsible for that and the sooner the member from Lloydminster understands that and goes back to her community and say, I'm going to support those people; I'm going to support those families, the better we will be.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the original motion needs to be supported, but in view of the fact where we've gone in the debate, I move a subamendment:

That the following be added after the word "provided"

and it is recommended that all persons who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood prior to 1986 or since 1990 receive compensation from provincial and federal governments comparable to the compensation offered to victims of tainted blood from 1986 through 1990.

And this is seconded by the member from Cannington.

The Speaker: — Once again, not having had previous notice of the subamendment, the Chair would like to take a moment to reflect on its admissibility.

Before going any further, the hon. member who seconded the motion is not eligible to second the amendment, and I'll ask the hon. member for Rosthern if he would like to designate a different seconder for his motion.

Mr. Heppner: — The amendment will be seconded by the member from Canora.

The Speaker: — Order. I find the subamendment in order.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just for the record, I want to state that I clearly volunteered to enter into this debate. It's an emotional debate and it's one that affects a great many people, not only in Saskatchewan but right across all of Canada. In today's motion of course, we're primarily focused at Saskatchewan people.

Tainted blood is a serious problem and literally there are thousands of people who live every day with this very issue — thousands of people who live every day knowing that they have hepatitis C that they contracted through a blood transfusion, Mr. Speaker.

It is almost beyond words to describe our feelings for these people and our sorrow on the one hand that they contracted hepatitis C through a blood transfusion. On the other hand, I think that it is incumbent that we remind ourselves that for many of these people, for many of them, if that blood had not been available in their moment of need, the discussion would be completely academic, completely academic.

Then we move to what for me is the crux of the matter. And that is, when should the Red Cross and the health system reasonably have known and reasonably have had a test available, Mr. Speaker, to test blood for hepatitis C. The best information that I have been able to garner is consistently that

in North America the testing was first available on or about 1986. From 1986 to 1990, while the test was available, we clearly did not test. Many, many people, thousands of people, contracted hepatitis C in that time frame, Mr. Speaker.

We — the Red Cross, the health system — should have known; therefore must now accept and shoulder some of the responsibility, if we might, for not having gone through with the testing or not seen that the testing took place when it should have.

There is never an easy way out of this. There's never an easy answer. And indeed we have to do everything we can to utilize our health system, our safety-net system, provide whatever supports we can for people who perhaps have contracted hepatitis C outside of the '86 to 1990 period. I don't feel any less sorrow for them. I don't think that their pain or their suffering is one iota less than for the people who contracted hepatitis C from the 1986 to 1990 period.

But there is two things goes on. One, there is clearly, Mr. Speaker, a system, a safety net, if I could describe it, that in Saskatchewan we're very, very, very proud of. It's a safety net that indeed many of us would like to see the level of safety elevated, or more dollars put in, if I can describe it that way. But nevertheless the safety net is there; the health care is there. The universal access to health care is there in Saskatchewan. And we value that very, very much.

(1545)

So it all boils down, it all boils down, this question, to when should the Red Cross, when should the health system, have reasonably been expected to test the blood donations. When should they have reasonably been expected.

As I said, the best information I have is from 1986 on. Now you could argue whether it should have been October or November or December or January, and I'm open certainly to those sorts of arguments.

But 1986 was when the test became available in North America, when the issue was widely acknowledged, and when we should have, in North America, in Canada to be more specific, we should have been testing. From that moment when we should have, but didn't, that's when we should be providing some payments.

Mr. Speaker, I've used about a third of my speaking notes on this issue, but I see that we have a minute forty-five left in this debate. It is the intention of the government that this issue get voted on. And that's why I will forgo the balance of my speech.

I thank hon. members of the Assembly for allowing me this opportunity to speak on an issue that affects literally thousands of people in Saskatchewan, and many more thousands throughout Canada. And I look forward to the vote on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? That being the case, then the debate will cease and pursuant to rule

17 the House will move to a maximum 10-minute period of questions and comments, at the conclusion of which the question shall be put, all of the questions shall be put. The House is now open to questions or comments by members.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I direct my question to the member from Lumsden, Regina Lumsden, I believe. Madam Member, you stated in your comments that you were supporting the government's motion that compensation not be paid to those victims of hepatitis C who contacted the disease through tainted blood because . . . you're saying that by agreeing with and supporting the amendment as presented by the government.

