

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

The Deputy Clerk: — I wish to advise the Assembly that Mr. Speaker will not be present to open this sitting.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately repair and pave the gravel portion of Highway No. 349.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will every pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Archerwill.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1999, 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 every pray.

These folks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, come from Robsart, Biggar, Consul, and Gull Lake; and those towns and communities like Maple Creek and that surrounding area.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to present petitions asking the provincial government to reroute Highway 40 to alleviate the dangerous and confusing entrance to the city of North Battleford, and to correct the congestion at the entrance to the city of North Battleford.

Your petitioners come from Cochin, Maymont, Battleford, and North Battleford. I so present.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise again today to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to regulate SaskPower and SaskEnergy so as to require them to provide electricity and natural gas at affordable rates for non-profit municipal recreation facilities.

Mr. Speaker, with the inevitability that winter's on its way, the petitioners from the communities of Imperial and Liberty are

very concerned about the cost of the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member knows that no added comments — just the prayer is all to be read.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for reminding me of that. However the people, the concerned people on this petition are from the communities of Imperial and Liberty, and I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order a petition regarding the relocation of Highway 40 to alleviate congestion at the entrance to North Battleford presented on October 20, 1998 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) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to regulate SaskPower and SaskEnergy so as to require them to provide electricity and natural gas at affordable rates for non-profit municipal recreation facilities; and finally of citizens humbly praying that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to act to save the Plains Health Centre.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 73 ask the government the following question:

For the Minister of Education and the Minister of Economic Development: when does your government intend giving recognition to the 20-year-old creation of a graphical form of communications designed by Rosetown speech pathologist Subhas Maharaj; do you intend to put the idea to use for our hearing and speech impaired as others around the world already have; or do you intend waiting until the patented technology is taken south to the U.S. (United States) and then bringing it back later with our devalued dollars?

I so present, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud today to present to you, through you and to you the members of this Assembly, a supporter of mine.

Now you may find it odd — this supporter is not from the constituency of Arm River. He's actually from the constituency of Wood River. So that's, Mr. Speaker, how far spread my support is.

I would, however, like the Assembly to please make welcome

an employee of the Shaunavon Co-op system and my son-in-law from Shaunavon, Mr. James Bateman. Please make him welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the legislature a very good friend, a long-time friend of mine seated in your gallery, Ron Filleul.

Ron and I worked together at the Wheat Pool for quite a number of years. We actually ran together at noon hours out of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). And I miss those runs, Ron, and I miss the many hours of good talk we had, although usually while we were running I was too busy huffing and puffing and trying to keep up with Ron.

In addition to being my friend, Ron is president of the CNIB, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, in Saskatchewan.

I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming Ron Filleul.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleague and those in the House here today in welcoming James to the House. It's nice to see you . . . whenever you have a constituent that is also a supporter come to visit, so I welcome you here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Closure of Plains Health Centre

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you.

In a few short days this Premier and his New Democratic government will be closing the Plains hospital, referred to as the people's hospital. Liberal leader Jim Melenchuk, Darlene Sterling, Lenore Schmelling, and the Save the Plains Committee, along with the Liberal caucus, fought a long and difficult battle to keep this much-needed hospital open for the people of Saskatchewan.

To our caucus it was like a medical team working to save a healthy patient with years of productive life ahead. But we are soon going to lose this patient which was responsible for so many miracles. The death of this hospital makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call on my colleagues and all members of this Assembly and all the people of rural Saskatchewan to rise and join with me in a moment of silence in honour of this great hospital.

Moosomin Girl Picked for Midget Hockey Team

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to take a moment this afternoon to recognize the achievements of a 14-year-old hockey player

from the community of Moosomin.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the interesting thing we have here is that Cindy Leslie is one of 190 girls that were invited to a camp to pick out the midget hockey team in the province of Saskatchewan to represent our province at the Canada Winter Games in Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

What we find, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Cindy at 14 is actually being asked to compete in an age level one level higher than hers. Of the 190, she was down to that 40 select few that were called for that last camp, and of that 40, she became one of the Team Canada midget players.

And I would like to congratulate Cindy Leslie and ask the members to join with me in congratulating Cindy and wishing our midget team well at the Canada Winter Games.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Synchrotron Light Source Project

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Today I want to shed some light in this Assembly — light that is a million times more intense than any medical x-rays. I'm referring to the University of Saskatchewan's Canadian Light Source (Synchrotron project).

As of yesterday, Saskatchewan was one step closer building a home for the first synchrotron facility. The Canada Foundation for Innovation, also referred as the CFI, is the key federal funding agency and has selected Saskatoon's synchrotron project as one that will be examined more closely while it makes its final decision in awarding research grants.

The U of S (University of Saskatchewan) synchrotron project has asked the CFI to supply the final \$71 million required for the project to go ahead. By moving to the final stage of review process, most in the scientific community are optimistic funding will be approved.

There's wide-spread support across Canada for the Synchrotron to go ahead. Once it is in place it will save Canadian researchers over a million dollars a year because they no longer have to leave Canada.

The research applications are broad and varied. They include both academic and industrial research in such areas as medicine, computers, physics, and biotechnology. And who knows, with a bit of luck, it may mean that the opposition parties no longer have to operate in the dark. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Athabasca Visit

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Seeing as Athabasca lacks any representation at this session, I thought I would tell about my visit to Athabasca this past summer. We canoed from just north of the Cluff Lake mine up into Lake Athabasca and across the southern shore of Lake Athabasca. For 14 days we didn't see another human being, had no

cellphone coverage and no radio coverage, and had not the faintest idea of what was going on in the world.

The Athabasca sand dunes which cover hundreds of kilometres are one of the most beautiful but least visited parts of our province. The William River provides an incredible contrast with Sahara-like sand dunes on the west bank and northern forest on the east for approximately 100 kilometres. The Athabasca sand dunes stretch for another hundred kilometres along the south shore of the lake.

The huge sand dunes rising above the northern landscape gives another worldly feeling to the area. For those who are not up to the trip but would like to see this incredible part of our province, Robin Karpan of Saskatoon has recently published a book entitled *Northern Sandscapes* with many beautiful pictures of this wonderful part of our province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wadena Condominium Project

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member from Kelvington-Wadena has been practising her fiction writing skills by sending a letter around the province saying how much she dislikes Saskatchewan and how mistaken the people have been in exercising their democratic right to a free vote.

Things are bad in Saskatchewan, she says. The people are sheep, she alleges.

She is wrong, I suggest.

The member has been so busy writing other parts of the province that she has neglected progress in her own constituency. So let me remind her of a story on page 1 of *The Wadena News*, September 30, 1998.

There is a housing shortage in Wadena, the story goes. And as the member from Prince Albert Carlton suggested on Monday, steps are being taken to alleviate that shortage.

Carolina Developments has confirmed plans to build a condominium project downtown, providing homes for those who desire condominium living downtown. The units will be pre-sold. This project will increase Wadena's tax base and give prospective homeowners more options.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been so much good news in my constituency of Swift Current lately that I am very happy to share this bit of optimism with the member from Wadena. She needs it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt Oktoberfest

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this week Humboldt is celebrating their annual Oktoberfest. Oktoberfest activities kicked off last Sunday with more than 20 accordion players jamming it up.

Activities continued throughout the week with such things as a

window display contest by downtown merchants; coffee and German cakes at the Willkommen Centre; the beer tank gang entertaining at St. Elizabeth's Hospital transition ward and the senior citizens' hall; and much, much more.

Festivities will wind up Saturday evening with a beer keg rolling contest and entertainment by the Little German Band. Dancing will follow with food, beer, and schnapps to sustain and energize everyone throughout the evening.

Come, join in Humboldt's celebration and enjoy a little bit of Germany in the heart of the Prairies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Volunteer Recognition Awards

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I was pleased to attend the volunteer awards banquet in Saskatoon sponsored by Sask Sport, Sask Culture, and the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association. The purpose of the banquet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to honour volunteers who make possible the wide variety of community-based programs we enjoy in this province.

And I would like to mention each recipient by name: Mr. Ved Arora of Regina was nominated by the Multilingual Association of Regina; Margaret Cugnet of Yorkton by the organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils; Bob Ivanochko of Regina by the Regina Ethnic Pioneers Cemetery Walking Tour Society; Dianne Anderson of Regina by the Saskatchewan Canoe Association; Dale Clancy of Saskatoon by the Saskatchewan Amateur Wrestling Association; and Birdie Prosofsky of Regina by the Saskatchewan Ladies Golf Association; and finally Eugene Arcand of Saskatoon representing First Nations youth.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were two groups recognized for their contributions to volunteerism in Saskatchewan: the Mortlach Fiddlers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Training Academy, Depot Division, for its contribution to fitness training in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, without volunteers, our provincial life would be greatly diminished and I congratulate these winners and the thousands of volunteers like them. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Good News for Weyburn

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to inform the Assembly today of good news items from the city of Weyburn in my constituency which is booming along quite nicely.

As an example of the activity in Weyburn and as an indication of the confidence Weyburn people feel in our town, I'd like to point out that Weyburn City Council has been presented with and is considering a five-year capital plan which will enable us to sail into the 21st century.

This capital plan calls for a total expenditure of around \$18

million and includes a number of necessary projects: a fire hall workshop worth 2.7 million which is already under way; a water storage reservoir; a \$3.2 million primary sewage lagoon; the transfer of city hall to a more adequate building; and improvements to the public library.

These improvements are the city's commitment to the future; a commitment that council feels comfortable in making. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these proposed improvements to the city's infrastructure are just one more illustration of how our province is growing. Congratulations to the city of Weyburn and their future plans.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Highways in Saskatchewan

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Highways. Keeping in mind what the member from Swift Current just said, perhaps he should have read the article recently that appeared in the *Foam Lake Review* entitled, "New research program announced." It said that Highway 310 from Foam Lake to Ituna will be used as a testing ground for tires. The article says:

According to experts this is the only stretch of road in North American that contains all the potential tire hazards: potholes the size of volcanic craters; gravel ridges the size of Mount Everest; and carefully calibrated washboards; roaming wildlife; and plain old-fashioned broken pavement.

Of course, this article was intended as a joke. However, it drives home a very serious problem. Saskatchewan highways are not safe to drive on thanks to NDP (New Democratic Party) neglect.

Madam Minister, when are you going to do something about it? When are you going to fix Saskatchewan's crumbling highways?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm actually pleased to be able to rise to announce all of the work that we have been doing across this province on highways and transportation. We put in a 10-year plan started 2 years ago with a commitment of \$2.5 billion over 10 years.

We've been living up to that commitment as we've added additional money: \$30 million last year, \$20 million more in our budget this year, and because of the exceptionally good season we've even put in additional dollars into the transportation system this fall.

I have been around this province and have certainly have seen a lot of construction done. And I have been in all areas of the province to see the number of kilometres that have been worked on on our primary and secondary system right across this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The minister made commitments and she's broken every one of them since she made it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, everywhere we go in this province, people say they have the worst highway in Saskatchewan. And it's really hard to tell who's right.

So the Saskatchewan Party decided to hold a contest. We're inviting people to phone in and tell us which is the worst highway in Saskatchewan. And you phone: 1-877-326-3652. And we're going to start taking entries today. Then in the spring we're going to send out a team of judges to decide; I'll be one of the judges. In fairness, we'd like to ask the Minister of Highways if she'd also be one of the judges. After all it's not like she's busy actually fixing the highways so she may as well go on our worst highway tour with us.

