

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition come from the communities of Steelman and Lampman. 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.

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

These petitions come from the Oxbow, Carnduff, and Glen Ewen areas of the south-east, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To present petitions as well and 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.

And the petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Oxbow and Alameda.

Mr. Bjonnerud: — 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 is in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Lampman and

Torquay. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition. These are signed by people from numerous communities across Saskatchewan 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 too rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. 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 the communities of Oxbow, Frobisher, and Alameda. 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 put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre until they conduct a comprehensive review of the health crisis we are currently experiencing.

People who have signed this petition are from Regina, Oxbow, and Esterhazy.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to present petitions on the issue of high power costs in the North:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to address the issue of reducing the high costs of power rates in the North.

Your petitioners this afternoon all come from the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, including one Beckie Belanger.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to stand and present a petition in reference to the high cost of power rates in northern Saskatchewan. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to address the issue of reducing the high cost of power rates in the North.

And the people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are

primarily from Ile-a-la-Crosse, and we even have our mayor and our administrator signed the form. And I so present.

The Speaker: — Hon. members will be aware of course, and I now recognize it's happened twice in succession, that in introducing petitions it's not proper to identify the petitioners. But the rules do provide for identifying the locations of the petitioners.

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

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

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

Those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Kincaid, Mankota, Frontier, and Gravelbourg. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues today in bringing forward petitions in the people's efforts to prevent and stop the closure of the Plains hospital.

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 essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition here today are all from the community of Aneroid. I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of citizens seeking justice for men and women who have lost their spouses in work-related accidents.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have The Workers' Compensation Board Act amended for the disenfranchised widows, 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 the petitioners who have signed this for today, Mr. Speaker, come from Pilot Butte and the Regina area of the province.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the long weekend I've received more petitions from the south-west, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to

reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

From the communities, Mr. Speaker, of Fox Valley, Golden Prairie, and I do believe Maple Creek as well.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order a petition regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre presented on May 15 has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received.

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

Of citizens of the province petitioning on the following matters: to put a halt to all plans of closure of the Plains Health Centre; to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; to act to save the Plains Health Centre; to call an independent public inquiry surrounding Channel Lake; and to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege at this time to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations which is as follows:

Your committee, in examining the matters of the acquisition, management, and sale of Channel Lake Petroleum Ltd. by SaskPower, and the payments to Mr. John R. Messer when he ceased to serve as president of SaskPower, has concluded that expert assistance is required in order for this committee to fully carry out its terms of reference.

Your committee recommends therefore, that the Assembly do authorize the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to enter into a contract with an oil and gas industry expert who shall be directed to do the following:

- (1) Provide an opinion on whether the 15 per cent discount rate used by SaskPower to determine the value of Channel Lake Petroleum was appropriate, given the market-place at the time of the sale of the company; and,
- (2) If the 15 per cent discount rate was not appropriate, provide an opinion as to what discount rate should have been used, given the market-place for gas properties at the time of the sale of the Channel Lake Petroleum.

I do now present my report and I move, seconded by the member for Regina Coronation Park:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, His Excellency Dr. Seyed Adeli, who is the Ambassador of Iran. I've just finished hosting a luncheon with Dr. Seyed Adeli and he is very interested in Saskatchewan. It's his first trip here.

He'll be meeting with the Deputy Premier, officials from STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.), the Sask Wheat Pool, University of Regina. He's going up to Saskatoon to meet with people there and students at the University of Saskatchewan.

Tomorrow the Minister of Agriculture will be hosting a luncheon with him here, I think, at the legislature. We're basically very pleased to have such good weather and we've enjoyed a very good visit so far and we hope that he will come back to Saskatchewan again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, 18 students from Marion McVeety School in Regina Lakeview. They're all in grade 4, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. King, as well as with our caucus researcher, Donna Shire, who has a son in that class. Welcome to the legislature and I look forward to meeting with you after the question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure and privilege today to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly, an individual seated in your gallery, one of North America's most celebrated musicians. Calvin Vollrath holds the title of Grand North American Fiddle Champion. And I want Calvin to stand up and be recognized.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, Calvin has 21 internationally distributed albums to his credit and his touring schedule includes over 250 engagements to date, worldwide. His name appears among the player credits on CDs (compact disc) of many of North America's finest recording artists.

I say as well that Calvin is also the dean of the Emma Lake music camp sponsored each year by the Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society, and I know he will be attending this year's function, which runs from June 15 to July 9.

I want to say, Calvin, congratulations on your record in the music industry and thank you for your work on behalf of Canada at an international level.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Lost Boy Found with Help from Police and Volunteers

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a minute to reflect on the story of two-year-old Tyren Bennett, who was lost on Sunday night for 10 hours before he was returned to his grateful parents. Thankfully we only saw this event through the eyes of the media, because one can only imagine the fear and desperation experienced by this young child and his parents, Rhonda and Terry. I can't image the fear that your baby was all alone and possibly in great danger.

It is clear that Terry and Rhonda are very courageous people, but they weren't alone, Mr. Speaker. This is not only a story of great courage, but unbelievable community spirit. Not long after Tyren went missing, a force of 600 policemen and volunteers gathered and searched throughout the night, never resting until the young child was found. At 4:30 a.m., the police and volunteers found the cold and frightened toddler walking out of a gravel pit 2 miles from where he had started.

Every time disaster occurs, we hear of communities coming together when their neighbours are in need. This pitch in and roll up your sleeve mentality is what makes Saskatchewan such an incredible place to live, and it is a big reason why young Tyren Bennett was returned safely to his mom and dad.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure Rhonda and Terry are thanking their lucky stars today that they live in such a great province with such great neighbours. On their behalf, I would like to officially thank all who sacrificed the eve of Victoria Day to save this young boy's life.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Aboriginal Awareness Week

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, this week is Aboriginal Awareness Week from of course the 19th today to the 22nd. The theme this year is, emerging economic power of aboriginal peoples.

As we look into northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have about \$150 million worth of contracts and wages mainly by Metis and Indian entrepreneurs. As we look in the mining sector alone, Chief Harry Cook and the Kitsaki Development Corporation — \$33 million worth of contracts in mining and also winning a national award.

In regards to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, we've seen the work in regards to the forestry industry — over 700 jobs created, about 2,000 into the future. We're looking at development, Mr. Speaker, not only with the forestry sector in the west side, but also in the central side with Montreal Lake Band, Peter Ballantyne, as well as La Ronge, working in partnership with Weyerhaeuser on a new, high-tech saw mill.

Metis entrepreneurs in the area of mining development. We're also seeing the development and evolution of the Clarence Campeau fund.

Mr. Speaker, I think as we approach the 21st century, we're

looking for a bright future as Metis and Indian entrepreneurs fight in regards to their spot and partnership with others in the economic field. I think the next century holds good for first nations and Metis people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to also acknowledge Aboriginal Awareness Week and to say that it's indeed a long time coming in which we sit back and we watch the accomplishments and the successes of the aboriginal people of Saskatchewan, be it in the East, West, South, or the North as well.

I think that we have a long ways to go to appreciate the incredible amount of work being done by the aboriginal people, the renaissance of the aboriginal people, so to speak. And there's a lot further steps to be taken. There are many aboriginal communities in north, east, west, and southern Saskatchewan that have incredible housing problems, incredible highways problems, and health care problems, employment problems, and we do have a long ways to go.

So certainly standing up here today acknowledging Aboriginal Awareness Week, I tell the Assembly clearly today that we have a lot of work to do. And I'm very proud to say that as a Liberal caucus, we recognize and appreciate and most certainly respect this week, and doing our best to work towards a common solution when dealing with the aboriginal people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Acknowledging Achievements of Young Athletes

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the positive influence team sports can have on young people — learning to work as part of a team, developing coordination, making friends, and getting exercise can all be part of the experience of playing a team sport.

I want to acknowledge the effort and achievements of two groups of young athletes from my constituency. The first is a group of female hockey standouts. The Swift Current trio of Nicole Schultz, Chelsey Funk, and Ricki Lee recently completed a successful hockey season with the Eston midget girls team which competed in the Northern Saskatchewan Female League. The girls were part of a team that won the provincial midget B championship, the league title, and the ice tournament in Calgary.

The second team I would like to congratulate on their success is the SouthWest Vipers volleyball team. These young men captured a silver medal at the 1998 midget boys volleyball championship final. The win allows the team to advance to the midget Western Canadian Open National Championships in Calgary, which were held from May 16 to 18. The members of the team are: Shan Poff, Eric Anderson, Cole Armstrong, Ryan Carleton, Scott Hunter, Gerod Wiens, Jeremy Reimer, Lee Wolfater, and Russ Neudorf. I would like to offer

congratulations to all these young athletes and good luck in their future endeavours. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to Leader, Saskatchewan

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy today to rise in my place to pay tribute to Leader, Saskatchewan — a town in my constituency that has shown leadership for all of our province in terms of self-sustaining, job creation roles and the things that make a community grow.

In Leader, Saskatchewan, the people found that they didn't have a secondary industry that was going to back up the agricultural community around them, and so they decided to do things for themselves. They started off by building an inland terminal, which is well under way, Mr. Speaker, and they're doing quite well with it. The local people got together with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and they're putting that up.

They thought that they needed something that would generate more income, and so they went for a hog industry approach and they've sold out all of their shares in a new hog enterprise. And they're about ready to get that off the ground.

Micada industries of course, has been there for quite awhile, building hopper bottoms and bins, and they of course are expanding all the time and are doing well.

The community thought, Mr. Speaker, that tourism would be a good thing to add to a rounded community, and so they started off a new golf course which will attract people. That, along with the Smith barn and the local attractions that they've had before, are of course, are going to bring in a lot of people.

And they boast to have the biggest mule deer and the nicest meadowlark in all of south-west Saskatchewan and in all of the world. They of course are monuments at each of the town, that welcome people.

With all of this and a new water line that the town has built in order to bring water from the South Saskatchewan River, the community will flourish as an oasis in what otherwise might have been a desert. And they have boasted 30 new jobs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spiritwood Students Win Youth Business Awards

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two Spiritwood High School students recently won awards at the youth business excellence awards in North Battleford.

Miranda Hyndman placed first in the individual business category, while Christine Voss placed second for her efforts. Miranda won \$400 while Christine won \$200. The students originally came up with business plans for school assignments. The students' teacher, Todd Berg, accompanied the students to North Battleford and accepted an award worth \$200 on the school's behalf. This is the second year that students from Spiritwood High School have received awards.

I want to congratulate Miranda and Christine for their work, and the teachers at the Spiritwood High School for finding creative ways for encouraging their students to learn. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cuban model of Saskatchewan

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As reported a few days ago in the *Toronto Star*, communist Cuba is looking to red NDP (New Democratic Party)-run Saskatchewan for their model as they slowly move away from the communist form of government, where freedom of speech for citizens does not exist and private enterprise is outlawed.

So, Mr. Speaker, they look to Saskatchewan, where freedom of speech for government back-benchers also does not exist, and private enterprise is allowed, but most certainly not encouraged. I guess it's only fair that the Cubans take some of Saskatchewan's economic ideas, as the Premier has certainly taken some ideas from them, in terms of democracy right here in the legislature, by muzzling his own MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from speaking their minds.

The Cubans are also looking at Saskatchewan's Crown corporations as a management style for their own state-run enterprises. Now that's an interesting development, Mr. Speaker. Castro may have survived the Bay of Pigs, but when the Cuban people begin to see their tax dollars thrown away in Guyana and sink to the bottom of their version of Channel Lake, I think it could all be over.

Mr. Speaker, the people will no longer stand for a leader who has been around since the 1960s, has survived several opponents trying to topple him from power, and who deals with dissent in his ranks with an iron fist. But enough about the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, to celebrate the birth of this new-found revolutionary arrangement between Cuba and Saskatchewan, I'm sending over a token to the Premier, the closest thing we could find to a Cuban cigar for under three bucks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Drag-line being Constructed

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Construction has started on a new drag-line for the Estevan Coal Corporation. The new drag-line is expected to be operational at the Shand mines by January 1, 2000.

There could be as many as 40 jobs created during the construction phase of the drag-line. The process for hiring welders is now under way and parts for the drag-line have been arriving since March.

The \$65 million drag-line is the first of its kind in North America. However, the model has been successfully used in Australia. Plans for the drag-line have been in place since 1986, when Estevan Coal was first contracted to supply coal for SaskPower.

At present, Estevan Coal operates two other drag-lines, one at Boundary dam and the other one at the Bienfait mine. The new drag-line will allow Estevan Coal to reduce the number of hours of the Boundary dam drag-line being used, and the drag-line at the Bienfait mine will be moved to other locations to uncover new coal reserves.

Mr. Speaker, the mining industry is very important to my constituency. And these upgrades by the Estevan Coal company ensure that the coal industry will continue to contribute to the economic welfare of the Estevan area for years to come. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Additional Hiring of Nurses

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, the political pressure is on and a by-election is looming and the Minister of Health has cynically found another \$9 million to hire nurses.

Of course that's less than one-tenth of the hundred million dollars SaskPower is planning to spend on computers. It's just a tiny fraction of the hundreds of millions of dollars sitting in the Liquor and Gaming slush fund. But of course this is not a health decision. This is not a financial decision. It's a political decision designed to buy a seat for Judy Junor and the NDP.

Mr. Minister, why are you only making this announcement now, on the eve of the Saskatoon by-election? Why wasn't this announcement made months ago, before the health system reached the crisis situation it is in today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess that the people across the way can't stand good news. They can't stand good news. And I say to the member opposite, and said on many occasions, that over the last 10 months, I've been travelling the province extensively, have visited all of the health districts now, and have in this year's budget, in our allocation, provided additional enrichments for staffing.