Madam Member, how can you possibly deny these people their opportunity for compensation if you indeed follow the tenets of Mr. Douglas and his compassion for the people when he brought in health care which was not related to any time frame in which a person contracted their disease or their reasons for utilizing the health care system. There was no time frame placed on that. It was universally available to anyone. Why is not the compensation for hepatitis C?

Ms. Murray: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it's a pleasure to have a chance to answer a question on this debate, which I very much enjoyed participating in.

In response to my colleague's question, health care services will continue to be available for all people, whether they're part of the hepatitis C package or not. I mean that's the commitment of those of us who support the views of Tommy Douglas. I mean that's . . . we've always maintained that what we want to do is provide health care services for people that are there when they need them and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 3:49 p.m. until 3:59 p.m.

Subamendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 10

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Draude	Heppner
Osika	Hillson	Aldridge
McLane		

Nays — 28

Flavel	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
Lingenfelter	Tchorzewski	Johnson
Whitmore	Lautermilch	Kowalsky
Crofford	Calvert	Bradley
Koenker	Trew	Renaud
Lorje	Sonntag	Scott
Cline	Serby	Hamilton
Stanger	Jess	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Murray
Thomson		

The division bells rang from 4:05 p.m. until 4:15 p.m.

Amendment agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 28

Romanow	Flavel	Van Mulligen
MacKinnon	Mitchell	Tchorzewski
Johnson	Whitmore	Lautermilch
Crofford	Calvert	Bradley
Koenker	Trew	Renaud
Lorje	Sonntag	Scott
Cline	Serby	Hamilton
Stanger	Jess	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Murray
Thomson		

Nays — 10

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Draude	Heppner
Osika	Hillson	Aldridge
McLane		

The division bells rang from 4:18 p.m. until 4:48 p.m.

Motion as amended agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 27

Romanow	Flavel	Van Mulligen
MacKinnon	Mitchell	Tchorzewski
Johnson	Whitmore	Lautermilch
Upshall	Crofford	Calvert
Bradley	Koenker	Lorje
Sonntag	Scott	Cline
Serby	Hamilton	Stanger
Jess	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Murray	Thomson

Nays — 9

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Draude	Heppner
Osika	Aldridge	McLane

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 301 — The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Act

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan to move second reading of this Bill this afternoon. And before I do so, I would like to provide just a bit of background or perspective pertaining to the legislation so that the public can be familiar with what's transpiring.

The object of this Act is essentially to provide the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan with the flexibility, among other things, to adopt a parliamentary system of government, and to schedule conferences and meetings without being

constrained by the notice provisions of The Non-profit Corporations Act. The Act also contains other provisions relating to the general conduct of the affairs of the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan in accordance with their bylaws.

Many will know that the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan was originally formed pursuant to The Societies Act in September of 1960. When The Non-profit Corporations Act of Saskatchewan came into effect, the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan was continued as a non-profit corporation. And for many years the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan has had a parliamentary method of governance. That is, delegates are sent to meetings of the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan from constituent churches. Each delegate who attends such a meeting is entitled to a single vote, to introduce resolutions, and to participate in the debate.

Each constituent church is entitled to name one delegate from each 25 members of that church. In addition there is a provision for youth delegates; and each member of the congregation which has an organized youth program is entitled to send one youth delegate to the Conference meetings.

The affairs of the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan has been governed between meetings of the Conference by an executive committee. Some of the individuals of that executive committee are elected by the Conference. Other individuals have been nominated by virtue of their position with affiliated Mennonite organizations such as Saskatchewan Women in Mission and Rosthern Junior College.

The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan recently became aware that there is a conflict between the provisions of The Non-profit Corporation Act and the bylaws which have been in effect for many years. The Non-profit Corporation Act does not envision governance by a parliamentary method of governance; therefore the organization has had to amend its bylaws to carry out its activities differently than this has been done for the past 38 years.

This does not fit with the traditions or history of The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan. Accordingly, at a meeting recently held in Osler, the Conference unanimously determined that it should petition the legislature for continuance pursuant to a private members' Bill — thus the legislation before us today.

The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan can only govern itself in accordance with its history and traditions if this private members' Bill is passed. There will be no change to the nature of the activities which The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan carries on by virtue of the continuance.

Accordingly, I move Bill No. 301, The Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Act be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

**Bill No. 302 — The Fondation Fransaskoise Act, 1998
/Loi de 1998 sur la Fondation Fransaskoise**

Mr. Kasperski: — Mr. Minister, I would move that Bill No. 302, The Fondation Fransaskoise Act, 1998, or Loi de 1998 sur la Fondation Fransaskoise be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

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