Madam Minister, will you be one of the judges in our Worst Highways in Saskatchewan contest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have in our plan not only made the commitment in dollars, but we also have made the commitment to people in Saskatchewan to work on a number of the challenges that there are there in transportation, in good planning, and organized planning.

Actually tomorrow I'll be at another sod-turning for our commitment on twinning Highway No. 1 east. We'll be doing that tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — A week or so ago I was in a constituency on the opening of the Outlook bridge — \$11 million project. We've done upgrading of over 170 kilometres of rural highways affected by the changes in grain and rail transportation. We've done construction on the Athabasca road this year. We've done over 3,500 kilometres of highways and northern roads this season, have received dollars in upgrading and maintenance and preservation work.

We are putting more dollars in. We are doing more planning than ever before . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, exactly, and we've had no help from the federal government. That is the one level in which we still have received zero help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Commitments are meant to be kept not just spoken, and the minister's already \$82 million behind in her supposed commitment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you're going to have a contest you have to have prizes. And we've come up with the perfect prize for the person who submits the worst highway in Saskatchewan. It's a free wheel alignment from the Saskatchewan Party and a commitment to fix the highway from the Highways department.

Now we can't speak for the Highways department until after the

next election. So we ask the minister, after we have selected the worst highway in Saskatchewan will you commit to fix that highway next spring?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe in two principles right here. If the people of Saskatchewan want to judge the road conditions, and if they want to judge where the biggest pothole was, it was the hole that these people made across from us in which we spend \$2 million a day in interest trying to fix it. The huge deficit in which, where they took off fuel taxes when they couldn't afford to do it and we've been still trying to repair that hole also.

But if the Saskatchewan Party wants to hold a contest on this, I am sure that they can just do very fine at it. But my understanding is that their wheels have fallen off and they're actually in the ditch.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Possible Job Action at Regional Colleges

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my questions are for the newly-appointed Minister of Post-Secondary Education. Just as we've gone through one labour dispute in this province it seems another one is fast approaching, one that could seriously affect many students in our province.

Mr. Minister, over the last several weeks our caucus has literally been inundated with calls from concerned students and parents from six regional colleges in southern Saskatchewan, concerned that their school year is in jeopardy due to impending strike action by employees of those regional colleges.

Mr. Minister, I understand that the union has taken a strike vote and that as of last Friday negotiations between management and the union have ended. Mr. Minister, what are you doing to avoid strike action being taken? Will the students at these colleges, many of whom are taking their first year university classes, see their school year jeopardized by this latest labour dispute involving your government?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all to the member opposite, I want to reassure the students of Saskatchewan that are attending the regional colleges that we're doing everything possible right now to ensure there is no strike and the continuation of classes.

He is correct that strike notice was issued last Friday, October 16. And the management, by formal response in a letter, acknowledged the strike notice but, I should say, have asked them back to the table. Negotiations to this point in time have gone very, very well and I'm convinced that we will find a resolution to this problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the minister needs to contact some of his own officials because negotiations have not gone very, very well. Your officials indicated last spring that there was a problem and that it required fixing and that your officials committed your government to ensuring that

that problem was going to be fixed.

We're not even talking about a new contract, Mr. Minister. We're talking about an old contract, which according to the union, came with the commitment by this government to settle long-standing issues outside of the last contract settlement. That never happened, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, it is our understanding that the strike vote taken by the union came back with a very strong strike mandate. Are you going to sit idly by while the student's school year is put in jeopardy? What is the government prepared to do to avoid this? Will it be back-to-work legislation?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again I want to reassure the member opposite and the students across the province who are attending the regional colleges that we are doing everything possible to resolve this dispute.

I would disagree with the member that the discussions have not gone well. They've gone very well to this point in time. Again, myself and the Minister of Education as well will do what we can to ensure that we find resolution to this problem. And I'm convinced that that will happen. My most recent information tells me that they will both be back at the table very shortly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wheelchair Buses in Saskatoon

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for Disabilities. Mr. Minister, last month you entered cabinet with a brand new portfolio, that one of Disabilities minister. And you must be very disheartened now that you've heard that more than a third of the wheelchair buses in Saskatoon have been pulled off the road because of mechanical problems. The Saskatchewan Abilities Council says it's a direct result of underfunding by the NDP government.

Mr. Minister, why are the wheelchair buses in Saskatoon being shut down and what are you doing about it?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a local issue in Saskatoon, as the member knows, where there is a transfer of the transit for the disabled program from the Abilities Council, and the city of Saskatoon had proposed to take it over, which resulted in inspections and audits and so forth.

This program is approximately 20 years old. In our department we have been reviewing it for the past year because a lot of the vehicles that were originally provided are now wearing out and we need to look at a program for capital replacements.

So we are working with communities to renew the program and there . . . the two things is capital and operating. The problem is too that these are very specialized vehicles. And if you have a problem, you have to place an order months in advance. So there is a problem and we're working with people in Saskatoon to try to find a resolution.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Benefits Under Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living Program

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the people with disabilities in Saskatoon aren't really very happy waiting while you renew and review policies. They are actually suffering.

I have another question for the minister in charge of Social Services. Mr. Minister, why does your government discriminate against disabled people who are covered under SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance)? The Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living program provides special assistance to people with long-term disabilities. However, if these persons are covered by SGI, they cannot access the SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living) benefits until their SGI coverage runs out.

Mr. Minister, if a disabled person is receiving coverage from Wawanesa or from The Co-operators, they are still entitled to SAIL benefits. Why is it that the only government insurance company — why is it that only the government insurance company is excluded from this? Why are you discriminating against this class of disabled people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I understand it, when people qualify for benefits from SGI pursuant to the programs they have, they would not necessarily qualify for the same benefits that might be provided through the SAIL program. And therefore when those benefits are provided by SGI, we expect that people will access those benefits but those benefits will then not also be provided through the SAIL program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, we're not asking for special coverage. What we're saying is there's a problem with no-fault insurance because there is a cap on it. When it runs out even persons . . . it eventually runs out for people with disabilities, with permanent disabilities, and that's a real problem, especially for people who've become disabled at a very early age. That's what I am saying. Before that SGI coverage runs out these people should qualify for the SAIL benefits, and we're saying that this is discriminating. When are you going to change this very unfair policy?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think that there's any intention to be discriminatory. All we're simply saying is that if people qualify for benefits pursuant to a policy that SGI has in place, there's an expectation that people will access that. But if those services and those programs are not available under SGI, then SAIL is there to assist people. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the NDP were laying off 600 nurses, hospitals in the United States were

recruiting them. Now a few years later the NDP has gone, oops, can you come back now please? We really need you nurses.

Alberta realizes the severe nursing shortage and is doing something about it, Mr. Speaker. It's offering cash to any nurse who recruits a new co-worker. Alberta is placing ads across the continent as far away as Houston, Texas to recruit new nurses as well. Other provinces don't just say we're going to hire more nurses, they're actually doing something about it.

Madam Minister, I know it's hard to attract people when all you can offer is one of the country's highest tax burdens, low morale, closed hospitals — like the Plains hospital that's closing the end of this month — the possibility of quick burnout, and back-to-work legislation.

But maybe, Madam Minister, could you tell us if you do have a plan, and what it might be to attract more nurses to Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question. What I can tell the member is that the spaces available for nurses' training have been increased this fall. I believe the spaces have increased by some 30 positions in terms of availability of positions for students who are wishing to pursue the whole work field of nursing.

The other point I can make is that I had the opportunity last night to meet with the members of the College of Nursing. And it's interesting to see what's happening across North America in terms of nursing shortages and also an overabundance of nurses.

We . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Florida as a matter of fact. Florida. Because of changes that are taking place all across North America, there are some parts of North America that have shortages of nursing and other parts that have too many nurses.

What I can tell the member is that our government in the summer of 1998 funded 200 more nursing positions, and I understand that all of those nursing positions have been filled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Madam Minister, maybe you can enlighten this House how long it takes for a nurse that goes into training this fall to be completed. What are you doing about the shortage of nurses now, and next year, and two years from now?

Madam Minister, the way you treated SaskPower employees was an obvious threat to health care workers. However, they have said they will not be intimidated by the NDP's heavy hand. The nurses have said they will not abide by your salary cap.

If they ignore your wage controls, is your plan to order the nurses back to work as well? Is this part of your grand scheme to create a great working environment for our health care workers? And will this threat of back to work be in any of your government's recruitment ads?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the member did not hear the answer to my question . . . or to his question on Monday.

What we indicated on Monday is that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses collective agreement expires at the end of March of 1999. We are not yet at the bargaining table.

I can tell the member that we expect to see SAHO, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, bargain a collective agreement with all of the various health unions and we expect that those collective agreements will be arrived at in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Well, Madam Minister, the SaskPower workers and SaskPower were very close — within a part of a percentage point — of coming to an agreement and your cabinet legislated them back to work.

So why are you going through the charade of letting SAHO waste time and money bargaining with the health care workers when, if they won't accept your cap, you're going to legislate them back to work? Why don't you just tell us now that you're going to legislate them back to work?

They're negotiating in good faith, Madam Minister. And how are you ever going to attract any other health care workers to this province with that kind of an attitude? Can you tell this House today that you have some latitude from your cabinet, if they will not settle for this, if we cannot attract health care workers back to this province, to move away from your cap — the cap that's been imposed on health workers in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think the member opposite heard the answer to his question.

What I said is that the nurses have not yet begun to bargain their next collective agreement with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations. The collective agreement does not end until the end of March, 1999.

What I can tell the member is that we expect the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, as well as CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees), SEIU (Services Employees International Union), and the health services association to arrive at mutually acceptable collective agreements with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Madam Minister, SaskPower workers were at the table for 10 or 12 months and you saw what happened to them. So again, what's the use of the charade with SAHO wasting their time and energy when you're going to impose a settlement?

Maybe your money's all being spent. I raised that yesterday about a public administrator in Rosetown that were getting paid \$800 a day . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . or Kindersley, I'm sorry.

Your answer to the media was that it's maybe only one day or two days a week, Madam Minister. Do you realize that \$800 dollars a day, four days a month, is \$3,200?

Madam Minister, can you tell me how many people in Saskatchewan earn \$3,200 a month working for our local co-op, our local grocery stores, across the province? Can you tell us, Madam Minister, what you're doing with that public administrator and why you appointed a patronage appointment to do that at \$800 a frigging day?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well what I'd like to say to the member is that in July of 1998, I understand that the Government of Saskatchewan through the Department of Health was advised that the board of directors of the Heritage Manor were no longer prepared to sit on the board of directors.

Now the Heritage Manor is attached to the Kindersley hospital. What I can say to the member is that we appointed, we appointed . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — But what I can say to the member is that the public administrator was appointed. The public administrator comes to Kindersley from his home close to Lloydminster one day a week to oversee the operation of this 80-bed long-term care facility. What I can also tell the member is that on November 1 of 1998 the health district in that area will take over the operations of the long-term nursing home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Supplements for Low Income Self-Employed People

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Social Services. This year, Mr. Minister, your government introduced several new programs aimed at helping low-income families or, as your government has said, building independence and investing in families.

The employment supplement program is one of those programs designed to provide a monthly payment in order to supplement income earned by lower income parents. However, Mr. Minister, for self-employed people, their income is deemed by this provincial government to be 40 per cent of their gross business income reported to Revenue Canada, not the family income as reported to Revenue Canada by which the federal child tax benefit is calculated.

Mr. Minister, this leaves a lot of people out in the cold. These rules for self-employed people do not help build independence and they discourage people from becoming self-employed or independent.