In the \$1.72 billion this year, we put additional funding in for home care nurses or staff, put additional money in for long-term care people. And a couple of weeks ago, or four weeks ago when I was at the convention of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, I said on that date that by the middle of May, by the middle of May we would be making an announcement on additional health care staff for the province.

Now if the member opposite and his leader are feeling some of the political pressure and want to publicize this as a political debate, he should be standing up and saying this is a good thing for all Saskatchewan people, irrespective of whether or not his leader supports it or doesn't support it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, a

briefing note on today's announcement suggests that this money is available partly because of the hepatitis C settlement. That appears to suggest that you aren't spending as much on hepatitis C victims as you thought you might have to so you can afford a few more nurses. Isn't that a nice choice? Hepatitis C victims or nurses?

You have a \$100 million for new computers at SaskPower. You have hundreds of millions of dollars stashed away in your Liquor and Gaming slush fund for next year's election. But in health care you're choosing between hepatitis C victims and nurses.

Mr. Minister, how can you defend this kind of cynical, politically motivated decision? Why are you choosing between hepatitis C victims and nurses?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the member opposite needs to get a new researcher, because his researcher today, who's running for this party in the Eastview by-election, if he's providing this kind of information, it's totally, totally inaccurate.

And I say to the member opposite, in Canada today we've put \$1.1 billion into a compensation package for hepatitis C victims. There has been no decision on whether or not that package would be accepted. It's in front of the courts today. And Saskatchewan's position is, is that we make that contribution. And you should understand that.

And today, Mr. Speaker, we have in this province put \$1.72 billion into the health care system — 1.72. And today we put an additional \$9 million in to support front-line workers, and what does the member do? He stands up and criticizes the future injection of additional staff of the province of Saskatchewan.

How do you want this, Mr. Member? Do you want us to support front-line workers in the province or do you want to politicize this in a different fashion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — You know, Mr. Speaker, today's announcement reminds me of the unfair hepatitis C package in another way. Some people get help; others get left out in the cold.

The NDP health crisis has spread like a cancer through every corner of this province. Yet about 20 health districts will get absolutely nothing out of this morning's announcement. In many of these areas nurses are being told they cannot take vacation days this year. Is that your solution to overworked nursing staff in rural areas?

Mr. Minister, you are picking winners and losers in the health system, just like you've picked winners and losers in the hepatitis C package. Of course it's because the NDP is making a political decision to protect its urban base in Regina and Saskatoon.

Mr. Minister, why are you ignoring rural areas? Why are so many health districts being left out in the cold?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that in this year's budget, if he were to pay attention to it, he would see that we've injected \$30 million to all health districts across the province. And to the district of which you represent, there has been an additional increase to your district as well, Mr. Member. And in our budget this year we provided additional funding for your people in your district to provide additional staffing for home care and long-term care.

And I say to the member opposite that you should pay attention to the fact that when we're putting \$9 million into the health care system today, it's going to provide enrichments to those areas where we are providing specialized services, so that people from your constituency can get those specialized services closer to home; so that people in my district can get those services in the larger community centres like Saskatoon and Regina.

If you're against health care reform, if you're against the system of growing more specialized . . . or for growing more front-line workers, you should stand up, have Mr. Melenchuk stand up, and say he does not support front-line workers in this province. I beg you to say that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Metis Hunting Rights

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Minister, at the beginning of last week you signed an order in council giving Clem Chartier and the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan \$62,500 for research and policy planning. That represents the first instalment of \$250,000 annual grant.

By the end of the week, Clem Chartier was talking about shooting conservation officers. Even though he has now backed away from those statements, Mr. Chartier continues to encourage his members to ignore provincial hunting laws.

Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan people are very concerned about this situation and they're going to be doubly concerned to learn that you are giving the MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan) a quarter of a million dollars — money that could be used to fight the province on this issue. Mr. Minister, what are you doing to resolve this situation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'll take this question for the minister responsible. Members will know that the Metis Nation has been an organization representing the Metis people in this province for many, many years — probably for 30 or so years. And during most of that period, apart from a time when Jim Sinclair insulted Grant Devine on national television, they have enjoyed a measure of support from the Saskatchewan government.

And we believe in that. We think that they are doing very valuable work with their communities, and therefore in our budgets are included funds for the support of the work of the Metis Nation. We're proud to do that; we think it's appropriate.

I think that Mr. Chartier explained his remarks that were reported in the paper. I think he made it clear that he was replying to sort of a side issue and certainly didn't mean to say what the newspaper reports quoted him as saying.

So I think that we're quite pleased with the fact that we're supporting the work of the Metis Nation in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — While the minister may be supporting those remarks, I'm not sure that the people of Saskatchewan do. The people of Saskatchewan want two assurances.

We want to know if you intend to uphold the provincial hunting laws and take the necessary steps to protect conservation officers. We also want to know that the quarter million dollar grant is not going to be used to fight the province on the issue of Metis hunting rights.

Mr. Minister, this grant is supposed to be used to enhance relations between the Metis Nation and the government. In the light of the recent comments by Mr. Chartier, are you now concerned about the state of those relationships? Should this funding be withdrawn until this issue is resolved and the Metis leadership agrees to follow provincial hunting laws?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the member was in the House last week when the minister responded to a very similar question.

An Hon. Member: — I asked the question.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — In fact the member says he asked the question, so he knows the answer to it. He's asking it again for some kind of effect.

And the money that the Metis Nation gets is according to a budget. It's a clear understanding between the government and the Metis organization as to how the money will be spent.

And no part of that, no part of that, Mr. Speaker, was included to fight any kind of prosecutions. So I think there is no fear that the money will be misspent in the way that the member suggests.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister of SaskPower.

Mr. Minister, this morning Mike Hurst of Milner Fenerty law firm of Calgary admitted he didn't do his job in acting as legal counsel on the Channel Lake sale. He said, and I quote:

... I am aware of the criticisms for my failure ... (and I repeat) ... my failure to directly forward to Mr. Kram, copies of all draft documents ... I acknowledge those oversights.

That's, I repeat again, Mr. Minister: "I acknowledge those

oversights."

He's admitting he didn't do his job. Yet SaskPower paid Mike Hurst and his law firm more than \$42,000 for those services. Mr. Minister, Milner Fenerty was hired, in part, to send SaskPower copies of all the drafts of Channel Lake sale agreements, but the Milner Fenerty lawyer admits he didn't do what he was hired to do.

Mr. Minister, what specific action has SaskPower taken to recover all or part of the legal fees it paid to Milner Fenerty? And when are you going to start doing your job and try to recover some of the money you lost in this botched deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated over two months ago to the Assembly when we released the Deloitte Touche report, we said that the Channel Lake arrangement, obviously there were things done, if we had to do it over again, that should have been done differently. We said that very clearly over two months ago and referred it to the committee which is now dealing with this issue.

But I want to say to members opposite, Mr. Speaker, though, and to all members of the committee, is to remind them of what Mr. Priel said again today about these kind of accusations and what you wouldn't do with the various people who come as witnesses before the committee. And he said, and I paraphrase his comments to say: it doesn't take much observation to recognize that members of the media take copious quantities of notes as these kinds of discussions are going on.

He said as well: and we had a gentleman appearing before us this morning who was a well-respected member of the Alberta bar. He also said to you and through the members of the committee to you, he said you may decide when all the evidence is in that there is nothing to refer to anyone. And to have this kind of discussion and leaving it hang, is not really fair to the people you are calling before you. And I strongly urge you not to get into this kind of discussion until you have come to the conclusions that your process requires you to come to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Logging Development

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All ... (inaudible) ... Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan should be heard. That includes the treaty people, that includes the non-aboriginal people, and that certainly includes the Metis people.

Mr. Speaker, this question goes out to the Minister of Northern Affairs or the Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management). And I quote from an article that has a headline, "Northern town moves to block planned logging development."

Mr. Minister, I quote further from the article:

The northern hamlet of Missinipe is fighting to stop the provincial government from selling timber rights to a large

section of the Churchill River basin.

Another quote:

... community members saying any future logging projects must be stopped and the fact that the community was not told was "unacceptable."

And another quote:

Missinipe town officials are rallying the support of trappers, outfitters, cabin owners, recreational users, residents and land owners to make their voices heard and possibly stop any development of the land.

Mr. Minister, will you listen to the people that are talking about these very important issues facing the hamlet of Missinipe and the forestry surrounding that particular community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, we are proceeding with a major development in northern Saskatchewan in different aspects, and before we do a development, we do a consultation. When we look at it, Mr. Speaker, we're at the very first phase of the request for a proposal. A proposal has gone out; we get feedback from people. There'll be people who will be for and against a particular issue. Right now, we will be going at the first phase. They'll be a second and a third phase to that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the letters that we're getting, from the response we're getting, people in that area feel that they are not consulted. And for the minister to stand up and say there is consultations happening, the question that I have is, what type of consultation is he referring to?

And I refer to another statement in the article, Mr. Speaker. One of the persons involved with ecotourism, which also has some incredible benefit to Saskatchewan, and he quotes ... and this is John Slobodzian, he owns Canadian Ways Canoeing, he says:

"It will be called Canadian Waste if we let people log this area."

He said if loggers or developers move into the area and start clearing away the trees, the tranquil piece of "heaven" will be destroyed.

Sure there are parts of our country that should be left sacred. I believe Churchill is one of them.

Mr. Minister, the people are crying out very loud to make sure that you understand that their needs, their livelihood, and the forests around them need protection. Will you give us that commitment today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, of course in regards to the whole issue of consultation, we will be getting the feedback

from the people. We are hearing from the member today and we will be getting the feedback from the people as time goes on.

We are looking at a very interesting contradiction in this sense, Mr. Speaker, because as you look at Missinipe, right across from the village is also Grandmother's Bay, you know, where we built the famous road to. And in there is owned ... it's part of Lac La Ronge Indian Band. Part of the interest in the forestry development will be Lac La Ronge Indian Band; and I'm pretty sure that a developer which includes ... in partnership with La Ronge Indian Band, will make sure that it's done in sustainable economic development fashion. So that is information for the member to know.

But we're only at the first phase in regards to the proposal having gone out, and this is the feedback we'll be getting from people from the North.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Additional Hiring of Nurses

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, at today's press conference announcing the hiring of extra nurses, the media asked officials from different health care organizations what part they played in the decision to hire 200 additional nurses. Well contrary to what government members opposite say about prior consultations, Brian Rourke from SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) indicated that his organization wasn't consulted about today's announcement. Rosalee Longmore, the president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, says her organization wasn't consulted. I made calls to health board officials in some rural districts who indicated they weren't consulted.

Mr. Minister, just who was consulted? And how did you arrive at the figure of 200? Did you just pull it out of thin air?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in response to the members opposite from the Saskatchewan Party, and I say the same thing to you, that over the last 10 months I've had the opportunity to visit all of the health districts in the province now, or nearly all of the health districts in the province. And in my travels and discussions with each of those health districts, I have also had the opportunity to meet with the unions and the organizations who are responsible for managing their own staff.

And I say to the member opposite that on all of those occasions that I met with them, they said to me that they're experiencing the same pressures that we tried to ... and identified today, and that is that the level of acuity at the floor level is extensive and they want to see more people working in the field. That's the information that's been provided to me consistently across the last 10 months.

At the SAHO ... At the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses convention not more than four weeks ago, the nurses there stood up and said, we want to have new employees on the floor today. Today is what they said. So for you to say that there has not been a discussion or a consultation is simply inaccurate. And I say to the member opposite that that process has been going on over the last 10 months and will continue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP, facing tremendous public pressure, has taken a step in the right direction on the issue of beefing up front-line care. But what about the other side of the equation? This government has yet to acknowledge the bed crisis that continues to plague the city of Regina and other areas.

Mr. Minister, you've slashed almost a thousand acute care beds since coming to power. Isn't it time you step in, acknowledge that you also made a mistake by slashing too many beds, and correct this mistake as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take the answer on behalf of the government because this question dramatically highlights and illustrates the difference between the Liberals in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa — in Ottawa they slashed \$7 billion in health care — and our position on health care renewal.

That's exactly what the difference in the issue here is all about. And this issue is this, Mr. Speaker, what Dr. Melenchuk and the Liberals want is to spend the money on bricks and mortar. And what we've been told by the people of Saskatchewan, by listening to them is, spend the money on improving the quality of care and service to the people by making sure you have front-line people available to provide that service.

That's exactly what we've done. We've listened and we've acted and you should be applauding us and supporting us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has revealed in this House that the Regina Health District faces a \$5 million funding shortfall and anticipates a \$1.9 million operating deficit this year. In Saskatoon the situation is even worse — a \$5 million deficit and as much as 13 million in the red next year.

Mr. Minister, what measures are you taking to ensure that the funding to provide additional nursing staff in these two cities actually goes to provide additional front-line staff, and is not simply put towards addressing huge deficits facing both of these districts?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has answered this question already to the members of the Tory Saskatchewan Party. Those positions will be allocated to front-line nurses giving front-line care, compassion, all their professional support, to people who are ill and in need. That is the commitment of the Department of Health. And that's exactly what's going to happen with respect to this money. But I want to say again this questioning by the Liberal Party highlights very decidedly what the problem is between the Liberals in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa; \$7 billion you took away from the health care system in Canada — \$7 billion.

And your leader said on November 25, 1996 to the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), talking about

inefficiencies where he could find \$1.3 billion, and when asked well where? He said, well health care. And when Mr. Maragos said tell us where, he said, I don't know because I don't have the numbers. And when Mr. Maragos said, well if you don't know that how can you say that it finds inefficiencies in health care? He said, he doesn't know that either. And then he said, because I know where the inefficiencies in the system are, because he's a doctor.

And you tell us, as I take my place, where are you going to find the money to keep the \$120 million at the Plains open, more money for the nurses, find the inefficiencies totalling \$1.3 billion? If you can square that . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Next question. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Prostitution

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice and I would hope that the Minister of Justice is the person that replies.