Will your government do the fair thing and apply the same criteria to the employment supplement program which is used to determine the federal child tax benefit?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question.

The intent of the programs that were put in place earlier this year is to encourage independence on the part of those who would otherwise be trapped on welfare and we want to encourage that in a positive way as opposed to punitive ways that are employed in other provinces.

The member makes an excellent suggestion. We'll take that question and look at it and see what we can do with that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Bus Passes for Saskatoon Students

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question this afternoon will be for the Minister of Education. A situation in Saskatoon is dividing our community. The Saskatoon Board of Education made a decision to give free bus passes to a small number of high school students in one area of our city. However, there are hundreds of high school students living on the west side of Saskatoon who also take city buses to east-side high schools because they cannot be accommodated closer to home. Parents and students, Mr. Minister, are calling my office about this seeming inequity that's taking place.

And my question for you this afternoon is related to the following. These parents have no entitlement to request a review nor is there any appeal mechanism available under the terms of the education Act with which they may request the board of education to seriously deal with their concerns. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only way they can get their concerns addressed is through the media.

My question is for you, sir, when is the education Act going to recognize the need for appeal processes?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — To the member opposite, first I want to say to you that I've had an opportunity to look at the issue that you're addressing this afternoon and I've had an opportunity to discuss it with my administration.

As you well know the responsibilities as it relates to transportation — decisions as to where schools are established within jurisdictions — are really with the school board. And as you know in our discussions with the school division and with the director of education, our view is that into the future that decision will be made at the local level. And at that point our department, through the grant process, will attempt to make available resources to address the issue as it relates to transportation to people in those areas.

As the Department of Education Act makes its way into the future, into this Assembly, we're going to be examining the question that you've raised which are the appeal processes and to see whether or not we can implement or institute the legislation that will address, on occasion, those kinds of issues that you are putting forward today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Osika: — With leave to move a motion with respect to a member on a committee that was missed yesterday.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Substitution of Member on Non-Controversial Bills Committee

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's been a change. It's not a new one. It's been a change. It wasn't missed. Moved:

That the name of Mr. Jack Hillson be added to the list of members composing the Standing Committee on Non-controversial Bills.

Seconded by the member from North Battleford. I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

House Adjournment

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I move, seconded by the member for Regina Victoria:

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's with great interest that we stand here on day no. 3 since being recalled to deal with what the government indicated was one specific point of business.

Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look at the orders of the day for today and I see one motion. I see one motion instead of a number of issues that this government should be bringing forward.

The official opposition for a number of years now has asked this government to have a regular fall sitting whereby we can discuss the issues that are relevant to the people of Saskatchewan. The concerns over health care; the concerns over highways; the concerns in the agricultural industry; the concerns in education. All of those are very near and dear to people in Saskatchewan.

And we thought that the chance had finally been arrived at, that indeed this Premier was going to ensure that we would spend a number of days talking about issues, dealing with even potential legislation that this government could bring forward to ensure that things proceed in a positive fashion.

But we didn't, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What we got was one motion to ensure that this House closes. And I want to point out to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this motion was introduced at the conclusion of approximately five or six hours of debate on Monday of this week. That this motion was the first motion that the government put forward after dealing with the labour dispute.

That motion was not agreed to by the opposition because we said there was much more to discuss; there was much more to be concerned about.

And yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after the Saskatchewan Party official opposition put forward a motion in the morning that says there is a lot of concern in the area of agriculture — we have impending problems for farmers, we have situations where land may be lost because farmers cannot handle the burden of the high input costs and the tremendously low commodity prices — after some debate in the morning, we noted that the government came forward with an emergency motion that said we should lobby the federal government to ensure that those concerns are addressed.

How ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that on Friday last the Minister of Agriculture said there was no need to declare this a crisis. There was no need for an emergency debate. That indeed the kind of discussions that were occurring between the Minister of Agriculture here in Saskatchewan and the federal Minister of Agriculture were going quite well. Farmers didn't have anything to worry about.

Yet on Tuesday of this week, we see that the government has already indicated that agriculture is a concern, that indeed we have to lobby the federal government to ensure that the issues are raised.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think yesterday's debate showed very clearly that there are concerns in the province of Saskatchewan, and it's not necessarily the concerns with the entire agricultural industry. I think what it is, is the understanding of how things work in agriculture.

Those of us from rural constituencies talk on a regular basis with farmers and those people involved in agriculture. And they know what is meant by input costs, fertilizer costs, chemical costs, crop insurance costs, hail insurance contracts that need to be purchased, the costs of fuel — all those kinds of input.

But on the other side when I talk to some of my relatives, friends, that live in urban communities, that haven't grown up on a farm, there is a need to ensure that those people also understand.

And, Mr. Speaker, I didn't have the opportunity to speak yesterday because there were a number of my colleagues on both sides of the House who spoke very well about the issues in agriculture and what needs to be done. But I want to indicate a very simple example. And I've used this example with many of my friends in Saskatchewan who are more urban in nature.

What we want to look at in agriculture is not necessarily the yield per acre, or necessarily what the farmer has combined, what we need to do is look at the entire picture. When a farmer

looks at revenue versus expenditures, there is a need of course not just to balance revenue and expenditures, but indeed to make a profit because that is the farmer's salary. That is the difference that occurs between revenue and expenditures.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and many farmers . . . for many farmers that I've talked to in my constituency, there is a concern this year that that will not balance, and in fact expenditures will exceed revenue. And I want to give a simple example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a real example of a farmer who has come to my office and said to me, this is the situation I'm facing.

There was a difficulty this spring, of course, with the early drought that we had in the province — May — and I believe it wasn't until about June 17 or 18 that we saw our first rainfall and indeed that there was germination. But already crops had been severely affected. And those that did germinate and came up, the yields weren't great. They weren't a total loss, but they weren't great.

In many instances we see 40 bushel an acre barley crop, and I might add feed barley, not malting barley. So when we start to look at 40 bushels an acre yield, people who hear that number say, wow, you know that's a great yield; the farmer is doing well, he's received 40 bushels an acre barley.

But let's take a little closer look. The Farm Debt Review Board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who I'm sure as being involved in agriculture, many people in this province understand that the Farm Debt Review Board travels around the province dealing with situations whereby the farmers have developed the problem. In this one instance, the Farm Debt Review Board, in my constituency, has looked at input costs and has indicated that the input costs range between 85 and \$125 per acre.

Now what does that mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, to apply the fertilizer, the cost of the fertilizer, to put the seed in, the treatments that are required to the seed, the chemicals necessary to combat . . . the pesticides necessary to combat weeds and/or insects if we're talking about canola and others like that; as I indicated, crop insurance that I'm sure most farmers would be willing to purchase if they could afford it; hail insurance — we have a lot of areas in the province that are subject to tremendous hail storms. All of these costs including the fuel, including the combining, the swathing, range 85 to \$125 dollars per acre.

Now, let's get back to the example of 40 bushel an acre barley. We're looking at a return right now in the elevator of some dollar per bushel. It has increased slightly. When we look at a dollar per bushel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the return on an acre then in the revenue column is \$40 per acre. That same farmer has just had expenses and we'll use the low end, let's just say it's \$85 per acre according to the Farm Debt Review Board. That farmer is in the hole \$45 per acre.

Well, you know, the simple example would be for someone who doesn't understand this would be, don't grow any more acres. The less acres you grow, the less you'll go in debt. I think that's the situation facing hog farmers right now. Hog farmers are enduring a cost of production to provide pork for you and me to eat and in the end it's actually costing them money to produce the hogs. The simply answer is, don't produce any

hogs, you know, and you'll save yourself money.

Well that's not reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Reality is those farmers are out there working. They're putting in long days all through the growing season, and in the end all they want is a fair return — a fair return, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is no need for the brown envelopes as my colleague from Saltcoats ended yesterday . . . indicated yesterday because that's a thing of the past. What we need to look at is to ensure that prices, the product paid to the farmer is adequate, adequate to cover the costs.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can travel from one end of this province to the other, and you will find out that in many cases this year there is a shortage. There is a situation where expenses exceed revenue and indeed farmers who have looked at capital purchases and trying to balance at the bank won't, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this government does very little about it. We have no legislation before us, we have no ideas from this government on how we're going to deal with this other than to adjourn the House today.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we take a look at a farmer's costs, and we take a look at what farmers need to do, transportation is of course the major issue. And I'm sure my colleagues across the floor who are involved in agriculture know that transportation is a key issue, that we need to look for a plan of how we're going to address this.

As a representative coming from the eastern side of the province, that area of the province experiences the highest transportation costs in all of Saskatchewan. Whether we're shipping the grain to Vancouver or to Prince Rupert or whether those commodities are being shipped to Montreal, we have some of the highest costs in that area.

The alternative that farmers have looked at in that area is the Churchill or the Hudson Bay Route Association. And there's a need to look at different systems because what is crucial is that farmers have to have a fair return for their output. They can't be forced to take losses year after year.

As the Minister of Finance indicated in the spring, it's critical that we have a large tax base, that we have the people. And what will occur, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province if the agriculture sector continues to go the way it is, is we're going to see a loss of a lot of farmers.

We're going to see situations which already exist in the constituency of Canora-Pelly whereby financial institutions who have taken over the land cannot even find a renter for the cost of taxes. There is land that is remaining fallow right now because financial institutions cannot find a farmer to actually cultivate and operate that land. That is what is occurring in rural Saskatchewan.

And what we need to do is to cohesively and very co-operatively develop a plan with the federal government to ensure that our farmers are on an equal playing field.

Farmers in Ontario can take their milling grain directly to a flour mill and sell it to a flour mill and in that way obtain a price of \$7 a bushel; Saskatchewan — you can't do that. If, if,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we had a pasta plant in Saskatchewan, you know that durum farmers couldn't even deliver their grain directly to that pasta plant.

And I think changes have to be made. And I think it's up to government to look at leadership in those areas, trying to do what is necessary.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I took a look at the list of Bills in second reading and I was wondering why government didn't take this opportunity to debate some of those Bills, to look at the ideas that have been proposed in these Bills. I'm just going to mention a few, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1430)

Bill No. 209, Bill No. 209, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 1998, also referred to as The Health Care System Review . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . My colleague from Saskatoon Fairview indicates that this is an old idea. Well you know it's not an old idea.

Right now in eastern Canada that's exactly what is being called for right across Canada. We spend \$1.72 billion on health care — tremendous amount of money. Nobody disputes that. But are we spending it wisely? Are we ensuring that what we are actually doing in the province of Saskatchewan is the correct thing to do? Well the only way we're going to do that is to have a review of the health system in Saskatchewan, and that is what is being called for in every province.

So for us to sit here today and say, well it's time to adjourn, we've dealt with the issue on SaskPower — you can't do that. You have to look at the whole review process. And I think it was time for this government to actually take a good close look at that.

Last year we debated, we debated health reform, we debated health reform . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Must have touched a nerve over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because what we . . . I mean this government knows clearly that health care is an issue to everyone. We talked about closure. We saw the kinds of rallies that have occurred. People want to be assured that there is a bed at the end of the day.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this past summer I had a personal occurrence happen to me. I was in the Yorkton regional hospital as it's called. And I was there on one evening in the intensive care unit as a visitor, and I watched the nurses scrambling because for that particular night they had to decide how they would cut back from six intensive care beds down to four; not because they wanted to, but because there was no staff to operate those six intensive care units.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know I've discussed that issue with the chairman of the East Central Health Board. I've discussed that issue with the CEO (chief executive officer) and the chairman as well. And there's been assurances that that will not happen again, that there will not be that tremendous pressure put on staff.

But as indicated today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are reaching a critical point in health care. We don't have nurses; we don't

have nurses that can actually be there. And we need to ensure that that is what is actually in place, that people feel confident that our health care system is going to be there for them.

This government is not providing the leadership. What does this government do? They are going to close the Plains Health Centre effective October 30. I think we could be doing much, much more. I don't think we should be adjourning today. I think we should be discussing the kinds of things that are relevant to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Chair, or Deputy Speaker, I'd like to also refer to Bill No. 201, The Crown Corporations Disclosure Act, 1998 — the ability for the Crowns to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what's going on. The auditor has recommended it. Forty per cent of this province's economy is in the hands of Crowns, and yet there is no mechanisms to ensure that there's adequate reporting; that there is indeed control by this legislature of the Crowns.

We're proposing that, and I think government members would support that because that is a need that has been addressed for years and years and years — long before I became a member and I'm sure long before some of my colleagues have become members here.

There is a need to address the Crown situation and to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan know what the Crowns are doing and why they're doing it. I think we should be dealing with that today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or tomorrow or on Friday, not adjourning this House. I think those are issues that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan want us to deal with.

Bill No. 202, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 1998 (Foreign Investment Prohibition). You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was one of the main concerns that people raised about Crown corporations over the past six to eight months with me. They indicated to me: I live on one side of the road and the rural underground development program did things for my neighbour on the other side of the road — three years ago, four years ago, when that program was in place. And yet it was cancelled by this government because they said there was going to be a shortage of money.

On the other side of the story they looked at a country of Guyana and said well . . . there was a need to look at, I believe it was a \$34 million expenditure into the country of Guyana. And I'll tell you, people in Saskatchewan cannot understand that, how the Crown corporation could abandon its own people where people would be forced to be subjected to power outages, power interruptions, plus even a safety concern.

We still hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of deaths being caused by electrocution because in their haste, a farmer fails to lower a grain auger and touches a power supply line and thus is electrocuted. That could be eliminated if the rural underground development project continued.

This Bill says, no more \$34 million for Guyana if indeed we should be investing in the province of Saskatchewan. Is that what the Crown is for . . . for ensuring that there is services provided to the people in Saskatchewan? I think that's exactly what they're for. People feel cheated on this one. They know

that there was a program in place that dealt with people to a certain degree, and then they feel abandoned because that is what has happened.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill No. 205 says The Crown Corporations Rate Review Act, 1998. Well, perfect example of that. We debated this in question period already for the last couple of days.

What about the SaskEnergy rate increase? Is it valid? Is it not valid? Is the 12 or almost 13 per cent increase in the price of gas, is that acceptable? But we'll never know that.

We in Saskatchewan are the only jurisdiction that doesn't have a rate review commission, an independent rate review commission that can say, yes, it's acceptable because these are the things that have occurred in the industry; or no, it's not acceptable because you're still making huge amounts of profits.

It's tough to say to people in the province, to say, well we're going to up your rates, but on the other side we're now going to look at an extra 10 or 20 or \$30 million profit. People can't . . . people don't accept that. And I think what this Bill is asking for is that we take a look at that and implement something that is being used throughout Saskatchewan.

We don't need to close this House today. We need to deal with these kinds of issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Bill No. 211, The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1998 (Block Funding). I've heard from meeting with many people in the health care field that every part of the province is a little different than the next part of the province, and I agree with them.

I think that's true in health care; I think that's true in education; it's definitely true in agriculture; it's true in the resource sector. We know that there are gas and oil fields located near Kindersley but there probably never will be any discovered in the Canora-Pelly constituency if you look at geographical maps. That's a given.

So as a result of that, how can we in health care expect that that large amount of money that's given to health district boards has to be allocated according to the formula right across this province? It doesn't make sense.

What should be done is that a block amount of money that currently this government decides on is given to a district board, and the district board addresses its needs and its concerns and in that way spends its money wisely. That's the kind of thing that is suggested in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I think most importantly, Bill No. 212 is immediately required. And Bill No. 212 says . . . It's called The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1998 (Fully Elected Health Boards).

School boards have the ability to raise their own money through a local tax, through property tax, and they receive grant money from the government. But they are fully elected health boards . . . fully elected school boards. They are responsible to the taxpayer that elects them.

That's what we require in health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because if we have fully elected health boards with block funding, they can assess the needs of their health district, the needs of all of their communities, the needs of the individual people, and spend their money accordingly. That's what is needed in this Assembly and I think that's what this Assembly should be dealing with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another Bill, Bill No. 210, The Saskatchewan Health Ombudsman Act. How many times did we have last year during the session, during the 1998 spring session, did we hear from people in this province about individual problems in health care? —where that there was a situation where a CAT scan couldn't be obtained for six months or an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) was postponed for months and months, that there wasn't adequate addressing of a cancer problem.

Those are the situations that we need to have addressed. Who can address them? The legislature? Well I think we listened to the former minister of Health last year talk about issues and say well it was the district boards' responsibility. Well, overall when we know that there is interaction between district boards — that people in Canora-Pelly require some health services in Yorkton, and they require other health services in Regina and Saskatoon. If they encounter problems, who is best to deal with those problems? But clearly we believe it to be a health ombudsman.

And I think that that's something that this government should take under advisement and move very quickly to ensure that the issues, the critical issues to people that are very dear to them — I don't think we understand what really goes through people's minds unless we actually are personally involved.

And I know the example that I gave about the Yorkton regional hospital in dealing with those intensive care patients was something I wouldn't understand unless I was actually there and watched and watched those nurses literally to the point of tears, having to determine which two patients out of six had to be put back on the ward for the day and the night until they had enough staff to meet that. Tremendous pressure on those families and that's unacceptable to the people of Saskatchewan. That's why we need a health ombudsman.

Bill No. 220, Mr. Deputy Speaker, says The Trade Union Amendment Act (Repealing Successor Rights). I want to raise that one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think clearly, in the Canora-Pelly constituency and all across Saskatchewan, we're talking about rail line abandonment. The railway companies are looking at short-line rail lines and saying we don't want them any more. They don't fit into our scheme.

I think what we have to do is ensure that business groups, communities, individuals, have the ability to form their own railway company, take over a short-line. And this Bill that would eliminate successor rights and put everybody on a level playing field could do that. It could allow opportunities to become real in the province of Saskatchewan. That's what we need to do. And the current legislation does not allow that.

We have difficulties in the province of Saskatchewan with rail line abandonment. When we also look at rail line abandonment,

Mr. Speaker, it's with interest that I noted the comments by the Minister of Agriculture yesterday on transportation and elevator location.

We just witnessed in this province a huge announcement by one of the major corporations in this province. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool had said that they were going to be closing some 235 grain elevators in about 170 communities that were going to be affected. Tremendous pressure on those communities that now are looking at the real possibility that that grain elevator is lost.

What it means, well, I think what we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is immediately there is a burden on our transportation system. I'm not referring to the rail any longer. I'm now talking about the road system. Because the grain that has been coming to that local elevator, and many of these elevators have been handling nearly a million bushels of grain in a fiscal year. A million bushels. Now they're going to be closed. Well that million bushels has to continue on the roadways to some other location, 25, 30, 35 miles away. That's the first pressure.

The second pressure is actually on the community that had the elevator. And I want to mention one little community in my constituency, the community of Veregin. Veregin lost its elevator and it's closed. As a result, they lost a tremendous amount of their tax assessment base.

Taxation in Veregin for the other people, if those services and costs are to be maintained, have to be picked up by every other individual. Tremendous burden now on the taxpayers living in that community to absorb the cost and the revenue that came from the elevator company.

(1445)

So elevator closures are not just a simple matter of saying, well we're moving ahead towards the 21st century and we have to look at a better system of transportation and we have to look at more grain efficiencies because there is a price to pay. The price is in the communities, the rural communities that will be abandoned.

There is a price. And what we have to look at is to ensure that any options, any options that are possibly there, those of farmers, those of communities, those of businesses to either save the elevator and become a grain handling facility for someone else, to ensure that the rail line can become a short rail line and used by someone else, those are necessary. And I would have hoped that this government would have provided some leadership on that in this short session that we have before us.

One of the other two Bills that I'd like to mention is Bill No. 207. This Bill is called The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act. In other words, the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) as it was commonly known.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure what's happening in this. Because if you recall, not only here in the House but I believe outside the House, the former minister of Labour made some comments about the possibility that an agreement was near, and I think he even indicated that within a week we were

going to see the end of the CCTA. I know there was articles in the newspapers that said that. And here we sit in October, that no changes have been made.

Saskatchewan taxpayers still are paying higher rates than necessary because this piece of legislation still exists. It would have been a great opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have dealt with that legislation today or tomorrow or the next day — a chance for that piece of legislation to be debated. And if indeed the former minister was correct and that this was going to be ended, that there was going to be an agreement to replace it, we could have had that placed before the people of Saskatchewan. But it's not on the order paper.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many, many Bills that are listed on the orders of the day — things that could be dealt with, things that the Saskatchewan people need to have dealt with. And this government chooses not to do so in this short session. They wanted to end this session on Monday evening instead of looking at the concerns that we have before us.

Today in question period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I raised the issue about a potential strike facing regional colleges. That is real. We have talked to many, many students; we've talked to many parents; and we've in fact had some comments from people who are involved right in the dispute, people who belong to CUPE. And they have indicated that this is an old problem, that this is something that this government has been facing for a number of months, in fact years, and it's done nothing about it.

There was a promise made last spring, or so we're told. What we need to hear from the Minister of Education is indeed, was there a promise? Was there a situation in place in the spring where strike action was imminent? Here we sit in October and students have been given a letter.

And I want to raise one piece of information, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a letter to a lady in Pelly, Saskatchewan. It says:

Dear Student: Thank you for your letter expressing concern over the possibility of strike action by regional college employees. It is my understanding that regional college management and union have not yet begun their negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement. It is therefore premature to anticipate problems.

I thought I heard the minister indicate to this House today that bargaining was proceeding . . . I believe he used the expression very, very well. This letter is signed by the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and he's indicating to this student that negotiations have not yet begun. Now what's the . . .

An Hon. Member: — What's the date?

Mr. Krawetz: — The date of this letter is October 13, 1998.

An Hon. Member: — Two weeks ago.

Mr. Krawetz: — Yes, just two weeks ago he's indicated that bargaining hadn't started; going very, very well I might add today in the House. When I spoke to one of his officials on

Saturday morning while at the University of Regina installation of its new president, that official said to me that the negotiations were reaching a very critical stage, that indeed he hoped that there would be some resolve this week because it was becoming critical.

Yesterday we found out that negotiations actually ended on Friday when the union indicated to management that they had a strike vote conducted and the results of the vote said proceed with strike action if necessary.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we're at a stage where negotiations are dreadful. They aren't going on anymore. They are over with. Students, like this lady in Pelly are concerned that the classes that they're taking are going to end because there's going to be a strike action.

Now the power dispute resulted in back-to-work legislation. Well, while power is very, very important to everyone — no question about it; heat is required as we come into the winter months — but a person's education, something to this particular individual, is also very, very important. They want to be assured that this minister: first of all, knows what the problem is; is able to recognize that we're dealing with something that occurred last May; thirdly, that there is a new contract that is being negotiated; and fourthly, that there is some guarantee that indeed that the education of that particular individual is not going to get messed up.