On May 7, Mr. Minister, we all know that 13 Saskatchewan men pleaded guilty to communicating for the purpose of prostitution in Saskatoon Provincial Court. These men were charged after a city police undercover sweep last month. Crown prosecutor, Leslie Sullivan, stated that and I quote, "The Crown feels strongly that if these men were not there then perhaps these young women would be off the streets."

Each john, Mr. Minister, received a fine of \$500 and a stern reprimand from the judge. No one, Mr. Minister, no one believes that a \$500 fine and a verbal slap on the wrist is an adequate deterrent to johns. Mr. Minister, will you acknowledge that current penalties for johns are totally inadequate?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Exploitation of children by adults is clearly something that we all hold reprehensible . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The hon. minister will recognize rule 28 requires that questions be asked and answers be provided through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The end of that sentence was going to include Mr. Speaker. It's that dramatic word construction which I think that the Speaker knows all about. But, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that children and young adults who are exploited by men are something that we do not tolerate in our community. And we are involved with a very comprehensive program in this government that's dealing with many different aspects.

The specific question asked today relates to the Criminal Code, and practically we are one of 12 voices, together with the federal government, when it talks about dealing with some of the things around the Criminal Code. And we have continued to work with the federal Minister of Justice around some of these issues. But it's very clear that all of us across the country need to use all of the skills that we have to get rid of this terrible problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Foster Parent Recruitment

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about a week ago the Minister of Municipal Government took notice on my behalf of a question from the Leader of the Opposition. I'd like to respond today.

Mr. Speaker, that question, as you'll recall, concerned an ad that appeared in the Regina *Leader-Post* for foster parent recruitment, and the Leader of the Opposition asked if this is a new procedure and does it indicate that we are experiencing shortages of foster homes.

I want to report to the House, Mr. Speaker, that this is not in any way a new procedure. We regularly use the classified section to recruit foster parents, along with other brochure mailings, along with notices. Probably our most effective recruitment tool will be referrals from other foster families. We do advertise. We advertise generically and we advertise specifically for foster parents in the classifieds and I have examples if the member is interested.

I do want to conclude by saying though, Mr. Speaker, that we are always, always interested in securing healthy, happy families who will open their doors and their homes and their love for children with special needs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 57 — The Education Amendment Act, 1998/ Loi de 1998 modifiant la loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 57, The Education Amendment Act, 1998 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 5 — National Highways Program

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moved by myself, the MLA for Redberry Lake:

That this Assembly urge the federal government to assume its federal responsibility by initiating and contributing in a real way to a national highways program, thus removing from Canada the stigma of being the only industrialized country in the western world not to have such a program.

And that's seconded by the hon. member . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, that will be moved at the end of my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have everyone in this Assembly

support this motion, as it is just basic logic — logic that was well understood by the fathers of Confederation over 130 years ago. In fact while the highway of that day was a dream of a ribbon of steel from coast to coast, it was still a national highway system.

Why the Liberal politicians in Ottawa are now so far behind, so reactionary in their thinking that they are over a hundred years behind, no one really knows. The transportation of goods and services across our nation, especially here in land-locked Saskatchewan, is our very lifeline.

The total trade per capita is higher in Saskatchewan than in any other jurisdiction in the entire world. And that trade relies on transportation — trade that can be ground to a halt by the lack of support by Ottawa's Liberal government.

The lack of a national transportation policy, combined with a lack of commitment for health care from Ottawa, is far more serious than just the movement of goods and services. It is literally in danger of splitting up this great nation. A national government without a national commitment is the beginning of the end.

Last year we completed approximately 95 kilometres of Yellowhead Highway in my constituency — and it is a beautiful road — of which the cost was shared with the federal government. But now the federal government in its wisdom cut all the funding to the Yellowhead and the Trans-Canada Highway. Any and all construction will be at the provincial expense in 1998. Just think about that. Not to mention the main area of my interest, being from the North-west, the completion of the Yellowhead from the Battlefords to Marshall is of top priority and it will be completed by the provincial government as soon as possible. However if Ottawa paid its share, it would be done in half the time.

This is also true of the Trans-Canada Highway. Just imagine, a Trans-Canada Highway. Just the name implies that it's a link across our nation. Strange as it may seem, we in Saskatchewan think that that should mean that the Liberals in Ottawa should help fund this project. But no, not only lack of support for highways, but also a complete failure of support for Saskatchewan people by allowing the railways to redraw the map of Saskatchewan.

For years some of us fought a losing battle to retain the Crow's Nest Pass freight rate agreement, a system that assured us as farmers, a reasonable charge for moving grain and a network that covered the entire province. That is the best system to move grain — roll it out on the steel. But not any more. Ottawa, or rather the Liberal government in Ottawa, killed the Crow and killed hundreds of rural communities with those changes, also badly injuring many Saskatchewan roads.

This is a direct transfer of costs to municipalities and to the province. With the Crow gone, not only have the roads suffered but so did the farmers. Our cost for freight and handling takes close to, if not more than, one-third of the value of the grain shipped. This is a major concern for all Saskatchewan people, as we not only have less farm income, but also certainly net less disposable income to spend in local businesses, and also less taxable income, as Ottawa has seen fit to throw

Saskatchewan producers to the railway wolves.

I had the opportunity to attend the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation inaugural conference last week, for the Minister of Highways and Transportation. And I am pleased to say that by working together, some progress can be made. Opportunities to increase the usage of the port of Prince Rupert to ensure its long-term viability, and impediments to achieving this goal, were addressed at the conference. Speakers stressed the need for industry, governments, and other stakeholders to develop cooperative strategies to expand exports of grain, coal, lumber, and other products to Prince Rupert.

Other economic development opportunities related to tourism, passenger rail and cruise service, value added activities, and service industries were also addressed. Canadian National and B.C. (British Columbia) Rail announced at the conference that they had signed an interchange agreement to facilitate the movement of grain from the Peace River region of B.C. to Prince Rupert.

Approximately 100,000 tonnes of grain originated in the Peace River country can potentially be interchanged between the two railways at Dawson Creek, B.C. under this agreement. Just imagine expansion of that into this area where we supply 55 per cent of the grain that is shipped through Rupert. This will increase the catchment area for Prince Rupert by eliminating the freight rate differential between Prince Rupert and Vancouver for these volumes.

Now I would like to quote from the speech given on March 24 at the western Canadian roadbuilders and heavy construction association convention by our Minister of Highways and Transportation. And I quote:

(1430)

When I think about our highways and where we are today, I can't help but think of the federal government and the role it has to play. And when I start to project what the future may look like, the role of the federal government again looms large on the horizon.

Because of our large geographic area, relatively small population, and diverse economy, over the past 40 years Saskatchewan has had to build one of the largest networks of roads and highways of any jurisdiction in North America.

Up until 10 or 15 years ago, the system was easily handling our transportation needs. Now our once reliable transportation system is under extreme stress. In fact Saskatchewan highways are under so much stress we are at a crossroads so to speak. Not only must we make extremely expensive decisions on increased maintenance and resurfacing, but due to heavier and heavier volumes of local and interprovincial traffic, we must make expensive decisions on major upgrading, including the completion of twinning two of our national highways.

The stress of freight being transferred to the highways system from the rail system is a significant part of the problem, with impacts estimated in the hundreds of

millions of dollars. In a province with only a million people, this is an enormous challenge and a daunting task for all levels of government.

A great deal of this stress is a direct result of the federal government's legislative changes. The elimination of the Crow benefit grain transportation subsidy has cost Saskatchewan grain producers about \$400 million in lost returns each year. Changes to federal regulations governing railways have led directly to the acceleration of branch line abandonment and grain elevator consolidation.

We've already lost more than 3,400 kilometres of rail branch lines, and we could lose another 3,000 kilometres in the next five to ten years. And we've gone from 2,500 individual grain elevators in 1972 down to about 650 this year.

Grain industry players say we'll end up with about 70 to 100 grain delivery points, in total, within the next few years. The number of heavy truck grain trips will increase tremendously as more trucks haul more grain longer distances to the growing network of inland terminals.

As a direct result of these developments, grain producers are paying higher freight costs, and road impact costs for provincial and local governments have soared. We estimate road and highway impact costs alone for the provincial government and municipal governments will increase by tens of millions of dollars per year over the next five years as more branch lines are abandoned and elevator consolidation continues.

In return, Saskatchewan is only receiving 24 million, spread over four years, in compensation from the federal government to upgrade our provincial highways impacted by the change in grain haul patterns. It is painfully obvious that the federal government made these changes with little if any thought of the consequences, and unfortunately Ottawa has shown even less will to deal with them.

I'm not against change and I'm not against progress. But what I prefer is organized and managed change, not instantaneous, overnight change. If the federal government would have developed a well-thought-out transition period over a manageable time frame, the transportation system could have also been planned and managed. Instead today we have rapid, if not rampaging, branch line abandonment and elevator rationalization. Plus we have the devastating results that are following for many communities and businesses in rural Saskatchewan.

In conclusion, I hope I have conveyed the message that transportation is a priority for our government, and with one of the largest per capita road networks in the known universe, highways and roads are a key component of our transportation priority. We increased our spending on highways and roads by about \$40 million in '97 and '98 fiscal year, not including the 20 million provided to local government through the Department of Municipal Government. This year we increased our spending by another 20 million, a continuation of a commitment to spend a total of 2.5 billion by the year 2007 to improve our

roads and highways.

I want you to know I take that commitment very seriously and am determined to provide the residents of Saskatchewan with a transportation system that meets their needs. In Saskatchewan, transportation is the backbone of our economy. Rail is the vital link in our ability to transport grain, and roads are an essential economic and cultural lifeline.

If the federal government would accept their share of responsibility in providing a national highways program, not to mention rail neglect, we might well keep this country together yet.

And I would like to take this opportunity to move the motion, which reads:

That this Assembly urge the federal government to assume its federal responsibility by initiating and contributing in a real way to a national highways program, thus removing from Canada the stigma of being the only industrialized country in the western world not to have such a program.

And that is seconded by the hon. member from Carrot River Valley. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand in this House and second the motion from the member from Redberry in regards to a national highways program for the country of Canada and particularly the province of Saskatchewan.

First of all I would like to sort of overview or give you an idea, or the people of Saskatchewan an idea, of what our road system is really like. The asset is about \$7 billion, Mr. Speaker. There's 11,700 kilometres of standard pavements in the province of Saskatchewan. There are 8,700 kilometres of thin membrane surfaces, Mr. Speaker.

Now those surfaces are very thin blacktop on top of a poor structure, built probably in the '50s and '60s for a much different time, Mr. Speaker — not for hauling grain with large trucks, but a more dust free situation for the people of the province of Saskatchewan to get from community to community.

You have to remember, Mr. Speaker, we have a large land base. We have not a lot of people; we're a little over a million people. Mind you, the population is certainly growing since this government came to power, but it still is a relatively small population, and the basic income . . . the basic industry in the province of Saskatchewan, of course, is agriculture.

There are about 5,700 kilometres, Mr. Speaker, of gravelled surfaces under the Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation. There are 185,000 kilometres of roads and highways and that would circle the earth four and half times, Mr. Speaker. That's the amount of roads in the province of Saskatchewan — four and half times around the equator. That's the amount of roads that we have in Saskatchewan.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, has committed \$219 million this year, in this year's budget, to upgrade our roads. And this isn't of course . . . not counting any monies that are given to municipalities to help with their road situation.

I want to speak a little bit about twinning, Mr. Speaker, because the national highways programs certainly was instigated with the idea of twinning and the concept of a national highways program, a situation where there is a network across the country that links all the provinces together. And this hopefully would be funded by all levels of government.

So in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have Highway No. 1, which is 655 kilometres long. And I hope the members of the opposition Liberals and the opposition Conservatives are listening to this. Of that length, Mr. Speaker, there are 373 kilometres already four-laned, and it's a divided highway. There's a balance of a 113-kilometre section from west of Gull Lake to the Alberta border, about 71 miles, 113 kilometres. And there's about 173 kilometres, about 108 miles, from Indian Head to the Manitoba border.

Now the cost of completing that twinning is \$49 million. That's the section from Gull Lake to the Alberta border — about \$49 million, Mr. Speaker. And in this budget our government had to take the bull by the horns so to speak and start the twinning — because of course the lack of interest by the federal Liberals — and we have done that. We are going to twin 27 kilometres in that area this year.

On the other side, Mr. Speaker, on the Manitoba side, it would cost about, oh somewhere in that 50 million . . . \$58 million to twin that area. In total, to complete the twinning of No. 1, it's about \$132 million, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to begin on the east side as well and we're going to start, again because we have to take the bull by the horns, because the federal government are not interested in helping western Canada, Saskatchewan in particular. They do put a little money you know into roads, but most of that you find in New Brunswick, I think, with Mr. Young over there. I believe he's working on some roads over there, but certainly there's not much done in the province of Saskatchewan when you talk about the federal government.

So we're going to take the bull by the horns and we're going to start twinning in the Indian Head to Manitoba border area, Mr. Speaker, 21 kilometres. It's not a lot, but it's a beginning. And we do have a commitment that over 15 years, without the federal government's help, we are going to complete the twinning of Highways No. 1 and 16 in this province over the next 15 years.

And the members opposite will yell, well yes, 15 years, that's so long. Well we'll get into that in a little bit, Mr. Speaker, to why it's going to take so long. But if the federal government contributed just a little bit, let's say 50 cent dollars, Mr. Speaker, we could do that in half the time — seven years, eight years, we could have all the twinning completed in this province, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we call a national highways program.

In 1987 all governments across Canada and the federal

government decided on what the national highways network should be — which highways should be included in each province and how that should be funded. And you know, Mr. Speaker, it kind of just died there and now the only thing we get from the federal government is maybe the odd ad hoc programs.