That's all these students are wanting. They want some leadership from government to say, yes, we're going to ensure that there is, you know, the possibility that if there is a disruption, we have in place a plan that's not going to jeopardize your education. That's what's critical to these people. That's what they needed to see from this government this week. And they didn't get to see it.

You know, I guess, the Minister of Education, the newly-appointed Minister of Education, has to address some concerns as well. The member from Yorkton who last year faced an ominous task being the minister of Health, and I'm sure he had a big smile on his face today when the new Minister of Health fielded questions and he had a chance to sit back and say, my gosh, I guess I'm glad I'm not in that position any more.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he's in a new position, and I think he has to address something that is very, very critical. But I guess since he hasn't put forth any new ideas for this session, maybe it's time that I raised them now with him so that he can look at them with his colleagues and look at them with all the partners of education and address some of the concerns that are being raised by these people.

Eight years ago, eight years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a concern in this province about distance education. How were we going to provide a quality education to schools that were becoming smaller, but because of geography, because of the distances to another school, you can't just close them? They're going to stay open. They're going to stay open all the time.

Well, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were meetings that took place with the vice-presidents of SaskTel. And those

people indicated very clearly that distance education was the way to go. It was the thing of the future.

School Division of Eston-Elrose — and I want to raise that one example Eston-Elrose — has within its own system right now a tremendous distance education program. There are teachers who teach in the community, I believe, of Kyle, and have their own classes in two other communities at the same time, through something referred to as picture tel. That was leading edge technology.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing much more has happened since those conversations with SaskTel eight years ago. We haven't moved forward in distance education.

A good example is right in the minister's home constituency of Yorkton. People in the community of Theodore last year were petitioning the then minister of Education to allow for the Yorkton Regional to have distance education in place and thus provide classes to the minister's home community of Theodore. Tremendous example.

I think not only could Theodore have taken advantage of that, but many other towns more than 35 miles away from that. So they were looking at a possibility of recognizing what is occurring. But we don't have those things in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now I think the government has to provide some leadership because you know what's going to happen? There's going to be continued school closures unless this government addresses the concerns. School boards will have no alternative but to discontinue grades, which is exactly what happened in the Yorkdale School Division. That board made a decision to discontinue grades 10, 11, and 12 because of economics — because of economics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not because this government provided any other alternatives.

This government should be providing alternatives. If distance education was provided without huge costs to the Yorkdale board, maybe they would have continued allowing grades 10, 11, and 12 to exist in the community of Theodore for another year or two or three. But they didn't. Because there is no alternative.

You know, I think what we have to look at also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that the Minister of Education has received letters on the small schools factor. The small schools factor is a contentious issue right now. The letters that are coming from boards of education are indicating to the minister to look at this situation, to address this.

And I'm sure the minister recognizes that there is a bit of a problem in that area. And I think we have to look at that. Because you know, Mr. Minister, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, right now the small schools factor is determined by comparing one building to another building. It doesn't have anything to do with the actual program that is delivered in the school.

And for those people who are not closely attached to rural communities, because in the cities those kinds of . . . in urban communities those kinds of things don't occur. The example I want to use is that in small communities a factor is issued in

calculating the kind of grant that a school board will receive based on the number of students in a grade. And as that number falls below 20, there is an allotment of a per dollar figure for each student in each of those grades. And I'm referring to kindergarten to grade 12.

The regulations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, break it up into three categories — an elementary category, a middle category, and a secondary category. And each is different, based on the distance to the next building.

Well that's very confusing for people, and I think it's a situation that Theodore people could not understand. Their school, which was a K to 12 school, the small schools factor for grades 10, 11, and 12 was determined by, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the communities of Springside and Sheho — Springside school, K to 6.

Now you tell me, what does a K to 12 program in Theodore, grades 10, 11, and 12, what does the grant payable for those 10, 11, and 12 have to do with the school in Springside? You know, that's a situation that this minister has to address.

And there are concerns raised by boards of education right across. We have to compare programs to programs. The former minister of Education in fact indicated that that was a concern and that she was going to be looking at it with her officials. Well she's no longer the minister of Education, and I would hope that this Minister of Education would take a good look at it.

What is required? We need to compare program to program . . . simple! This formula was a good formula if all schools were kindergarten to grade 12, because then you're comparing a building that has K to 12 to a building that has K to 12.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, across Saskatchewan now the configurations are many. We have K to 3 schools, we have K to 6 schools, we have K to 8 schools; there are kindergarten to grade 12 schools, there are grade 7 to 12 schools in the same small town as maybe a kindergarten to grade 6 school. The minister now has to look at that and say what's fair? What's fair for the students and for the parents in those communities? Those are concerns.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Education is proving how little he understands, how little he understands about the education program. The board of education, the board of education has nothing to do with the regulations. The government set the regulations. The government is the one who imposed those regulations and now they've indicated that the board has to live by the regulations that are not fair, that are not fair.

So what I'm asking, what boards of education are asking this minister, is to sit down with his officials, take a look at the existing regulations, and recognize whether or not there is a problem. If there is a problem, will the minister fix it? If there is no problem, explain to the communities how the current regulations best fit their needs. That's all that's being asked for by boards of education.

(1500)

You know and, if the minister doesn't have the letters, I can easily fax them to him. I'm very sorry to hear the minister chirping today because this is a serious issue in rural Saskatchewan. And I guess it's about as serious as the comments made by the minister in health care when he was the minister and he didn't care about health care and he probably doesn't care about education either. So I think boards of education have to be prepared for what this minister might be up to.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been involved in education for a long time. I've served as a teacher for 11 years and I've been on the school board for 9 years; and in all instances what you try to look at is what is fair for the students, what is best for the education of individuals. And I think that's what people in this province are asking for. They feel right now that the property tax has become a burden; that indeed the former 60 per cent funding by government and 40 per cent from the local taxpayer has become completely reversed and 40 per cent only comes from this government. And they feel that that is an excessive burden on each and every individual and they want this government to look at that.

What is the long-term plan of this government? That's what we expected to see this session, Mr. Deputy Speaker — some planning, some looking forward. Some ideas, some fresh ideas on how we could deal with problems that are facing Saskatchewan presently. But we didn't see that yet. And what we want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is for this government to come forward with some plans. They have the opportunity to do that today. They have the opportunity . . . had the opportunity to do that today; they have the opportunity to do that tomorrow.

We would like to see some honest, real legislation from this government that deals with problems, and there is no way that I can support that motion that ends this current sitting of the House. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Deputy Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to address this motion.

It's most unfortunate that the government believes that there is nothing that needs to be done by the legislators of Saskatchewan; there is nothing left to be done this year that requires the attention of this Assembly.

You know we've called for fall sittings for the last seven or eight years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we believe that there is a need in this province for people to have the opportunity to address their MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), their representatives, and have those concerns heard and acted upon in this legislature when they're most pertinent. But that doesn't seem to be the interest of the government.

Now it's a lot easier to govern when you're outside of this Assembly than it is when you're in the Assembly. Because there's a lot less opportunities for people to ask you questions — pointed questions, questions that may question the motives and the actions you're taking. And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that it's not the time to adjourn this

Assembly, that there is a lot of issues that still need to be addressed by the members of this Assembly.

And perhaps part of the motion that we were originally brought into this Assembly to address — the back-to-work legislation for the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) workers — should have included a small clause in there to say, Saskatchewan members of the Legislative Assembly should be sitting in their desks in the fall addressing the issues facing Saskatchewan. I believe that would have been a very worthwhile addition to that Act.

Now it would seem though that the members opposite, including the Premier, have no interest in that. We've had three fall sittings up until this date. 1991, right after the NDP Party had won government, they called a fall session to start their programs to put their people in place and that's understandable. Every party would have done the same thing.

But from that time on, from 1991 until 1997, there was no fall sitting. But last year the Premier had a special concern. The Premier wants to go down in history for his interventions in the Canadian constitution. Well we saw his intervention in 1980 and '81 with the kitchen debacle that set out our constitution, allowed Prime Minister Trudeau to repatriate the constitution, which has led in turn to a lot of the problems we have had in our discussions with Quebec.

But the Premier wanted to be known as the great statesman, as the person who first got the Calgary accord passed through his province's legislature. It didn't happen, but that's what he had hoped to do. And for that reason we had a fall session, a fall session in which we discussed more things than just the constitution.

We discussed those things in spite of the Premier and his wishes and the wishes of the government members, not because they wanted them to be heard. We did that in spite of them, not with them.

The same applies this year in 1998. The people in Saskatchewan are having an opportunity to have some of the issues they bring forward talked about in this House. And that's happening not because of the co-operation and the desire of the government to participate in that, but rather in spite of the government.

The Government House Leader on Monday stood in this House and presented the motion that we're debating today and tried to end the session on Monday night. Didn't want to hear about all the other issues facing Saskatchewan, including the issue that the government brought forward yesterday, the emergency motion on agriculture.

It's really surprising and interesting how on Monday night there was no crisis in agriculture. And yet when we brought forward on Tuesday morning that we were going to present an emergency motion on agriculture, the Minister of Agriculture quickly rushed out and discovered that there was a crisis in agriculture and therefore it needed to be debated, because the government members had to be in the House yesterday to debate issues because they couldn't get passed their motion to adjourn, to recess the Assembly. But today we're here debating

that particular issue.

What are some of the issues though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that need to be talked about in this Assembly? Some of the things like highways. You know, I brought up the question today about how terrible the highways are in Saskatchewan, which one is the worst highway in Saskatchewan. Everyone who has driven around Saskatchewan knows that there's a good many bad highways.

And there are, there are a few good highways though. There are a few good ones. You drive north out of Regina here, you will find a very good highway through an NDP constituency — very good highway.

You know, you look at some of the highways . . . the minister talks about highway construction. In her own constituency, going north from Weyburn there is some construction going on. But it's surprising how it ends right at the boundary of the next constituency.

You know I don't know what the minister for SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) did to make the Minister of Highways mad . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Order. Order! Now certainly members will all have an opportunity to engage in this debate. At the moment the hon. member for Cannington has the floor and I invite him to continue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It shows that there is a lot of interest in the highways . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Now the Deputy Speaker has not been in his chair for three seconds. The hon. member for Cannington has the floor and I encourage all members to allow the hon. member to continue in his debate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It goes to show that there is certainly some interest in the highways or lack of highways in this province and that the government members are extremely sensitive about the highways in their constituencies as well as across this province.

As I was starting to say earlier, it's interesting though that the construction of highways in the minister's home constituency comes right up to a border and ends. Now I don't know what the minister for SERM, the member for Indian Head Wolseley did to make the minister unhappy that she didn't carry on with that construction into his constituency, because that was actually the worst part of the highway. But it stops just at the border of the minister's constituency. So I think maybe the other minister needs to talk to the Minister of Highways to get some of that fixed up.

There are a lot of other highways, Mr. Minister, that are equally bad or even worse shape because the road that the minister was fixing wasn't all that bad, which reminds me of another road which wasn't all that bad but did get some work this summer. Highway 33, south-east from Regina is a pretty good road, Mr. Speaker. I would be proud to have that in my constituency.

And unfortunately, or fortunately for the people who live in the

area, the minister was fixing that highway again. Not a lot of holes in it. The fact is there were no holes in it but the Highways department is out there fixing up the road through the member for Regina Qu'Appelle's constituency.

Now there are some highways though, Mr. Speaker, that do need a lot of work. I had a citizen call me concerning No. 8 Highway north of MacNutt. Now I'm not sure which constituency MacNutt is in. It might be the Minister of Education's but it's up in that area . . . and my colleagues say to the member from Saltcoats constituency.

This person phoned in and said the Highways department is going to do some work on our road, on our highway. What they're going to do is they're going to cut a foot and a half to two feet off of either side of the highway and pile it on top because the road is too low . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, it makes the road higher but it certainly makes it a heck of a lot narrower and it didn't have shoulders to start off with, Mr. Speaker. And that's the kind of solution that this government has for rural highways. We'll turn them from low wide roads into narrow high roads. Not any better but they're a different shape.

An Hon. Member: — Not highways just higher roads.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, not highways, just higher roads. On the south end of No. 8, Mr. Speaker, in the Redvers area, the highway is so badly rutted that school buses are in jeopardy driving down the road. They bounce out of these ruts. Especially if there happens to be some rain, the ruts are filled in with water. This is on pavement. This is not gravel; this is not dirt. This is what we call pavement in Saskatchewan with huge ruts in it.

Water can be up to six inches deep standing on the highway in the ruts and when a heavy vehicle hits this they're pulled, they're thrown around, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is threatening the lives of the children in the school buses that drive that road. And Redvers is one of the major communities with one of the larger schools.

In fact it's not just a danger, not just a danger to the children riding in those school buses, but it's going to be a danger to the highway crews this winter when they're out on the road with the trucks and the snowplows pushing snow. What's going to happen when they hit these ruts? Are their blades going to dig in and peel off six inches of supposed asphalt off the centre of these roads? That's a real problem, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — There isn't six inches.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, as my colleague said there isn't six inches. It's a half inch of oil and six inches of clay. What's going to happen when they hit those? Are they going to bounce into the ditch or are they going to bounce across the road and hit the vehicle coming towards them? That's the kind of situation the highways are in in Saskatchewan.

So that's why I brought forward today the idea of having a contest to allow the people of Saskatchewan to express their opinion . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I'm listening to the hon. member for Cannington relate in his speech about the highways of Saskatchewan. I simply wish to remind the member that the motion before the Assembly is:

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

And I simply remind the hon. member to tie the debate into the motion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's the need to keep this House open and that's the fault with that particular motion. We need to keep the House open to discuss issues like the highways and to give people the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to actually start putting in their suggestions as to which is the worst highway in Saskatchewan.

I know you come from out in the Outlook area and once in a while perhaps you drive some of the roads out there. Highway — I believe 15 — I've been over that road and it was pretty poor, a pretty poor road. Now I don't think it's the worst because I believe the worst highways in Saskatchewan are actually in my constituency, Highway 361. That's the worst one in my opinion. But I haven't driven every road in Saskatchewan. But when we get some agreement as to which may be the worst roads in Saskatchewan, I will be out there and inspect those roads.

And again I offer . . . ask the minister if she will be a participant at judging which are the worst roads in Saskatchewan. You know, I know that Highway No. 32 south through Ceylon is a pretty poor road. And perhaps some of her constituents would like to vote that as the worst road in Saskatchewan because it certainly is full of potholes and a danger.

(1515)

You know you wonder why the American farmers are outraged about Saskatchewan products going south. I think it's amazing that Saskatchewan products actually get to the border rather than cross the border. It's amazing that we're able to get trucks from anywhere in Saskatchewan to the U.S. border with the condition of our roads. So I think they should actually be giving medals to those truck drivers who brave these roads and survive to get their products to the U.S., border — not to criticize them, not to vilify them but to honour them for being brave enough to support the economy of Saskatchewan by taking their life in their hands to actually haul a load of cattle or grain to the U.S. border.

The minister has made commitments over the past that there is going to be \$250 million a year, \$2.5 billion of commitment to highways in 10 years. But the member, the minister makes the commitment but she never follows through with it. And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must keep this House open. That's why the motion presented by the Government House Leader is invalid and why it must be defeated. Because we need that minister to keep her commitment, not just to simply talk about it but rather to stand in her place and said, yes, I will be

providing the \$250 million a year that I promised for highways.

She hasn't done it, and the fact is she's \$82 million behind in her commitment. And the commitment's only three years old. Only three years old and she's already over \$80 million behind.

I know what they're doing. They're making the big promise up front, not spending any money at the beginning . . . hopefully they'll get re-elected. If they don't, they don't have to meet the commitment. If they get re-elected, oh well, it will be like the five-year plans out of Russia. Oops, sorry, that one didn't work; we'll come up with a new one. That's what they're doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They actually have no intentions of ever meeting those commitments but they sure sound good.

And that's why, that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot allow this government motion to pass. Because this minister and most of the other ministers are not keeping their commitments and they need to stand in this House and say why they're not.

The government has . . . is collecting roughly \$450 million a year in fuel taxes and licensing fees — \$450 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they're spending less than half of that on actual highway construction — less than half of that on actual highway construction. And people want to know, what am I paying all this money for on fuel taxes, what am I'm doing paying all this money on fuel taxes when they're not actually building any roads?

People drive around the province of Saskatchewan and it's amazing when you actually find a highway under construction. You go to Alberta, you go to Manitoba, you drive to our neighbours to the south in the U.S., and you always run into road construction someplace.

But that's one of the good things we can advertise about Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Come to Saskatchewan; you'll never be held up in traffic with road construction. It won't happen because there isn't any in Saskatchewan. And our roads prove it.

We do get tourists that come up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They drive across the border and maybe they go up to La Ronge for a holiday and they drive back, and as they cross the border they say, I will never drive those roads again. Never. The fact is they've even had signs up in some of the truck stops south of the border saying, don't go to Saskatchewan; the roads aren't fit to drive on. And they have pictures of them.

And that's why our tourism suffers. Because these people, like the member from Swift Current, won't support road construction in this province. He's got a good road; drives a double-lane highway from Regina to Swift Current. But what happens when you get past Swift Current? What happens when you want to go south, or you want to go north to Saskatoon? All of a sudden the roads aren't fit to drive on.

But it doesn't bother the member from Swift Current because, other than going to Medicine Hat for his shopping, he doesn't drive to Saskatoon. He doesn't drive south to the U.S. border. And he only drives into Regina to sit in his seat and chirp and collect his paycheque.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need serious road construction, highway construction, in this province. And it's not just highways, it's also our municipal roads. We're seeing rail line abandonments. We're seeing elevator abandonment — Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is abandoning 235 elevators across Saskatchewan.

If you don't think that's going to have a major impact on our roads, you obviously don't understand the agricultural economy. That grain is going to move and it's going to move now in big trucks and those trucks are going to pound our roads to pieces.

And who's paying for that? Well right now it's the property taxpayer in that municipality that's going to pay to fix that road, even though, even though they have not necessarily all the costs related to them.

The elevator in a community can close . . . drives from that community through the neighbouring RM (rural municipality) and onto the inland terminal. The second one is paying the bills, and that second municipality and the people in that small town, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the ones who don't want this House shut down.

They don't believe that this motion should pass today because they want their issue discussed, they want to know that the members opposite and the Minister of Highways and the Premier are hearing what is being said. They want to know that the Minister of Highways is prepared to do something about that added cost — that added damage to the roads. We haven't heard anything out of the Minister of Municipal Affairs about it. They also need to be a part of this. It's not just highways, it's municipalities also.

The members opposite, they also drive on pretty good roads because they drive down from Saskatoon — Saskatoon Northwest — drives down No. 11 Highway. It's a little bumpy in spots but it's not full of holes at least, and they are fixing that road, Mr. Speaker.

It seems that if you have a good number of NDP members living at the far end of the highway you can get your road fixed, but if you live on the fringes of Saskatchewan, forget it; you just don't have enough MLAs driving those roads so they don't get fixed.

Seem to have struck a nerve there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they're a little concerned about this particular issue. They have a real . . . It gets under their bonnet, Mr. Speaker, when I actually point out the truth of these issues.

The road between Regina and Saskatoon is getting some work done on it because there are a large number of MLAs who drive that road, including, including, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Lloydminster. She spends a lot of time on that road driving back and forth, and I'm sure she's been encouraging the Minister of Highways to actually fix that road.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — What is your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I've listened with great interest to the member and lately he's concerning himself with the length of time it takes for the member from Lloydminster to drive to Regina. And that may all be very interesting, but none of it in my view is relevant to the motion that's before us.

What is before us is a substantial motion that speaks to the issue as to the recall of the Legislative Assembly upon adjournment.

And the speaker was previously cautioned by the Chair in this regard to be relevant, yet I don't see that relevance there. I think the speaker has a very clear obligation to tie what he's saying to the motion before us. And the motion before us is very specific, very clear, and certainly doesn't lend itself to the kind of ramblings that we've seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So therefore I would ask you to call the member to order and to ask him that his comments be relevant to the motion. Thank you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just in response to the point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a well-known tradition in this Assembly that when we're debating a motion, that members are to relate to the motion their concerns and address the motion.

And as I've been listening to the members this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members have been following the motion very carefully. And while they've addressed issues of pertinence that are important to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, they have tied those comments directly into the motion and the reasons why this motion is not a motion that one should just take lightly — that there are some very relevant and pertinent issues that need to be addressed regarding the adjournment of this Assembly.

And I think if you look back, and I'm sure Mr. Deputy Speaker has taken that time sitting in the chair to understand the rules of the Assembly, and just point out to the member that there is this long-standing tradition. We are aware of the rules and the motion and I would suggest the members have indeed been following those guidelines.

And I think if we were to look back at tradition, we would find the member from Regina as well knows what the rules are because he has addressed those same kinds of concerns when he's been addressing the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I thank the members for their input into this decision.

I also want to state to the member from Regina Victoria that the motion also not only deals with the recall of the session when it is adjourned, but also about the adjourning at the end of the day and it will stand adjourned.

And I believe . . . I have been listening also as you state that you have . . . the hon. member from Cannington has referred to why he believes that this motion should not pass at this time

and why this House should not adjourn. And I believe he has been relating to the motion. So therefore the point of order I find not relevant.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would also like to thank the member from Regina Victoria for the opportunity to take my seat for a few minutes, collect my thoughts, and come up with some more arguments. So I'd like to thank the member for that opportunity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the \$450 million that this government collects, that's not the only money it's collecting for highways, for fuel taxes, for licensing fees. It also collects a large amount of money from resource extraction and a good portion of that money that they collect is related to traffic on our roads. When you haul a load of oil, when you haul a load of grain, when you haul a load of uranium, it has an impact on our roads. It also has a direct impact on the provincial coffers for the royalties that are collected from that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that is another reason why this House needs to continue sitting and why we cannot agree with the motion to adjourn the House today, to recess this House to some future point down the road at which we all know will be sometime next spring.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are lots of issues that need to be discussed. Those resource revenues that we're collecting which amount to, last year I believe it was in the neighbourhood of 6 to \$700 million, some of those revenues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should be allocated to the maintenance of our infrastructure in this province so that we can continue to extract those resources in an efficient and reliable manner. When you see an oil tank truck stuck in the middle of a highway, Mr. Speaker, because it sank up to its axles in mud, that's not an efficient use.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are some of the examples of why this House must continue to sit, why the government needs to start coming forward with some programs that deal with these issues and not simply try to sweep them under the carpet to silence the opposition and to try and silence the people of Saskatchewan.

I talked about resources. And we've certainly seen a change in the resource industries in the last year in this province. And the government opposite has not yet addressed those revenue changes that have taken place.

(1530)

The fact that oil prices have dropped from \$25 to \$12 and have fluctuated in that 12 to \$14 range ever since the Minister of Finance presented his budget, I think has some clear implications on this province. And the minister has failed to come forward at this time, during this sitting this fall, to explain what the government's doing to protect the people of Saskatchewan from those drops in resource revenues.