Now some other changes that we need to talk about, Mr. Speaker, because our transportation system is certainly changing, is the federal government's passing of Bill 101, which is the Canada Transportation Act. And this . . . why is this Bill so important to Saskatchewan. Well of course we haul a lot of grain from the province of Saskatchewan and we export probably the majority of that grain, and that goes to our ports and then of course to the countries that purchase our high-quality grain from the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Well the federal government in its wisdom made changes to the Canada Transportation Act which is now railway friendly. So that means the railways can abandon lines at their will with very, very little notification and very little chance for input from the public or other governments. So they can pretty well abandon at will and that's exactly what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. So of the 6,600 miles of line in Saskatchewan, 3,600 miles, Mr. Speaker, are grain dependent. And of that, Mr. Speaker, I believe already there has been a majority . . . a lot of the dependent lines now abandoned, and more going to be abandoned.

At the system's peak in 1972, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had 14,560 kilometres of rail line. To date, about 3,400 kilometres have been already abandoned. The federal government changes to the Canada Transportation Act have given both CN (Canadian National) and CP (Canadian Pacific) increased flexibility to abandon branch lines at their whim. There's about another, oh, 1,140 kilometres that have been identified for abandonment in CN and CP's three-year plans.

(1445)

It is estimated, Mr. Speaker, that up to 3,000 kilometres of grain dependent branch lines could be lost in the next five or ten years, resulting in hundreds . . . 6 or 700 railway jobs. But not that so much — even though how important that is — is the damage to our road system, Mr. Speaker, and what it's going to do to our roads.

And because of these changes made unilaterally by the federal government, did they come and help with the road damage? No, they erased that from their mind. They say this new Bill C-101 is going to be railway friendly so that the railways become healthy, and certainly they are. They're making hundreds of millions of dollars of profit and becoming very healthy on the backs of the producers, and our road system, as it deteriorates.

Are the railways going to pay for that damage? No, they're not going to pay for that damage. You know who's going to pay for that damage, Mr. Speaker? It's going to be the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan that are going to pay for that damage.

So what the federal government did is take away the costs from the railways. They took away the Crow benefit and now we pay about, oh, probably 300 per cent more for shipping our grain to port. Well they're allowing the railways to take a section of that

savings, but who's going to pay?

All they did, Mr. Speaker, is transfer the costs from the farmers of Saskatchewan and . . . to the farmers of Saskatchewan from the railways, allowing the railways to make more money and the farmers less, damaging our roads, and with no compensation hardly whatsoever.

When they took away the Crow though, Mr. Speaker, what they did is this . . . The value probably in the \$7 billion range, I would say of the Crow; the Crow, that's what it was valued at, about 320 million in farmers' pockets to ship their grain to market each and every year. So a value of about \$7 billion was the estimate at that time. Well the federal government decided they're going to give the farmers of Saskatchewan about 1.6 . . . or farmers of western Canada about \$1.6 billion, and they did that over a few years. They gave them some money so that the farmers wouldn't complain so much about losing the Crow.

And then what they did with the provinces and the municipalities is they give them this little, little wee bits of money, like about \$84 million over four years, and they said, well this will do, this will fix your roads. And then we'll wash our hands of this situation and you guys can do it on your own now.

And you know how much \$84 million goes when you talk about building roads? When you talk about twinning, for example, it's about \$460,000 per kilometre. So you can see, when you do about two and a half kilometres, that's about a million dollars. And that's what it cost. So you know what \$84 million does over four years. It does absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker.

I noticed when I was talking to the mayor of Cumberland House, he would like his road fixed over there. There's 93 kilometres and the estimated cost of fixing that road to Cumberland House, and that's not even depending on grain, is about \$20 million. So you know how far the \$84 million that the federal government gave both to the RMs (rural municipality) and to the province to help with roads is going to go. It's certainly not sufficient. It's not sufficient at all.

Well what can be done? What can we do if we work together? Now we'll take a little look at the ad hoc programs that were started a few years back, probably in about 1991-92. There was a program where the federal government put in 50 cents and the province put in 50 cents and we were able to do some twinning.

We twinned from Saskatoon to North Battleford — that's just completed now. We completed sections of No. 7, for instance, Saskatoon to the Pike Lake turn-off. We're in fact twinning now. We twinned Warman to Saskatoon. We're twinning Martensville to Saskatoon. Certainly there has been some work done, and as soon as the federal government comes up with a few dollars, we certainly will work.

But ad hoc — there's nothing on a permanent basis, something that governments can plan with. Saskatchewan, you know, we come up with a transportation strategy. The federal government hasn't got any.

So you're sort of guessing and trying to do your best to protect your road system and protect the producers and protect the

people that use our transportation system, but always without that national transportation system or national highways program. You're kind of doing it on your own and you're not really sure what changes the federal government will make in the future that will destroy your plans. So we're going to continue to work on that.

Some of the other things that we're doing is the trucking partnership, which involves partnerships with the trucking companies and the Department of Highways where they share in road repairs or some economic benefit for them.

We're also investing in area planning, because right now about 6 per cent of the highway road network takes about 70 per cent of the traffic. Certainly the RMs are the same. They have certain roads that take the majority of the traffic. They have other roads that take less.

And they have to plan better, Mr. Speaker. They have to certainly plan better with the limited resources that we have in this province to fix roads. So that's what they're going to do. So area committees are going to start looking at what are the priorities in their area. Taking a look at their need for grain transportation, taking a look at the need for . . . the tourism needs in the area.

And there are other needs that a specific area may have that another area may not. For instance, oil industry in the south-west compared to the forest industry in the north-east where I'm from, Mr. Speaker. So those are the things that area transportation committees can do.

Also within the department, Mr. Speaker, is a short-line unit, a group of people that work with local communities, local organizations, to help determine if in fact a short-line railway would be successful, would be economically viable, would be used by the producers, thus taking some of the stress off the roads and leaving it on the track where it should be.

These are the kinds of things that the area transportation committee can do. They can call up the unit in the Department of Highways, certainly willing to go out there and work with them to find out if indeed a short-line unit would be viable. But as long as the federal government have Bill C-101, and they're very reluctant to make any changes to C-101, it's very hard for us to put together short-line railways in this province.

And I would hope that the federal government will look at Bill C-101, make the necessary changes. We debated that in the House last week. And I would hope that they would make those changes so that short-lines are in fact . . . have an opportunity to be successful in the province of Saskatchewan.

I'm going to move on now, Mr. Speaker, for a minute and talk a little bit about who should pay for our roads. And I noticed the member from Wood River, the member from Wood River, he said this, and I hope that the member from North Battleford will listen and maybe explain to the member from Wood River his statement and how true it is.

And this was from the Kindersley *Clarion* and it was dated March 26, 1997. And this is what he said to Roy Bailey's request that the federal government take its responsibility in

paying for some of the national highways network, and this is what the member from Wood River said:

I did. I have publicly stated that I'd hoped there would have been a national highways plan in the past federal budget. I have raised the issue with both federal minister, Ralph Goodale, and Finance minister, Paul Martin. Once the fiscal situation our federal government has faced is brought under control the way it has here in Saskatchewan, then that level of government should direct a large portion of the tax collected to where it was intended, our highways.

Now I wonder if the Liberals over there could remind the member from Wood River of his statement and maybe he can join with us and ask again for — I don't know how many times we've asked the federal government — if they would support us in the national highways program. He knows. The Liberal government over there knows that the federal government have a responsibility. Well hopefully they will come forward and we will be able to share in that.

Now the Saskatchewan Party over there, they demand that we spend more money on roads all the time. It's the old Tory spend, spend, spend. It doesn't matter where the money comes from. They believe that money grows on trees, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine that.

An Hon. Member: — They don't like trees. They want to cut all them down.

Mr. Renaud: — Well they want to cut them down too. But anyway, they believe that money grows on trees and that we should have money for this, and money for that. And it doesn't matter what the federal government pulls, we should find it right here in the province of Saskatchewan and just spend, spend, spend — fix every road right now. That's what the Saskatchewan Party says.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker, that those people over there . . . some of those people sitting over there when the Conservative Party was in power in this province, they overspent by a billion dollars a year — exactly what they would do if they ever formed government. Thank goodness the Saskatchewan people will not allow that to happen. But I'll tell you that they would do the very same thing. And they spent a billion dollars a year more than what they had coming in.

And you know they created a debt of \$15 billion in this province, Mr. Speaker. And do you know that we pay today \$760 million in interest each and every year. And you know what \$760 million would have done this year, Mr. Speaker? We would have been able to twin Gull Lake to the Alberta border, how many times? If it's about 50 million to twin, if you had \$750 million extra, I don't know, that's quite a few times. You could twin that piece of highway that many times, Mr. Speaker — 15 times. Every year you could twin that section of highway. You could go over and over and then you could rip it up and do it again, and rip it up and do it again. You could do it 15 times. And that's what the Saskatchewan Party, the Conservative Party, believes.

An Hon. Member: — That's exactly the way it used to be.

Mr. Renaud: — Exactly. They would spend. They would spend, spend, spend. They would create debt, and instead of building roads and fixing roads, we would be paying interest on our debt. Shameful. It's shameful.

Well what are we going to do, Mr. Speaker? I announced a few things that the Department of Highways are already doing, but I want to read you another . . . a little bit from a news release that was dated March 13 — or May 13, pardon me — and it's from the Investment Dealers Association of Canada, and this is what it says:

The Saskatchewan economy is on track to its sixth consecutive year of expansion due in large part to admirable government management of provincial finances.

Exactly the opposite of those members across there, Mr. Speaker, exactly the opposite. And it goes on, Mr. Speaker, and it says:

The most indebted provincial economy in the country six years ago has now reduced the debt burden to the provincial average. In fact the government's debt to GDP ratio has dropped sharply from 56.1 per cent earlier this decade to 34 per cent in the fiscal 1997-98. This is a 22.1 per cent drop. That drop is double that of the next best provincial performance.

And it goes on, Mr. Speaker, to say:

Following an estimated 3 per cent advance in 1997, the Saskatchewan economy is expected to grow a solid 2.7 per cent this year led by strong domestic demand. Last year's 2 per cent cut in the provincial sales tax, combined with low unemployment rates reflecting the province's strong economic conditions, will continue to buoy positive consumer sentiment.

And this is what it's all about, Mr. Speaker. We will twin those roads certainly. It'll take us 15 years. It's a go-slow approach, absolutely. It's not like the Saskatchewan Party, the old Tories, where they want to spend everything right now — borrow it, borrow it, create debt, and then of course everything goes for interest.

No, it's exactly the opposite of that, Mr. Speaker. It's the go-slow approach. Go as you can afford it.

And that's exactly why the Investment Dealers Association of Canada are supporting our province's and this government's financial plan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — I want to make one more point before I allow the debate to go to somewhere else. I want to make the . . . I want to say a little bit about fuel tax, because I get it often, and I know the Saskatchewan Party, the newer, the new Conservative Party, and the Liberal Party will say, spend all the money on fuel tax that you collect in the province on roads. Well this is fine; in a perfect situation hopefully you would be able to do that.

We collected about 300 million, \$299 million in fuel tax in '96-97. Right now we're spending about 219 million, 220 million, on roads; that's not counting of course the money that goes to RMs for roads. But you know we're not quite there yet, but as I mentioned earlier, sort of the go-slow approach, and we will make it there eventually. We do have a commitment of \$2.5 billion on roads over the next 10 years and we will do that, and we will fix our roads to the best of our ability.

But how about the federal government, the federal Liberals, Mr. Speaker, how about them. What do you think they get in fuel tax? Well I believe, if my notes are correct, Mr. Speaker, it's about \$6 billion each year that the federal government gets from fuel tax — \$6 billion.

(1500)

Now they do spend a little bit in New Brunswick. I understand that Mr. Young is over there and I can understand that, but how about Saskatchewan? I mean the members from the Liberal Party, some of them jumped over to the Conservative Party and will certainly still defend some of what the Liberal government does because they still feel that link, I think, that sort of, that tie. Between those two parties, Mr. Speaker, it never seems to leave. I mean you're a Liberal-Conservative or a Liberal-Conservative. I mean it just doesn't really matter, the policies are exactly the same.

But I wonder why, if the federal government takes in \$6 billion, why they would not come forward, especially now. They balanced their budget and they say they're going to have a balanced budget. Well let's make that commitment today. The federal government should make that commitment today to a national highways program, sharing with each of the provinces to improve our national highways network. It would allow each province to have more money to help with other roads.

And also if the federal government would just look at Bill C-101 and change the Transportation Act so that it's producer friendly, so that it's short-line rail friendly, it would be a great benefit to the farmers, to the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to get up and talk on this subject today and I agree with some of the things that the member for Carrot River Valley said, although very few. But I do agree with the number of the things that the member from Redberry started off with, talking about the federal government not accepting the responsibility they have towards highways. And I agree with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would just like to quote a couple of lines out of a letter that I received from David Collenette after I wrote to him asking him to support the twinning of both ends of No. 1 Highway.

And here's some of the responses he had. And I found them somewhat interesting. He goes on to talk about the money that they have put into Saskatchewan in the last couple of years under the Canada-Saskatchewan Strategic Highway Improvement Program, but then he goes on to say:

All levels of government are faced with difficult priority-setting decisions that balance the needs of health care, education, and other essential social programs against the ever increasing need to replace and improve deteriorating infrastructure.

Well that's fine, but we have to remember that this is the same federal government that cut over 7 billion out of health care in this country. So we have a hard time accepting some of the things they say as real.

He goes on to say:

If and when funding becomes available at a federal level, the competition for new funds will be intense. I will need a strong argument to convince my cabinet colleagues that the federal government should contribute financially on a national scale to a sector under provincial jurisdiction.

I think what he is saying here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that people like Mr. Goodale are going to have to get off their little pulpits there and support him in asking for money for Saskatchewan. And I think part of our problem here is that Mr. Goodale, although he has done a lot to hurt the farmers of this province, has done absolutely nothing for the rest of this province because he's the only sitting federal member the Liberals have out here. He's done absolutely nothing in supporting the needs of the province of Saskatchewan.

So the third party, I know they get up and say, oh we need this in the health care and we need this in the twinning, but they may be better off if they turn to their counterpart and their federal cousin, Mr. Goodale, and ask him just for once to do something for the province of Saskatchewan.

The one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was glad to see in the budget, that there was money for twinning of the No. 1 Highway, a small portion at each end. But I think my concern with that is that this was not extra money. This is money taken out of the existing budget, put into the No. 1 Highway, which is needed, but it's also going to short-change secondary highways that are in terrible shape out there and needed the full funding.

The member for Carrot River Valley, if I remember right, last year made this big hullabaloo and announcement about two and a half billion dollars over the next 10 years — 250 million a year.

Now in first sight that sounded wonderful, but we should have known, as usual, this government talks a big show but does absolutely nothing to back it up. Two hundred and fifty million a year and what did that government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, put into highways? A hundred and ninety-eight million last year. This is year two, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what are we putting in this year? Two hundred and eighteen million.

Now if my numbers figure . . . just work out right, and I hope my calculator is better . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Now this is . . . I presume that this is early in this particular debate, because obviously there's a great deal of interest from a number of members. For the moment the member for Saltcoats has the

floor. Order. The member for Saltcoats has the floor and we should do him the honour of hearing his remarks before I recognize the next speaker.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to hear there's so much interest in what I have to say.

As I was saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope my calculator works better than the Leader of the Third Party, and I think it does. But if I add up the shortfall that this government has, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the first two years under their new 250 million a year program, they're already \$80 million short of what they said they were going to spend.

Now the minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, answers in question . . .

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My concern is, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and I've asked the Minister of Highways this same question — is that if you're already \$80 million behind in your commitment over the next 10, 15 years, when are we going to catch up? And I believe her answer was, well in the last couple of years of the program.

Well that's an impossibility, to say that at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because as we know, that government will be nowhere to be found in 8, 10, or 15 years. They'll be part of history in this province, as was Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to touch on a group that come out last week, I believe it was, and they're CRASH for short, and they're Canadians for Responsible and Safe Highways. And some of their concerns was over the one truck with two full 48- and 53-foot trailers on our single-lane highways.

And I think to some degree I share their concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because the number of accidents we see in this province over the last 3, 4, 5 years, to me seems to be on the increase drastically. Seems every time you turn around there's a fatality on the highways. It seems that there's a semi-trailer of one kind or another involved. And I guess what these people are saying actually, what we're doing is opening it up possibly to make it more unsafe than it already is.

Some of the other things that these people were talking about, and the gentleman that was speaking on their behalf was Mr. Evans, and he said that Saskatchewan also allows truckers to work up to 112 hours a week compared to the national limit of 60 hours a week.

By allowing giant trucks on two-lane roads in the charge of people who must be amassing serious sleep debt, this province is laying claim to the most lax trucking safety regime in Canada and the United States. And I may be inclined to agree with him, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They go on to talk about some of the statistics and they again head their statistics by saying, Saskatchewan has the most lax truck safety standards in Canada and the U.S. (United States). And they've got here, maximum truck lengths in Saskatchewan is 124 to 131 feet. And the average for Canada is 82 and the

average for the U.S. is 82. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are just about double that.

Maximum hours once again for a trucker, that he can work in a week, 112 in Saskatchewan, 60 in Canada, and 60 in the U.S. on average. Fatality rates for collisions involving large trucks — and this is per 100,000 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker — is 2.66 in Saskatchewan and yet the Canadian average is 1.95 and the American average is 1.83. So maybe these lax regulations are starting to show through.

We've had an accident, Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of weeks in my constituency where three fatalities . . . that I knew very well these people, and again, once again it was a semi involved, through no fault whatsoever of the driver, but I think what it has to do with is the number of semis on the road, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In this case it was snowing and blowing, but a matter of two or three seconds difference and probably this accident wouldn't have happened. But I think because of the large number of semis on the highways, this is why we're starting to see more and more fatalities.

Some of the other issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk on today is the funding that this province has taken part in over the last seven years that this government has been in power. And I'd like to just go through the numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Total Highways and Transportation budget in '91-92 was 208.953 million; '92-93, 164.922 million — we can see the drop there; '93-94, 180.7 million; '94-95, 177.578 million, and we have compared all this to when they came to power and it was 208 million; '95-96, 169.484 million, we took a drop again, Mr. Deputy Speaker; '96-97, 170 million; we're still a way down from what it was, from what it was when this government came to power; '97-98 was the first year of the program that I talked about before, when the member for Carrot River Valley made such a big fuss about the money he was going to spend under his tutelage, was 198 million, a shortfall of \$52 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we just cannot believe one word that this government says in their announcements. I hope the announcement to do with more nurses today is not the same. I hope it has a little credence and we actually see the nurses — this wasn't just to elect Judy Junor in the Saskatoon by-election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this issue is a very important issue but I also feel that the subject that we were talking on in last week's private members' debate was also very, very important and I don't believe we got to the end of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So with that, I would like to finish my remarks on this subject.

I would like to at this time move a superseding motion, moved by myself and seconded by the member from Moosomin:

That the Assembly do now proceed to item 4 under private members' public Bills and orders, adjourned debates, in the orders of the day.

I so move.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. A superseding motion is in order.

The division bells rang from 3:13 p.m. until 3:23 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	

Nays — 23

Van Mulligen	Tchorzewski	Johnson
Whitmore	Upshall	Kowalsky
Calvert	Koenker	Renaud
Lorje	Nilson	Hamilton
Stanger	Jess	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Murray
Langford	Thomson	Hillson
Aldridge	Belanger	

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well as so often happens with this administration, what is at first blush a good idea has unfortunately some very sinister undercurrents.

We all know that there are some terrible pressures on our road system. We all know that this is a national problem, and we all know that changes in grain transportation are going to increase the pressures on grain transportation.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what disturbs me so terribly about this motion is that again we have a motion before us taking a provincial responsibility for highways and says, why doesn't Ottawa do something? No mention, no mention, no mention that the provincial government also has a responsibility and also can be doing something.

Now we have lobbied the federal government, and will continue to do so, on the need for federal participation in our highway system. But how can we vote in favour of a motion which makes no mention whatsoever of the fact that our provincial government also has a responsibility?

Well, and how have they discharged that responsibility?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Obviously I was right when the previous speaker started speaking. There's a great deal of interest in this debate. I simply ask all hon. members to wait your turn and it will surely come. And you will have the opportunity to proceed as currently the hon. member for North Battleford has.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, sir. How is the province discharging that responsibility, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well they're discharging it by spending less on roads today than they were 10 years ago. We're actually losing ground. Ten years ago we spent more on highways than we do today, and that's before inflation. If we include inflation, if we include . . .

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

Mr. Hillson: — Then of course two years ago we had a grand announcement from the provincial government, a grand announcement that in the next 10 years they were going to

spend 2.5 billion — 250 million in each of the next 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Yes. Wonderful announcement. Congratulations. But in the intervening two years we haven't come anywhere close to the promised 250 million in either of the two years. Now are they going to be spending 300 million a year from here on in to catch up? I don't know.

The member from Lloydminster says, give us time.

Well the way I see it, we have lost so much ground in the last decade, by the time we actually catch up and take highways seriously, Lloydminster will probably have voted to secede to Alberta.

You have promised 250 million a year for the next 10 years. You have now missed the first two years. How much longer will this be allowed to continue before you take it seriously?

(1530)

Well the member for Redberry was with me a couple of weeks ago when we had the sod turning for the inland terminal at North Battleford — \$11 million investment by Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

Today, as I understand his speech, he was critical of that construction and opposed to it. I thought two weeks ago he was in favour of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool building this beautiful new facility in North Battleford. Today I gather he's opposed to this happening.

There are changes, and these changes do put pressures on our highway system which all levels of government will have to address, including the federal government. But for us to pass this motion, for us to pass this motion in effect says that our provincial government has no responsibility in the matter, that would be a travesty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for us to pass this motion and absolve the Government of Saskatchewan of all responsibility for this province's highway network.

Well the federal government did fortunately pay one-half of the twinning costs from Saskatoon to North Battleford, and we hope that they will pay for the one-half from North Battleford to Lloydminster. That is desperately needed. We had another three fatalities again this spring.

But in this terrible lack of responsibility, this denial of responsibility we see in the speech from the member for Redberry and the member for Carrot River, I want to point out some of the things that the Government of Saskatchewan could do if they take seriously the province's highways, and if they think that we have a provincial government to do anything other than write letters to Ottawa.

I mean that's the basic question here, isn't it. Not just on transportation — on health, on everything. Why do we have a provincial government? Well we have a provincial government to send letters to Ottawa. That's why we've got them. That's all they're good for. That's their mission in life. That's how they discharge their responsibilities.

Well we tend to think that a provincial government can and should do more.

What are some of the things that they could be doing? Well in my own constituency there is the issue of the entrance to North Battleford. We have finished the twinning to North Battleford. Unfortunately, when we finished the twinning to North Battleford with federal money, we did not address the issue of Highway 40's entrance into the city. We have at the eastern entrance to the Battlefords, a jumble of conflicting roads coming in at several different angles, and this has led to a terribly confusing and dangerous situation. We have had fatalities in each of the last two years.

The city of North Battleford is so concerned about this situation they are prepared to donate land to move Highway 40 further east, to take it away from the major area of congestion.

Well so here's money from Ottawa, here's money from the municipality, the city of North Battleford. All it takes, all it takes is a little bit of initiative from our provincial government.

Now does the member for Redberry support the provincial government for participating? Well I was pleased to see he did in fact come to the news conference to say yes, Highway 40 has to be moved. Well it has to be moved with the assistance of our provincial government. Let's not let the provincial government off the hook.

Well Highway 14, which is the highway past Cut Knife, Marsden, Neilburg, the major way which people from our area get to Calgary, I'm getting all sorts of calls this spring about the deterioration of that road, about people wrecking their cars and trucks on that road, and the oil pans that are being lost. So my brother came over the weekend from Calgary and he said he didn't have to read the welcome to Saskatchewan sign to know that he had crossed the provincial border.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last time I looked, Alberta and Manitoba had the same federal government as we have got. So how is it, how is it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they can discharge their responsibilities to their citizens and we can't? What's the difference? Is the difference Ottawa or is the difference the provincial administration?

Well, what are some other small things that could be being done? I have written to the Minister of Highways about the fact that our bridge over the North Saskatchewan has no barricade on the pedestrian walkway. This is standard throughout North America. It's standard even throughout Saskatchewan, but for some reason the Battlefords was not thought worthy of a pedestrian barricade. We've had one fatality because of big trucks coming down there and the suction that they create.

Now this is not a major expenditure, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A pedestrian barricade would cost very little and, I dare to say, that could be accomplished even without sending the letter to Ottawa. Our provincial government could simply take some responsibility.

The old bridges across the North Saskatchewan, very scenic — they're one of the most photographed areas in the Battlefords. They're now badly rusting. All they need is a coat of paint. Will

Department of Highways do that? They can't even seem to get around to some of these minor, mundane matters, and yet they spend about 35, 36 cents of what they collect from fuel tax on our roads.

And they spend less today on highway construction than was spent 10 years ago. Well . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. Just a reminder to hon. members that the member for North Battleford has the floor.

Mr. Hillson: — Well I was just concluding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am sorry that in suggesting that our provincial government should also take some responsibility for our highway system that I hit such a sensitive nerve. I had thought that all members would join with me in saying that all levels of government have to put their shoulder to the wheel and address this very important problem.

But I'm sorry that apparently the government members take the view that only one level of government has to show leadership and responsibility. Unfortunately that level of government generally does . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I would like at this time to move an amendment to the motion before us. And we will discuss some of the hon. member's other concerns later, but I want to move an amendment at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to read as follows:

That after the words "federal government," the words be added "and provincial government to assume their responsibilities." And further to delete all words after the words "thus removing."

So the effect of this amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to say both levels of government have to take this seriously. Let's not just be hollow hypocrites whining about somebody else taking responsibility. Let's admit we can also do something. We have to do something. That's why we have a provincial government, that's why we have a federal government, so that all Canadians will join together in the important mission of giving this province a highways system, a transportation system designed for the 21st century.

I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seconded by the hon. member for Athabasca.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I will ask the indulgence of the members. The wording is not complete on this, and I believe that the intention of the member for North Battleford is that I would marry the amendment with the motion. Is that correct? I request some guidance from the hon. member for North Battleford.

Mr. Hillson: — You can take it to . . . You can delete everything after "and provincial government to assume their responsibilities." I'm satisfied with that as being the sum total of the amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in support of the motion, the amendment as proposed by my hon. colleague from North Battleford. And I want to also point out, Mr. Speaker, that we have had on numerous occasions the

chance to speak about the highway system of northern Saskatchewan. And of course we've heard different perspectives of southern Saskatchewan and all throughout this great province of ours.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to speak and talk about the issues of northern highways and I'll try my very best not to belabour the whole process of speaking on highways by taking up a whole pile of time here. I'll try to be as concise and certainly as clear as I could be.

I guess what I want to tell the members opposite, the government, when you talk about pointing the finger at the federal Liberal government, that I want to advise them at the start of my presentation that denial is not just a river in Egypt; in fact denial also has a number of meanings according to the dictionary, and I'll just share them.

The first one is the act of saying that something is not true; the second interpretation is the act of saying that one does not hold to or accept something; number three, is a refusing; number four is a disowning, a refusing to acknowledge; and finally the fifth interpretation, of doing without things that one wants, self-denial.