Again we need to hear that minister stand on his feet and explain that that's why this House cannot be adjourned today; that's why this session cannot yet be recessed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Finance needs to stand in his place and explain how his budget is possibly going to balance when oil revenues have dropped by 50 per cent; when grain prices have dropped; when durum has gone from \$8 two years ago to \$2 today. How is he possibly going to be able to balance his budget?

It's not just the revenues that are coming in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, though, that we need to discuss here before this House is shut down. We also need to discuss the impacts on employment — the impact it's having on small communities; the impact it's having on people like car dealerships.

I heard of one car dealership that has already in the last couple of weeks taken back a couple of — not a couple . . . eight leased vehicles in the last couple of weeks because they were leased out to people working in the oil industry, working on the drilling rigs. They're not working so they can no longer pay those costs for those leases. That's going to have a very dramatic impact on that car dealership.

And that's the ones that I've heard about. What about all the ones that have turned back their vehicles and yet have been quiet about it, haven't said anything.

Over the last couple to three weeks, my office has been inundated with people who work in the oil patch and who are now looking for unemployment insurance. And I'm sure some of my colleagues who also have oil and gas in their areas are facing the very same situation.

And those that don't have oil and gas have small farm manufacturing — small farm manufacturing that are laying people off. And those communities are in trouble. And this government is not doing a thing to address those issues. They want to rush out of here.

The IBEW workers were prepared to go to work until this government locked them out. These are the guys who don't want to even go to work. They want to shut this House down, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we believe that it's wrong to recess this House. We believe that the motion presented by the Government House Leader today must be defeated. We must be given the opportunity to carry on debating the very important issues that face this province, not simply let the government members sweep it under the rug, put a cone of silence over it, and Merry Christmas!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the shortfall in oil and gas revenues that are taking place right now are affecting the municipalities also. Municipalities are facing more and more traffic on the roads because of the closures of railroads, because of the closures of grain elevators. Their revenues are dropping because of the slump in the resource industries. And yet the people in those areas are expected to pick up the slack and to carry on.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they simply haven't got the money to do this. They are looking to the government to start making up for some of the monies they have withdrawn from the municipal budget. This government has withdrawn millions and millions of dollars from the municipal budgets.

Oh, they promised — what was it? — \$10 million a couple of years ago as 10 per cent of the gambling revenues. And all of a sudden, well we didn't promise you actual cash; we'll pay for some of the programs in your area — we'll pay for 911. And then all of a sudden when 911 started to get implemented, well no, we're not going to pay for that. We're going to tack a dollar on every phone bill to pay for 911.

So at the end of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government weaselled out of their promises to the RMs to give them a share of gambling revenues.

The drop in resource revenues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, isn't affecting just oil and gas. It's also affecting the mining industry. We've seen the Contact Lake gold mine close. Because resource prices were too low, it simply wasn't economical to carry on operating that mine.

Now we have another hundred or so people out of work because of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And yet the government fails to mention that fact. They're not interested in dealing with that fact. They would rather recess this Assembly so that nobody can talk about it, so that the people of Saskatchewan aren't paying attention to it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's one of the reasons why I'm opposed to this particular piece of legislation, to this motion to recess the House.

We had that debate yesterday on agriculture. But prior to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, prior to the Minister of Agriculture's overnight revelation that there was a crisis in agriculture, about a week ago he spoke in Saskatoon to the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, and he referred to protection programs, safety net programs that were available to farmers, so there was no additional need for any new government programs.

There was programs like the gross revenue insurance plan and NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account). Now he may have been able to bamboozle the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce because they are not farmers.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and the ministers of Agriculture before him, including and specifically the member from Rosetown when he was the minister of Agriculture, killed the gross revenue insurance program. They killed it dead. They killed it and stripped it of its money and that's what the Premier used to balance his budget one year; \$188 million out of the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program is what they used to balance the budget and that was money right out of the farmers' pockets. The farmers in Manitoba got their money, the farmers in Alberta got their money, and the farmers in Saskatchewan lost their money to this government. They took the money.

I don't know what the Minister of Agriculture was talking about when he was talking about the GRIP program, but perhaps he's thinking of a new one. Maybe that's why we need to keep this House in session, Mr. Speaker, why we can't recess. Because perhaps that was a Freudian slip by the Minister of Agriculture and he actually has a new GRIP program up his sleeve.

Well I'm looking forward to seeing exactly what that is because

I remember prior to the 1991 election, the member from Humboldt was running around the province promising bigger and better GRIP. Well he "biggered" and bettered it right out of existence. The member from Rosetown, Darrel Cunningham when he was the minister of Agriculture, he got his comeuppance on that. Farmers in his area didn't think much of his burying the GRIP program and they buried him politically.

An Hon. Member: — Retired him.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Retired him — forceful retirement. And there will be, and there will be a couple of other Agriculture ministers that have dealt with GRIP that will also be forcefully retired after the next election.

An Hon. Member: — Retired by whom?

Mr. D'Autremont: — They'll be retired forcefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member from Yorkton wants to know who is going to do that. Well, who will do that will be the people of Saskatchewan. And their replacement and the replacement for those members will be Saskatchewan Party candidates for election.

We see the government talking about health. We have the past minister of Health here yipping from his seat. Well I had an opportunity to see the new junior Minister of Health, the B-team minister, the new member from Saskatoon Eastview, in operation here a week or so ago. She came down to do a grand opening of a new health care facility in my constituency in the town of Redvers.

And it was very ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the B-team minister would come down to do the ribbon cutting on this new facility for health care when the provincial government didn't put a nickel into it. Want to take all the glory, but the local people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had to fund every nickel in that hospital — \$2.3 million — they went around to the people in the communities and collected money for them.

And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must not support this particular motion, why this motion to recess must fail when it does come to a vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are lots of issues that need to be discussed in this area in the province of Saskatchewan for the people of Saskatchewan. They want to know that somebody is listening and that somebody is hearing what they have to say, and they know that it isn't the government. So they ask us to pass the message on to this government to see if that government will listen.

Now I know that my colleagues also have people contacting them asking that they give the message to the government also, and I'd like to give them the opportunity at this time. I will not be supporting this motion.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take pleasure in being able to stand in the Assembly this afternoon to raise a number of points in regard to the motion that has been brought forward by the Government House Leader. A motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which I think is somewhat appalling. To think that this government would act in

such a manner as to call the members of this Assembly together, to gather together, for the single purpose of legislating a group of labourers in this province back to work. And especially when at the time the labourers, the only reason they weren't working, or a number of them weren't, were . . . was because they were locked out.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I would have to say it must have been difficult for the government due to the fact that over the years, and I don't see that there will be a lot of change even in the future, that the labour movement has been strong components and supported the current government over a period of years.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we were debating the motion of back-to-work legislation on Monday evening I found it very interesting to note what we had a number of demonstrators around the Legislative Building I can recall. And while a number of individuals in this Assembly may not have been here prior to 1991, any that were here know exactly the type of demonstrations that took place — a lot similar to the one that was taking place in Ontario last week when the Conservative government was meeting or the Conservative Party was meeting for their annual convention.

And I would suggest to you that the demonstration here paled in comparison. In fact it looked like it was almost a love-in rather than a real demonstration of anger against the government. And maybe it's a reflection of that long-term allegiance to the NDP Party.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have expected that even with the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) meeting in Regina this week, that they would have been here in this Assembly. And my guess is, if they were really concerned, they would have been as angry or disappointed as we are that the government would bring forward a motion calling for an adjournment of the Assembly until a call down the road by the Speaker of the Assembly upon the request of the government for the members to gather again. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that we have a motion — or a piece of legislation that we've discussed this before about fall sessions — this would be an opportune time for the government to show that a fall session can work and could be a very integral part of the legislative process in the province of Saskatchewan.

And what we're calling for and what we as a party have asked for over the period of years is nothing new. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the province of Alberta for example, the province of Manitoba for example, do have fall sessions. And what do fall sessions do? What do these two provinces do? These provinces, the governments in those two provinces specifically bring forward a number of pieces of legislation; they have a short sitting.

And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm sure all members of this Assembly find even when they're talking to individuals in their own constituencies, the question is: what are you doing, aren't you in Regina? At least I get that on numerous occasions as I'm walking and talking to individuals, well why aren't you sitting in the legislature today?

I think it would be a good time for us to show the people of

Saskatchewan that there is a place for the legislature to function. That it's not the place for the legislature just to function from a period of time, let's say the mid-to-late February through to June, but indeed there's a place for a session in the fall as well so that the elected members of this province could indeed sit down and effectively debate pieces of legislation that affect the concerns of the electorate in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1545)

I would suggest that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the leader, or the Government House Leader, rather than calling for an adjournment could have suggested that here's a good time for us to show some good faith and leadership and maybe bring forward some new ideas and some pieces of legislation that we'd like to address in the spring as the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta do. And then allow the elected members of this Legislative Assembly a period of time then to effectively go out, talk about the legislation the government's talking about, talk about their direction they're planning to go in the spring session so that we could come back and effectively address any concerns and determine whether or not the government is acting in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've noted and as my colleagues have noted thus far, there certainly are a number of issues that the public in Saskatchewan are concerned about. My colleague from Cannington mentioned highways. And just for example, just a recent incident that took . . . that happened on Highway 48, east of Maryfield. A constituent of mine had called; he had been trucking grain, he was on his way home and came upon an area of road that was very washboardy on Highway 48, and it just so happened he was meeting a semi-truck and that the trailer went out of control as a result of the washboard conditions. And he said we were just very fortunate that we didn't have a head-on collision. Now he was quite concerned.

And then that was bad enough. But two days later he was hauling some grain to the elevator only to have his tailgate open up going over the washboarded area and lost a significant amount of crop which had a very high value. In fact it was a crop that does have a decent return right now. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is concerned — and he is not just one of the individuals — but he is concerned about the highway conditions in the province of Saskatchewan.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other irony is when you go across the Manitoba border, the province of Manitoba has upgraded their section of highway right through to Virden, to the point that is where, as a couple of constituents mentioned just recently — they've been in Manitoba — that driving back to Saskatchewan, just before they got to the Saskatchewan border there's this big sign that says Saskatchewan Naturally.

They thought to themselves, yeah, naturally we're going back to the old, old trails that we used to see in Saskatchewan as soon as they hit the No. 48 that they were driving on. And they were wondering if maybe the sign or the billboard at the border should not be changed to just say Saskatchewan rather than referring to it naturally. It doesn't really give us a good idea of what Saskatchewan has to offer.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the idea of highways to debate in this Assembly, the members know that that's a concern. They know that . . . I'm sure the government members hear it as well as we do that there are highways across this province — and we're heading into the winter months — highways that need a tremendous amount of work otherwise it's going to be a major problem.