(1545)

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's what we find in northern Saskatchewan. And I share with my colleague here that it's very apparent throughout all of Saskatchewan that this government is in denial when it comes to their responsibility of highways in Saskatchewan as a whole.

And I want to share a very important bit of information in terms of northern Saskatchewan. When they stand up and they say no, as a provincial government we're not really totally responsible for highways in the North; it's the federal government — they should be doing something. That's what they're saying to the people today with this motion, Mr. Speaker. They are saying that no, the provincial government does not have responsibility; the federal government will look after highways.

But, Mr. Speaker, the question we have is what's the value of having a provincial government if every problem that we have as a province, they simply stand up and say well it's Ottawa's fault — it's Ottawa's fault that we've got poor roads, it's Ottawa's fault that our health care system is in problems, it's Ottawa's fault that the unemployment rate's so high in northern Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina South stands in his seat and he yells again, once again. Every time we speak about highways in the North he stands . . . or he yells across the room. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure with all the people, he's probably got maybe a 10-minute drive on blacktop from his constituency to the office here.

He does not drive from Patuanak to Pinehouse. He doesn't drive from Turnor Lake to Dillon. If he drove those roads he would sit there and respect and listen to what the northern people's concerns are, and he would again appreciate, he would totally appreciate the fact that as a member of that government he has got to push his caucus to start spending some major dollars on

highways so Saskatchewan can protect its infrastructure and become a very productive and, quite frankly, a totally self-reliant province into the 21st century.

So I say to the member from Regina South, that's the type of attitude that people do not enjoy. They do not appreciate it when he has a five-minute drive on blacktop to come to work in this office here in this building here, and yet people back home have many times travelled on very poor roads. And I'm talking about roads that are sometimes 90 kilometres long and sometimes 150 kilometres. So I think it's very important that we begin to respect what the northern people have been asking for in many years, is to be part of this province and to fix our roads.

Mr. Speaker, because of the isolation of northern communities, you're often seeing people that live a great distance from each other. You try to travel from La Loche to Pinehouse. That's got to be at least a two and a half hour drive, if not a three-hour drive, and much of that is driven over roads that are in very poor shape. And people do that constantly, Mr. Speaker.

But you would assume in a region that has hospitals, sometimes 70, sometimes 80, sometimes 100 miles apart, you would assume at the very least they would have decent roads so you can get to those hospitals easier. You would assume that because they're so isolated we'd have decent roads so we can be able to travel out of the communities or travel to each other's communities and visit. But the fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, northern Saskatchewan has terrible — absolutely terrible — highways and the conditions are very appalling.

And I'll say one thing, Mr. Speaker, all we get from this particular government, when we talk about highways, is silly notions and silly motions of this sort saying well, hold it here, the federal government is responsible. We're doing our very best but until they put more money in, the northern people's problems will continue.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of northern Saskatchewan simply do not buy that. For 20 years, if not 30 years, we have had these roads that we've been travelling on and the tremendous costs, to not only safety and people's lives but to the vehicles and the economy as a whole in northern Saskatchewan, is the end result of this government not paying particular attention to northern Saskatchewan's highways.

Mr. Speaker, I could share with you a number of stories of people who have driven these highways and damaged their vehicles and, as the member from North Battleford indicated, a number of other problems that other people have.

And the amazing aspect of it, Mr. Speaker, is every time that as a MLA I stand up and we talk about the road to Dillon or the road to Turnor Lake or the road to Pinehouse, they can simply get up and they could say, well it's a federal government responsibility. Or they could use the other line. You know — we're spending \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years on highways. That's one of their favourite phrases.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what that translates per year is 250 million per year. And the province collects over \$400 million in gas taxes. So in essence they should be spending a huge majority of

that particular money into the highway systems of Saskatchewan, especially the highway system in northern Saskatchewan where there is such dire need.

So in essence what they should be saying is we are collecting maybe 4.5 billion in gas tax but we're only putting in 2.5 billion over the next 10 years. That is the truth, Mr. Speaker. That's what they should be saying.

And the fact of the matter is they're simply not . . . (inaudible) . . . the word or the phrase 2.5 billion over the next 10 years. Well that sounds a heck of a lot more politically safe to say as opposed to saying we're profiting off the highways and that's why our highway systems are in such terrible shape.

Another compelling argument, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about highways in the North is that we've always maintained, we've always maintained that the main highway heading into the Athabasca constituency, which is Highway 155 from Green Lake to Buffalo Narrows and through Beauval and up through Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche and on to Cluff Lake, that highway we've made reference to it being Grant Devine's golf course. There's actually maybe a thousand holes per kilometre.

I don't know who's golf course that would be. Maybe that would include the member from North Battleford again. He had that many holes in every kilometre in terms of trying to golf.

But certainly there are a number, a number of problems with Highway 155. And if you were to take an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to drive up that way, go down Highway 155. You might think it's a bombing range. You might think it's a golf course. You might think it's something else.

But the fact of the matter is if you travel down a different road, Highway 903, Mr. Speaker, which is just west of Highway 155, where they are extracting resources, where forestry and now natural gas is starting to become a possibility; that highway, Mr. Speaker, runs from Meadow Lake. It runs through Canoe Lake and goes on to Dillon, and now it's cutting up the Upper Cumins area.

And that highway, the resource extraction highway, if you drive that highway, Mr. Speaker, you will see what an incredible, beautiful highway it is. It's just in really good shape. They spend millions of dollars each year to build up that highway to extract all the resources.

And to qualify what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that superhighway that they're building that one day might connect Fort McMurray to Meadow Lake directly, what are they spending there, Mr. Speaker, for this year? Highway 903 — 2.35 million, Mr. Speaker. That's on grading. And another grading, 3.5 kilometre grading, \$225,000.

So a total of roughly 19 kilometres of work on the superhighway, they spending close to \$2.5 million, Mr. Speaker. That's right from the horse's mouth. That's the highway that extracts resources from the North. For 19 kilometres they're spending 2.5 million.

Now you go down to Highway 155, the highway that feeds all the communities — the community of Buffalo Narrows, the

communities of Beauval, Pinehouse, Patuanak — what's their commitment? Highway 155, north of Green Lake, \$180,000 — \$180,000, Mr. Speaker.

So what that says — and that's for the entire highway — what that says is 20 kilometres of road that extracts resources gets 2.5 million; a hundred-and-some kilometres that people use for people purposes gets 180,000. And that, Mr. Speaker, was a provincial decision. They made the choice on where they want to spend the money and they're better off, in their view, to spend that money on a superhighway that bypasses all these communities and extracts all the resources for their wealth.

And yet they have the gall and the audacity to stand up today saying, well, your federal Liberal cousins aren't putting any money.

So where are your priorities when you talk about highways — the people road versus the resources road? I say to the people of the North and to the Assembly and every member across the way here, the fact of the matter is it's your money, you spent it on the resources extraction highways and not on the people roads.

And I continue, Mr. Speaker, I continue making this point. May 14, 1990, the member from Cumberland, and I quote from *Hansard*, he indicates, quote:

... you know, a lot of the road building goes into the development in regards to the forestry development and also to the mining development.

But what we're also stating is that the developments should also consider the communities as well, and that the improvements to the communities needs also to take a priority. As we look into the future the communities aren't going to be able to partake into the development, and when we're getting about a billion dollars a year from the North from development, from mining and forestry, and when you take that much money out from one or two constituencies — you know, over a billion dollars — you need to put the infrastructural development in there so that the people can partake in the development in the way that they should.

And that was the Minister of Northern Affairs in 1990 when he was in opposition.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're saying. If you're taking all that money out of northern Saskatchewan, at least have the decency to respect the isolation, to respect the fact that we're miles and miles away from each other, to respect the fact that we can't access health care as easy as southern Saskatchewan does, and to respect the fact that we haven't got a five-minute drive from your home to your workplace on blacktop.

We ask you to respect all those points and put together a plan to really begin to address some of the challenges when you talk about northern highways.

Mr. Speaker, these are people of Saskatchewan we're talking about and the Saskatchewan spirit that we all hear the

government talking about — well, it exists in northern Saskatchewan. Real concerns exist.

And I also want to quote another statement of the member from Cumberland:

And also too, the only other ... after the development leaves, there will be the traditional resource use and the tourism that is required in that area. And for those to develop you need an excellent road system.

So I would like for you to, as you look into the future to put greater emphasis on the community level.

And this is the member from Cumberland on May 14, 1990 talking about the need to put money into community ... roads that service communities.

And now he's in government, what do they do, Mr. Speaker? They flip-flop. He changed his mind all of a sudden. We'll put money into resource. The roads that extract all the resources and make all the money for government, that's where our money's going. The people highway — well, they get 180,000 bucks.

And, Mr. Speaker, you can't fool people. They can talk as much as they want about 2.5 billion over the next 10 years or 15 million or 20 million. All these millions they're talking about — people are still driving on roads that need care.

And if you don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of letters here. One of course is from the mayor of the northern village of Beauval. He's a friend of mine; his name is Sandy Rediron. And Sandy wrote me a letter dated May 5, 1998. And I'll read the letter. It's a very short letter, Mr. Speaker:

I would like to bring to your attention the terrible road condition of Highway 155 between Green Lake and Beauval. I have had numerous complaints from the community regarding extensive damage to their vehicles and the hazardous driving conditions on this highway.

Your earliest attention on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, Sandy Rediron
Mayor of Beauval.

(1600)

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is really amazing is the accommodating attitude of northern people. For 20, 30 years they have been waiting. They have been very patient. We have given this government political support. We have given them support on every level that we possibly could. And yet our highways continue to deteriorate to the point where our vehicles and our lives are in jeopardy.

And yet the resilience and patience of northern people is evident in the letter presented by Mr. Rediron when he said your earliest attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated. Again, he's very accommodating.

So when are we going to be able to get it through our MLA heads that when you have a concern that is consistent over the next 20, 30 years that there is a real problem there, that there is an extensive problem there.

So that's why it's important that we provide the opportunity for people to come forth, give us the problem so as government — it may take us some time — but we put together a solution, a plan. But so far as we are aware, there has never been a plan and there never will be a plan unless this government wakes up and stops blaming Ottawa and stops inflating your numbers to appear that they're doing something.

That type of politics and that type of gestures is simply insulting to the northern people's intelligence and I ask them to desist from doing such things as it doesn't serve nobody's purpose except theirs.

I also want to share one more letter here from the English River First Nations. The chief and council of Patuanak are for many years argued about the whole situation of their highway. And I quote from the letter, Mr. Speaker. I beg your indulgence; it's not very long, quote:

The benefit to the northern residents of Patuanak in the province of Saskatchewan is to upgrade and update the provincial Highway No. 918 leading from Beauval, Saskatchewan to the hamlet of Patuanak and the Indian Reserve No. 192D in Patuanak, Saskatchewan. This highway, classified as a secondary highway, is approximately 90 kilometres in length. By updating, upgrading we're referring to blacktopping and paving to said Highway 918.

This gravel road in question was built in the 1970s and has been a source of concern for all vehicular traffic since its inception. The gravel, loose stones, sand and clay on said road has caused numerous punctured tires, punctured gas tanks, transmission casings, oil pans, axle rods and casing. Flying stones and gravel have caused many windshield cracks in our vehicles. Far too many vehicles have been subjected to these hazards for the past 25 years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these guys have said it right from their own documentation asking the government to do something. And we have had Conservative governments in the '80s, we've had an NDP government in the '70s, and now we've got an NDP government in the '90s and we're still waiting. We're still waiting.

You know, and we to a large extent, we cannot blame the current government for putting this province \$15 billion in debt. That's the Saskatchewan Tory Party that done that. And they lay claim to that.

But what we could do — and there's two things you have to watch here, Mr. Speaker — number one is we have to put the blame where the blame is. And that's the Tory caucus put this whole province in deep debt. And secondly, we have to put the blame also on the current government because of their inaction. Their inaction is causing serious problems in northern Saskatchewan and we need to get those things addressed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that we talk about these issues at great length. I rise today very shortly and briefly, because I know I've got many more miles I could go on this particular matter, to express and to expound my arguments as to why the province must desist from blaming the federal government for the highways problems of northern Saskatchewan. They've been doing it for 20, 25 years — they've been inflating their numbers — and in the meantime, our people will be driving on those same roads.

And, Mr. Speaker, this problem is very apparent in northern Saskatchewan. And are we asking for 2,000 kilometres of road to be repaired? No, Mr. Speaker. Are we asking for 1,500? No, Mr. Speaker. We're asking for approximately 350 kilometres of road to be repaired, to be maintained so people can stop travelling on these roads, subjecting their family to danger and ruining their vehicles at a rapid pace.

And in closing, Mr. Speaker, there's an old Highways worker from Ile-a-la-Crosse — and I beg the indulgence of the Assembly — his name is Harry Morin. And Harry's a fine man that put many years into working for the Saskatchewan government and Highways.

And he bumped into some Highways workers on the road and he said, you know when I worked on highways when I was a young man, we seen a hole, we used to go there, we used to make sure the base was solid and then we'd fill that hole up. And then we'd cap it up with some finer gravel in those days as opposed to oil, and then it would be fixed. Nowadays, instead of putting gravel in there you guys are putting flags in there, and flags will not fill these holes.

So I guess the situation, Mr. Speaker, is the people of the North are saying, well who do we blame? Who do we blame? Do we blame the Conservatives for putting us \$15 billion in the hole and then pretending that, oh, it wasn't us, it was somebody else? No. People know it's them. People know it's them.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, point-blank we got to put the blame and the emphasis on the provincial government because they make their choice. They make the decision as to where do you want to spend their money. No question about it.

And when they stand up and they say, your federal Liberal cousins or it's their responsibility, nothing could be further from the truth. They collect over \$400 million each year in gas taxes — 400 million. We have waited 25 years. We have been patient. Isn't it time that this government wake up and begin to address these problems?

And even in my own community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Mr. Speaker, I go home on weekends; provincial highway goes right through our community. It stops right by the church at the south end of the community. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that road is all torn up. Highways crew comes along once a week and mends it up a little bit and fixes it up and they go back again. Two days later it's all messed up again.

And I think the key thing here, that the message we're trying to give is, why don't you fix up these roads once and for all? Fix them up decently so people can travel on them safely and not worry about their vehicles being wrecked, and get the thing

done. Get the job done.

And you know I think the key thing is as long as you have MLAs that are like the member from Regina South, who keeps harping from his seat, as long as you have MLAs that drive on nice, thick blacktop, five minutes from their home to this Assembly, they'll never understand the people driving from Dillon into Buffalo, the road that they've got to travel on. They'll never understand what the NRT (Northern Resource Trucking) truckers have to travel on late at night. They'll never understand what the taxi operators got to put up with.

An Hon. Member: — The louder the echo, the emptier the barrel.

Mr. Belanger: — Exactly. The louder the echo, the emptier the barrel. And that's what a lot of people are hearing. They're hearing empty promises from this government because they really never had a plan when it comes to highway construction in northern Saskatchewan.

So in my fifth closing statement, Mr. Speaker, I want to make one point very clear. If the government cannot rebuild these roads, if they refuse to rebuild them, they continue refusing to accept responsibility and point their finger at Ottawa, and the people aren't going to buy it. They know it's a provincial responsibility. You can't fool people. The silly game of politics is not going to fool anybody.

Why don't they at least come to these communities and say, why don't we have a major road reconstruction training program, to have community people from Turnor Lake, from Pinehouse, from Patuanak, from Dillon, from Buffalo, from Ile-a-la-Crosse, Green Lake, why don't we put a massive training program over the next 5 or 10 years, use a portion of the northern resource dollars, use some of the tax dollars, gas tax dollars, and have the northern people themselves rebuild those roads?

It may take 5 years, it may take 10 years. But at least it's a plan, Mr. Speaker. There's many people out there looking for work; they're looking for training. Why doesn't the government make a massive effort to take all these people that are looking for work, the need for highways, put on a training program and repair and build all these roads so they may last for the next 10, 15, to 20 years.

That's an idea that's been floating around for many years, Mr. Speaker. And you can have people from Turnor Lake rebuilding their own road. And they'll build it, Mr. Speaker. They'll build it good and then maintain it good. And they'll take care of it because they're the ones that built it and they're the ones that'll own it. So that's the key thing that we're talking about, and it's very important that people understand.

And I also want to send to you, Mr. Speaker, an article that appeared in *Northern Pride*, March 24, 1998, and this can be distributed to all the MLAs. And it's grade 8 and 9 students at the Patuanak school. They have submitted letters to the editor and poetry to *Northern Pride*, hoping their voices will be heard and something will be done about the state of Highway 918 which of course is from Beauval to Patuanak.

And I will give this to one of the pages and they'll xerox these pages and hand them to all 58 MLAs so we all are aware that poetry and the words of the students of the St. Louis School in Patuanak finally are able to hit home and that we're able to get some things done on these northern roads.

So, Mr. Speaker, stop playing games. Stop blaming the federal government. Stop inflating your numbers. Start with exciting and innovative approaches to rebuilding our roads because we need them for the essential links to health care, to other communities, and to services and hospitals and the whole bit in southern Saskatchewan. We need those roads.

And we know that you make an incredible amount of money on northern resource extraction. We also know that NRT pays you guys, pays the provincial government extra dollars each year for hauling heavier loads. At the very least put those monies back into the people road so our people can travel in decent and relative safety and that we don't have to worry about our vehicles being cracked up and smashed up, and on and on and on.

So, Mr. Speaker, I stand here in proud support of my colleague from North Battleford on his motion, and I beg the indulgence of the rest of the Assembly members to support the motion to accept responsibility as well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an interesting afternoon observing the opposition parties in their one-two punch attempt to move off of an issue that is creating a very significant amount of problems in rural Saskatchewan. And doing so not only for a short term, but for an extended period of time.

And I want to bring up to the attention of the House some information that the member from Athabasca speaking about northern transportation forgot to bring into place. The federal government, through two different segments, did put some money and accepted their responsibility in the North when they removed the barge system and the maintenance to the dredging and that, so that the barge system could function on Lake Athabasca. The federal government did move to provide funds, something in the neighbourhood of six and a half million dollars for the road between Points North and Black Lake. But the member from Athabasca did not bring that up to indicate that there was that type of a policy in place.

This motion that the member for Redberry moved is a motion that would see the same type of acceptance of responsibility by the federal government in their removal of rail lines from the province of Saskatchewan, to implement funds in the same rationale as they did in the case of the barge . . . removal of the barge system, so that the highway system is in place and built in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now I understand that the member from North Battleford may not be in agreement with this, because the benefit he feels occurs to his constituency through the construction of grain elevators in that particular area. But as you share the benefit, I think you should also share the cost.

And he went on to continue, Mr. Speaker, indicating that he was very pleased in wanting to see some more expenditures in his own constituency, the painting of bridges and fences. And I say that's very typical of a federal Liberal to enhance the photo opportunities in the area that he's in rather than deal with the actual issues of transportation.

(1615)

And, Mr. Speaker, the system that we have as a government where we have the federal government and the provincial government having different responsibilities, it seems to me that over the last number of years that I've been actively involved in politics, the federal government has been shirking its responsibility and offloading on the provinces not only in the area of railway, but also in the area of air in the sense of shuffling the airports onto the backs of the local municipalities; and in water, in the case of what I've just indicated, in the removal of the subsidy for barges.

And all of that ends up meaning . . . or bringing about an increase in road traffic and costs thereof, and the federal government hasn't been prepared to accept its responsibility by putting some money into it.

So what I say is that if we were to accept what took place with the barges as the indication, where the province is putting in a million and a half and the federal government is putting in six and a half million, when the federal government meets its responsibility, the province's funds are already there for about a billion dollar expenditure in roads if the same comparison is maintained. And I say to the members of the Liberal caucus opposite that that's the type of responsibility that I'd like to see the federal government deliver.

I'm going to be, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be supporting the motion, but I'm . . . and I do so because I believe that transportation is one of the key issues that maintains the economy of this province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the matter of highways, I think I'd also like to address that because of a few concerns in my jurisdiction, and they've become a lot more serious in the last month or so.

But I think first of all, we need a comment briefly on some of the discussion that we've heard in the House here. We've had the government side, the NDP, ramble on for a long time about how they shouldn't take responsibility for it, Mr. Speaker. If the feds only stepped in, we would have highways like Alberta — highways like Alberta. And we had old Highway ministers chatting this up thinking they had all the solutions.

The other excuse that they gave, Mr. Speaker, was if it didn't happen to be this debt thing. Well yes, debt has hurt every province in Canada. And if Tommy Douglas hadn't started the debt with the unfunded liability and racked up some \$8 billion in that area, we'd be a whole lot better off now. And everyone in this country knows that, except those people across there are not prepared to admit that, that the first dollar of debt, Mr. Speaker, was Tommy Douglas's debt. And everyone knows

that. And the sooner that the NDP over there start taking responsibility for their own debt, the sooner we will be able to address some of the problems that are out there. And now . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Now all hon. members will recognize that the hon. member for Rosthern is not located all that far from the Chair, and the Chair is having some difficulty in being able to hear him make his remarks. Debate can go on for quite some time, and I'll invite all members to put their remarks on the record.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and those were some good comments I had to make. And it was good to see that the member from Lloydminster, who by the way, Mr. Speaker, lives so close to good highways that it's very understandable that she has very little concern about the rest of us. Every chance she gets, the famous phrase about gone west applies.

The other part that's been interesting in this debate, Mr. Speaker, is how the Liberal third party over here has said, it is only the provincial responsibility. And that too is incorrect. And I think both of those two sides that I've just addressed need to go ahead and look at the world the way it really happens to be. If we go, Mr. Speaker, to other countries and see if they have a national transportation policy, we see how much better their highways are. And we need that, Mr. Speaker, in this country.

We need the federal Liberals to come on side. We need Ralph Goodale to come on side and say there needs to be some money for transportation. We need to get this grain from the centre of Canada out to the Coast, and we need to get the products that are coming in from our coastal areas and from across the border south, we need those products coming through on good highways. And so the federal government needs to do something in that area as well.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the feds have a problem that I've already addressed, and that is they too have over the years racked up an enormous debt and they've tried to get out of that situation by offloading onto the provinces. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, as we're talking of offloading, we just at this particular point have to discuss something that has been talked about today.

We've talked about how many times around the equator or around the world or around the moon, the highways in Saskatchewan go. And this government seems to think that they're taking responsibility for fixing every mile of those.

Well I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, this government's fixing very few miles of those because most of those miles are being fixed by RMs. And there isn't a single person living in our RMs right now in Saskatchewan that isn't aware of the fact that it's this government that's taking money out of their pockets, and say those are your highways; you take those \$30 million and you take them out of your grain profits, if there was such a thing as profits in grain. But that seems to be becoming a myth in our country as well.

That offloading, Mr. Speaker, is what has caused a lot of hardship to the RMs, because their roads, the roads that they have to drive on, as we know very well, Mr. Speaker, in our

grid system in Saskatchewan, they're every mile to every 2 miles, east and west, north and south — almost all of those, Mr. Speaker, are RM responsibilities.

This government has backed out of that. They said, you're on your own. You want to have roads that are good enough to get fire trucks down in winter, you take care of it. You want roads to haul your school kids on, you take care of it. And so they've offloaded left, right, and centre. And it's our rural people in our RMs that have been caught with that responsibility.

But not just in the RMs, Mr. Speaker. This government has also offloaded onto cities and the highways that end up going through our cities and our larger communities. Those various local taxpayers have had to pick that up as well, because this NDP government has backed out of the responsibility that they have had for decades, Mr. Speaker, for decades.

And there was a time, Mr. Speaker, when this government took its responsibility and took a fair share of what they were supposed to have with support for rural roads. And they put that money in place to help the citizens of this province. They've backed out of that and they're doing none of that now, Mr. Speaker. And it's to their detriment and it's to their shame. And everyone else in Saskatchewan has had to pick up the load for this government that doesn't know how to run its own affairs.

They have money for all sorts of things, but not for RMs. They go to Guyana, Mr. Speaker. Millions of dollars. We haven't even got a clue how many are out there, but we know that it's way too many. And there's probably going to be more coming.

They can go to New Zealand and throw away millions of dollars. But what did they give to the RMs, Mr. Speaker? Less. A four-letter word that the RMs have heard from this government year after year, and that's less.

NST, Saskatchewan taxpayers' money out of the country. What do the RMs get? Less. Channel Lake comes along, Mr. Speaker. Money lost over there. What did the RMs and the cities get for roads and infrastructure? Less.

It's the famous four-letter word from this government to everyone in the province. And the member for Swift Current sits back there as if he's going to pontificate on this one as well. He knows well enough what his highways are like in that area. He knows well enough how many lives have been lost on that section of the Trans-Canada very close to his area.

He knows well enough what his rural roads are like. I've driven on those rural roads. They're a mess. And they're not a mess because the RMs are not doing their job; they're a mess because this government has abrogated its responsibility and just says, we're going to give you less and give you less again. That's the kind of government we have, Mr. Speaker.

Now at this particular point, I need to turn the attention of this government to my particular constituency. And yes, after we've lost probably more lives than any other constituency in this province, this government did some twinning, some twinning — about 4 or 5 miles along Highway 12, and maybe about twice that many miles along Highway 11.

However, there's a major highway there that has a lot of traffic that has absolutely fallen apart in the last month to six weeks and that's Highway 312, Mr. Speaker. That highway was bearable. Compared to the rest of highways in Saskatchewan, it would have been an average highway. Compared to Alberta, I'm not sure what they would have called it, but it wouldn't have been a highway.

An Hon. Member: — Cow path.

Mr. Heppner: — Cow path possibly. If in fact there were no cows in the area, you could allot it to that because grass would grow there on occasion as well. However Highway 312, as soon as the road bans were off this spring, has fallen totally apart. There are big chunks of highway out there. There's probably not a chunk there that two or three people couldn't pick up and walk off. It's all broken up. It's in bits and pieces. There are trenches and ditches in the middle of the road. It's become a total disaster.

And recently — in fact, it was this weekend — I was talking with an individual from my constituency and he says, do people ever complain about Highway 312? Yes they do. Every time they drive on it they complain about Highway 312, Mr. Speaker, because it is terrible. And the unfortunate thing is it's a highway that's very critical to that constituency. It's basically a highway that links the two bridges that cross the river between Saskatoon and Prince Albert. And so for that particular reason, this government needs to pay some attention to that particular road.

The grain traffic that goes there goes off in all directions. It may go to the Can-Oat on the west side of the constituency or go off to some of the major elevators on the east side and coming across both from the Blaine Lake area and the Wakaw area. And so that Highway 312 is a very critical highway in grain transportation.

And what has this particular government done? I would challenge anyone to drive down that road and find one thing they've done on it. They've done absolutely nothing. The fact is they've done less, and there's that four-letter word this government's so famous for. They've done less again than they did last year and it's become a real disaster.

I think as we look at those particular highways, there's another part in my constituency that needs to be mentioned because I think it shows the ineptitude of the way this government builds highways even when they have a chance to do it right.

They created an intersection, Mr. Speaker, on the divided section that was on Highway 11, an intersection that comes off of Warman Road. They bought up a lot of land. They could have had a curve there that would have been a 100-kilometre curve — lots of room, lots of space. What do they do? They create a curve that's probably — well it's hard to call it a curve, it's more like just a corner — about 50, 40 kilometres would be about maximum on that one.

They used to have a sign when they finished off this curve on this intersection, Mr. Speaker, which was about three years ago. They put a sign up there to indicate there was a corner. They put the sign up, Mr. Speaker, and they put it up again and again

and again and again. For the first half-year they must have put it up a dozen times, because the intersection is so totally ignorant and undriveable that people continually kept going through the intersection, taking down the sign.

So they've quit, Mr. Speaker, they just quit putting up the sign. So they put it half a mile down the road, thinking nobody there . . . no one would hit it at that point. They were right on that part — that no one's hit the sign.

But, Mr. Speaker, if you went to that particular intersection, you would be very hard-pressed, driving back and forth weekly or daily for a whole year, not to find skid marks going off in the ditch where someone couldn't make that intersection, because it just doesn't make any sense. It's one of those curves that just doesn't work. It isn't identified properly, it's built poorly, and it's been done that way in spite of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that they had all the room and all the space to do it correctly.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, those were the issues I wanted to address this afternoon and that is the abysmal job this government's done with Highway 312. The abysmal job they've done when they build a highway and don't know how to do it properly. And the offloading they've done on all the rural roads.

And so when we talk about our transportation system in this particular province, we know if this government and their famous four-letter word . . . and that is, people in Saskatchewan, you're going to get less for that — you're going to get less.

Now there's a comment made about 40-some per cent of the tax dollars from gasoline not being exactly the right figure and we had someone chirp from that side and say it's over 50 per cent. Well isn't that amazing? So we've got a halfwit Robin Hood. He doesn't keep it all — he only keeps half of it.

Now isn't that just amazing, Mr. Speaker, that this government would take credit for really only taking half the money that they collect from a particular tax and misusing it. Truly amazing that they could take credit for that and stand in their place and say, guess what, we're only misusing half the money. We're only taking half the money that we're taking in taxes from gasoline and throwing it to a big pot where it gets lost and no one knows where it goes. Take credit for that sort of thing.

(1630)

And all we have to do — and I'll ask the members across to do their own checking on this, Mr. Speaker, so they get the numbers right — do a check in Manitoba, do a check in Alberta, and see the percentage of their gasoline tax that goes to roads. Do a check on how much . . . what percentage of their gasoline tax goes to their roads, and I think this government will see again, the famous word, less goes to roads in this province out of that tax than any place else. It's a disaster.

And one more thing about our federal people out there. We had a document that was circulated through the House awhile back, Mr. Speaker, that indicated how much money the federal government was putting into roads. And in the next three, four years for Saskatchewan, there's nothing — absolutely nothing,

Mr. Speaker.

The Liberals out there, who have a few people here that carry their name — not proudly so, I can assure you — but do carry their name, they weren't spending a dollar on the next numbers of years in Saskatchewan but they had money for the Maritimes, they had money for Ontario, they had money for Quebec.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if this government would take the tax dollars that they collect from the people in this province and spend it on highways, and if the federal government would spend an equal share to what they're spending in other provinces in Saskatchewan, we would have the roads we ought to have without anyone paying any more tax, without anyone paying any more taxes.

So this government can get its act in gear; federal government does the same thing; we will have those roads and no one can hide behind the fact that it'll take a whole lot more taxes. Use your money wisely; forget about Guyana and NST and Channel Lake. Spend it wisely; spend it reasonably and things will be okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The division bells rang from 4:33 p.m. until 4:34 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 5

Krawetz	Bjornerud	Toth
D'Autremont	Hepner	

Nays — 17

Van Mulligen	Shillington	Upshall
Kowalsky	Koenker	Trew
Renaud	Lorje	Hamilton
Stanger	Jess	Wall
Kasperski	Ward	Murray
Langford	Thomson	

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Investing in Transportation: A Transportation Strategy For Saskatchewan People.* Mr. Speaker, this government has many visions for the people of Saskatchewan. A wellness model for the best health care system, bar none in the world, the envy of our American friends and our Alberta and Manitoba neighbours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — A social safety policy, the first comprehensive review of the social program in Canada in thirty years. A program which will offer concrete, sustainable ways and methods of people becoming contributing members of society rather than staying caught in the welfare cycle. Another great policy we have.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a vision with regards to transportation. A safe, modern and efficient transportation system that supports economic growth and social well-being in

Saskatchewan, despite what the naysayers would have one believe.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the most extensive highway and rural road network in Canada. On a per capita basis, Saskatchewan has twice as many roads and highways as any other province. Our 185,000 kilometre network was developed to serve our widely dispersed communities, our agricultural producers, and our resource industries.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government's major policy shifts in the last little while in the field of transportation have far-reaching implications for Saskatchewan producers, shippers, and the transportation industry. The federal government has eliminated transportation subsidies, reduced regulations, and commercialized airport and port facilities. Deregulation of the rail industry weakens shipper protection measures and allows the railways to proceed with reckless abandonment, their branch line policy in Saskatchewan.

The national airports policy will place an added burden on the affected communities in the province by transferring ownership of eight federally owned airports in Saskatchewan to local authorities, the province, communities, or other interest groups. There will be no federal support for the airport in Swift Current or other airports without scheduled service. Of course the profitable airports like the one in Toronto, Montreal, they were privatized and sold to their cronies so that they could gouge the travelling public. Subsidies that were used from those airports to support the airports in rural Saskatchewan . . . and they call themselves a party of rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, for years Saskatchewan and other provinces have urged the federal government to enter into negotiations to develop a coordinated national transportation policy. Such a program needs to be a shared responsibility, but the federal government has avoided making a commitment to date.

Mr. Speaker, words will never express my shame and disappointment as Canada remains the only federal country in the western world that does not have a national transportation policy, where the national government does not contribute a significant portion to the cost of maintaining a national highway system.

Mr. Speaker, the members often talk of the highways system in the United States, but they fail to realize, or conveniently forget, that the national highways in the United States are funded 90 per cent by the federal government, whereas we in Saskatchewan get zero.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is faced with dramatic challenges that have significant implications. The abandonment of rail lines without any competition will only lead to higher freight rates, excessively high freight charges as a result. The loss of the Crow benefit, a significant, permanent cost increase. And so we are treated by the federals. The second major challenge is the repair and the upgrading of our road network.

Mr. Speaker, the member from, I think it's Rosthern, suggested that the provincial tax was not on fuel, was not being used the way that it should. Both the Tories and the Liberals often suggest that the provincial tax on gasoline should be used to

fund highway and road construction and repair.

Contrary to popular misconception, the fuel tax is not, nor has it ever been, a road tax dedicated to road construction. And financial experts have cautioned governments against having dedicated taxes. The fuel tax is a sales tax, and as such goes into the province's General Revenue Fund and is used to help fund all government programs, including health, education, social programs, debt repayment, and of course highway work.

If the amount of money collected through the fuel tax on gas and diesel fuel is compared to the total budget of the Department of Highways and Transportation, the figures, which show that over the period of 1992-93 through 1996-97, the average annual fuel tax revenue was 299 million, and the average annual Department of Highways and Transportation budget was 173 million, or an average of 57 per cent of the fuel tax revenues collected . . . Now the hon. member from Rosthern says, they brag about paying 50 per cent of it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in 1997-1998 the DHT (Department of Highways and Transportation) expenditure amounted to almost 80 per cent of the fuel tax revenue collected. The member from Rosthern would have to do some more research before he comes out with those statements.

Now this could be considered reasonable in view of the fact that the province is still spending approximately \$2 million per day because of the former administration of which he is a member. He was not in the House at that time, but he is a member of the party which left this province with this horrendous debt. And so that is why we cannot spend more on the highways.

The opposite member says that all that this government says is less, less. What he would do is spend more, more. And he would be prepared to spend a billion dollar deficit just like the former administration did and leave this province in the terrible financial shape that it was when we took over. Mr. Speaker, same old story.

An Hon. Member: — Same old Tory. Same old story — spend, spend, spend.

Mr. Wall: — Right.

The previous administration discontinued the fuel tax during the years 1982 to '83. Through 1986-87 an estimated 664 million in fuel tax revenue went uncollected. Had the fuel tax been a dedicated road tax at that point, what that would have meant, there would have been no money to spend on roads.

In constant dollars, if 57 per cent of that foregone revenue was available for highway construction, it would fund approximately 1,000 kilometres of high quality, primary two-lane highway. And that's what we lost.

Also if that \$664 million had been saved at 9 per cent interest, by the end of the 1995-96 fiscal year it would have been worth 1.8 billion. By the same analogy the fact that 664 million was not collected has added 1.8 billion to the accumulated provincial debt, and then the hon. member over there complains about how we handle finances.

Saskatchewan's fuel tax rate is 15 cents per litre for gas and diesel, 9 cents per litre for propane. Those rates have not increased since March 19, 1993. The federal excise tax on fuels in all provinces is 10 cents per litre on gas, 4 cents on diesel, and zero on propane. The federal government collects more than \$6 billion each year from fuel taxes, but spends less than 500 million each year on road transportation with as much as 98 per cent of that 500 million being spent in eastern Canada.

In the 1997-98 budget speech we announced a 2.5 billion 10-year commitment to improve Saskatchewan's roads and highways. As a first step the Department of Highways and Transportation budget for 1997-98 was increased over the previous year by 30 million, or 18 per cent, to 198.8 million.

(1645)

And they complained that we haven't spent 250 million in the last two years. It was pointed out clearly to them that we would vamp up to that \$250 million. And you can rest assured that that's what will occur is that over a period of 10 years the average — and, Mr. Speaker, perhaps that's what they can't understand is the average — an average of 250 million will be spent each and every year.

With the loss of the branch lines, Mr. Speaker, and with the elevator consolidation and so forth, the traffic of course has become much heavier on the roads. And, Mr. Speaker, the entire financial responsibility for maintaining and improving the highway infrastructure has been placed, by default, on the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

The cost of the ship and grain transport from rails to roads can be roughly determined by the dramatically increased maintenance costs on our thin membrane surface highways which are taking the bulk of such traffic. In addition, significantly increased direct transportation costs will be borne directly by producers impacted by branch line closures as they are forced to buy larger vehicles and haul greater distances.

The Saskatchewan government has recognized these realities and is vigorously pursuing various options. The provincial government believes that, given the right circumstances, short-line railways can provide efficient transportation service, reduce the stress on the road system, and prevent or diminish some job loss.

Historical expenditures, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to mention just a couple of things. During the period 1991 through 1996, Saskatchewan expenditures on provincial highways and airports totalled 1.02 billion; on municipal rural roads — 185.7 million; on municipal urban streets and roads — 80.4 million; total during the period — 1.21 billion.

During the same period, the federal contribution to highways and provincial airports totalled 41.4 million; on municipal roads they spent 22.5 million; on municipal urban streets and roads — 10.8 million; and a total during the period of 74.7 million. The combined total provincial and federal expenditures during the year — 1.366 billion.

The provincial percentage of that total — and this is the interesting thing — was 94.5. Mr. Speaker, the federal

percentage, a grand total of 5.4.

We now come to another thing which is of great interest to me, the twinning of the highways. Mr. Speaker, we have heard many petitions with regards to the twinning of the No. 1; haven't had much to say about the Yellowhead.

Highway No. 1 — the Trans-Canada which runs through my constituency — the Highway No. 1 runs for 655 kilometres from Manitoba to Alberta. Of that length, 373 kilometres are already a four-lane divided highway. The balance is 113 kilometres, which is 71-mile section from just west of Gull Lake to the Alberta border; and 173-kilometre section from east of Indian Head to the Manitoba border remains as two-lanes highway.

On the western section it is estimated to cost approximately 49 million to build another parallel two-lane highway adjacent to the existing highway. And on the eastern section it is estimated to cost 83 million to build a new parallel two-lane highway. Total cost of both projects is estimated to be approximately \$132 million.

And this is what the opposition states: spend that money, spend it now; get those highways forming, and so forth. Of course we are going to do that. We're going to do it with a plan. And we have promised that within 15 years we will twin not only the No. 1 but also the Yellowhead.

In 15 years, Mr. Speaker, we hope that the federal government will see the error of their ways.

The provincial government, Mr. Speaker, has committed to complete the twinning of No. 1 east and west and No. 16 from the Battlefords to Lloydminster within the next 15 years. If federal cost assistance was made available, that time frame could possibly be reduced to eight or seven years — seven or eight. Meanwhile, the provincial government is exploring all possible options to accelerate the twinning projects.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of maintenance and repair required to maintain a road surface in acceptable condition is dependent on many factors — the original construction standards, volume, type of traffic, weather conditions, and so forth. We have been spending approximately 2,300 per kilometre each year on maintenance on the thin membraned highway system as an overall average. Even so, conditions are getting worse.

Increases in grain haul and oilfield traffic which were never intended to use the TMS (thin membrane surface) system are major contributors to the deteriorating road conditions. Our total maintenance expenditure on these roads in the '97-98 fiscal year will be approximately 19.8 million. It would cost about 160 million to bring all TMS highways back to a condition which would be considered acceptable, and approximately 30 million every year thereafter to keep them in that condition.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that we have a leadership role to play in transportation issues here in the province. But we cannot and should not do it in isolation. As a province we can only try to influence what the federal government does. Based on history, we've been very

disappointed with the lack of willingness on their part to consider representations we made on behalf of the Saskatchewan people. But even when all the western provinces have reached consensus and gone forward collectively, we have not seen much willingness from the federal government to work with us.

Our provincial government does not operate that way. We are committed to working with producers and others on transportation issues. Once again, the delinquent player in this entire scenario is the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, transportation is not simply a matter of building roads and railways, it's a matter of national unity as well, and it deserves much more attention and financial support from our national government. Together we can build a transportation system that meets the social and economic needs of the people of Saskatchewan. Whether it is a national highway system or safe all-weather access to local hospitals and schools, involvement from Saskatchewan . . . our involvement is necessary in order that we use the funds allocated to transportation as effectively as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

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