We were just talking about power the other day and the fact that a disruption in power when it's 40 below would not be very pleasant. And the Premier used that as his argument for calling this session.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about issues that we could discuss, certainly health care is an issue that could be discussed — that the House Leader and the government members could be discussing. But I strongly believe that the reason for this motion is because the Government House Leader, the Premier of this province, and the government members certainly do not want to get into further debate on health care, especially when we're arriving at the end of . . . we're pretty well at the end of October and the Plains health facility is now closing down part of its operation. And I believe on October 30 they are going to be closing down their emergency ward.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hear about that on an ongoing basis because of the number of individuals that I'm aware of who are . . . deal with, provide ambulatory service in my constituency and surrounding areas. And their claims and the concerns they've raised time and time and time again is a fact that when they're bringing a patient from south-eastern Saskatchewan or the southern part of the province of Saskatchewan, the Plains health care facility is a facility that's easy to navigate to, it's the quickest facility to get to, it's the quickest facility to get an emergency patient to, and to have the medical attention addressed that that patient needs.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so to sit here this afternoon and having to be discussing an adjournment motion that says this House shuts down for a period of time until the government decides in its good wisdom that it's going to call us back into this Assembly, is ludicrous.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could be addressing areas like health care. But as I indicated earlier, I'm sure the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health do not want to be talking about health care right now. Certainly they do not want to be talking about health care in view of the imminent closure of the Plains health care facility and the fact that there's still ongoing construction at the General Hospital. And the Pasqua Hospital I believe has had most of the construction done. But there are certainly shortfalls in our health care system and health care delivery in the province of Saskatchewan.

To the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that as I've seen and just received a notice earlier today from an individual, actually a grandparent in the very extreme south-eastern part of the province of Saskatchewan, who's little granddaughter needs some special equipment because of a failure of her legs to develop properly. And the interesting thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they can and they've chosen to go to Winnipeg to receive that procedure because they would have to wait in the province of Saskatchewan to get in and receive the medical

attention that is needed.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in making this choice, even though we have reciprocal agreements to provide services back and forth, even though it is much closer and much easier for the family to get to Winnipeg, the province of Saskatchewan is saying no, we will not cover that cost even though the cost if it was done here in Saskatchewan would be done for about the same amount of money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is another area of concern. The fact that while we're talking about an adjournment motion today, there's a family has to deal with the fact that they have to pay out of their own pockets to provide a medical attention that their little daughter needs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find that appalling.

I find it . . . Someone says the government will argue that we don't have a two-tiered health care system. That is almost a perfect example of the two-tiered health care system that we have in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Leader of Saskatchewan Party has been going around the province of Saskatchewan for the past number of months meeting with district health boards, he's run into a number of concerns that have been brought forward by boards. Some of the areas of concerns and certainly an area of concern that individuals have brought to our attention as a party since we were formed, the fact that in many cases boards are restricted by the type of funding that the Department of Health says to them.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the government's concerned about their lack of legislation on the Table to debate, there certainly are enough other pieces of legislation that could be debated in this Assembly, pieces of legislation that I'm sure could be debated very effectively and would address some of the major concerns out there. Such as Bill No. 211, The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1998 which it calls for a motion or a Bill that we brought forward, our caucus has brought forward, which calls for block funding that allows health districts . . .

And as the leader of our party has found, a number of boards have indicated that if they had the funding that was given to them, did not have any strings attached, that they would be able to apply that funding better and to meet the needs of the specific district.

And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure many members of this Assembly through the past number of months and even years have found that district board members have brought to their attention some of the problems they face because of some of the strings that the government has put to the funding that they send to district boards and the fact that it really impedes them in meeting the specific need of their district.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you might ask or someone might ask, well why would you talk about block funding? What's wrong with having a few strings attached to funding? The facts are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you start tying strings to funding and start dictating where the funding should go . . . Let's take for example the Pipestone Health District, the needs in that district may be totally different from the North-East

Health District or some of the other health districts in the province of Saskatchewan.

Maybe the needs in the Pipestone Health District happen in the area of acute care, but they can't meet those needs because of the strings that are tied to the funding. Whereas other districts might have a specific need of home care or a specific need in the heavy care field.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's time the government recognize the fact that while they have created these boards and while on many occasions they continue to put the blame for problems within the health care area at the feet of district boards, it's time they gave the boards a little more of an opportunity to have some direct say and involvement as to how they put the funding and apply the funding so that they can provide the services that are specific to their district.

Another area that we're hearing about — this is not coming from the boards and I can understand why; we're hearing it from individuals regardless of party affiliation — the fact that people feel that if we're going to have health district boards in our province that are supposedly accountable to the people who elect them, then it's time that we had fully elected health district boards rather than partially elected and partially appointed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you talk about appointed boards, the perception — and I don't think they're wrong — the perception out there is that those board members who happen to be appointed feel compelled to follow the guidelines and the wishes of the government or the agency that would appoint them.

And that's why the public feels that if the district boards are given the authority or given the ability to provide a service to our community, then why aren't we given the same opportunity to elect them totally so that we can have a direct say and direct impact as to the types of services that we feel the boards should be addressing on our behalf in the specific district that we represent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well, the government has, and the former minister of Health and I'm certain the new Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Health will talk about this as well, but I doubt we'll get into a full review of the health care system. But the government has talked about a review of the health care system once we've had district boards in place for a number of years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, have we had that review? Have we had a real review?

The government would argue, I know the former minister of Health would argue that on an ongoing basis he was reviewing the health care needs and how district boards were functioning.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would seem to me that the government's argument that they're reviewing the role of health district boards and reviewing health care delivery in the province of Saskatchewan, would seem to me that they themselves or their own department, their appointed officials are the ones telling them, yes the system is working right; it's working just the way we designed it and it's providing a service next to none; and not only in the province of Saskatchewan but certainly in Canada.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and I agree with the Conference Board of Canada — that if we're going to really take a long term and sit back and take an overall view of health care delivery in the province of Saskatchewan, it's time for a full-scale review. A review that is not impeded by government but indeed bringing in or appointing or putting in place a mechanism that allows for input by all the individuals involved, whether it's the patient, whether it's the caregivers such as the nurses who feel that they've been working under some very difficult circumstances and situations, whether it's the doctors, whoever's delivering that service, and certainly the district boards as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we're going to have a true review, we're going to take a broad look and determine whether or not the health care system or this wellness model as we see it today, is meeting the needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

I think as the Conference Board of Canada has indicated, we need to take a full review. And not just the Department of Health telling us that they have reviewed the delivery of health care and it's working well, but indeed someone outside of the department who can look at it objectively. And not just the province of Saskatchewan, but I would suggest, as the Conference Board of Canada has indicated, that this review would . . .

And I see the member from Regina Victoria would like to suggest that that has nothing to do with the motion of adjournment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order, order. Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The member is certainly wide-ranging in his comments on the issue before us. But from time to time it is incumbent on the member to relate his rather wide-ranging comments to the motion before us. And I don't think that it's sufficient for him to, whenever anyone stands up on a point of order, to say, oh but I was really meaning to relate it to the motion before us.

So I think the Chair needs to listen carefully and must call the member to order if the member is not relating all of the concerns in the world before us to the motion before us, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1600)

Furthermore I also have a concern about the rule of anticipation, Mr. Speaker. I just heard the member say, and call in his comments, for a review of the health care system. Now the very next item on the agenda is a motion by that member in which he's calling for a full-scale review of the health care system.

Now it seems to me that the member is anticipating items on the agenda. This motion before us is not a motion of adjournment per se. That is a separate issue. There is nothing to suggest that we can't get to this next item on the agenda, which deals far more appropriately with the concern that he's putting before the people of Saskatchewan.

So on two counts I really question whether the member is in

order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I have listened to the member for Regina Victoria's point of order very carefully. And certainly the point of relevance of debate is always a point that is in good order, whether it's this debate or any other debate.

In my experience this day, members speaking to the Assembly adjournment motion at the end of the day have been relevant to the motion in the normal manner in which the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly operates, and that is there is generally wide latitude for debate that must tie in to the motion.

I thank the hon. member for Victoria for the point of order and recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the comments the member from Regina Victoria has made as well regarding the adjournment motion.

And in regards to his comments and the adjournment motion, the fact that certainly yes, there is a motion on the order paper in regards to a full scale review of the health care system . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. The ruling has been made from the Speaker's Chair and it is inappropriate for members to comment further on the ruling as made from the Chair. With that caution, I invite the member from Moosomin to participate and continue with the debate.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It wasn't my attempt to even address the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the motion before us and the motion of adjournment, and the fact is the motion of adjournment calls for this Assembly — and that's correct — it calls for the Assembly at the completion of the motion, and if this motion would be passed, that this Assembly, when it adjourns at the end of the day, would adjourn until the request of the government. And I appreciate that. And I know exactly what it means.

They also, if you were to look at the order paper and for individuals who are not aware of it, the suggestion was made that once the motion was done we would immediately move into further debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been around this Assembly long enough to know that when a motion such as this is moved, it doesn't necessarily mean that opposition members will certainly get to the area of debate that they would like to.

I would love to get into the debate on the review of health care on this motion, and I appreciate that and I thank you for that.

But in regards to the motion before us and that adjournment, I would suggest as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this motion as we have been pointing out, and I'm sure that the minister or the member . . . the House Leader, the Government House Leader could have come across to our caucus and asked us, if we gave you the opportunity to address some of the concerns that you

have on the table, would it be possible to then bring this motion in and have an agreement to arrive at a conclusion at that.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, members of the Assembly know that a lot of times there is that debate back and forth, that there are those agreements that we can arrive at, that we can sit down with the House Leaders to sit down to arrive at agreements. Unfortunately, we weren't given that opportunity and therefore it's imperative that we point out why we feel quite strongly that the motion before us is an ill-thought-out motion at this time in view of the fact that there are so many areas for debate and areas up for debate.

I'm certain as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in view of the fact that the SFL is meeting in the city of Regina right now — it's not just the SFL; there's a number of other groups that are meeting in the city of Regina — that members would just as soon, with the weather being as nice as it is with the sun shining and I'm not sure where the temperatures are, I understand it could be in that 20 degrees, to be very candid I would enjoy . . . much rather be outside right now rather than sitting in the Assembly debating some of these issues.

But I have to let members of the Assembly know and certainly the ministers and the Premier of this Assembly know that while it's nice outside, my constituents expect me to represent their views and to bring to the attention of government areas of concern such as the one I was just reviewing in front me, an area of concern with regards to the Workers' Compensation Board. Or another area of concern that as members we face and a lot of times we can't do much about it, but because we're the individuals handy, employment insurance. And we all have our point on where the federal government is going right now with regards to employment insurance.

But those are concerns. When people run into difficulties with areas such as EI (employment insurance) or Workers' Comp or being able to get in for a health procedure or some of the other areas or the closure of elevators and the problems of highways in the province of Saskatchewan or as my colleague the member from Canora pointed out, the concern that students at the regional colleges have been bringing to my attention. And I'm sure all members of the Assembly have had those concerns brought to their attention, it's imperative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we indeed take the time to mention and bring these points forward to the Government of Saskatchewan.

And so I really want to say how much I appreciate this Assembly and the legislative process, the democratic process, that allows us to speak to motions, whether motions of adjournment, and point out areas where we feel that some of these motions may fail.

And that's what my colleagues and I have been attempting to do today, to point out the fact that this motion to adjourn sounds very good; it sounds very simple. But this motion in particular brings this Assembly to a grinding halt at the end of the day if some of these issues aren't addressed ahead of time.

We will not have another opportunity until a time in the future at the discretion of the government to come and address these questions, to raise these issues, to bring to the Minister of Health the concerns regarding the closure of the Plains health

care centre and the fact that that closure is now more imminent. And I can appreciate why even the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health may not want this Assembly to continue to go beyond the next few days. Because of the fact that, as we're in the Assembly, as members of the opposition, it's the opportunity for us to really hold the government more accountable.

And that's why it's imperative and that we feel it's important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Assembly be allowed to function and continue to address a number of the concerns as indicated earlier.

There are a number of motions that are on the order paper that if we had the opportunity, we would love to debate. But I'm afraid that if the motion as it is before us, once that motion receives approval, which I would have to suggest it will because of the majority of the government, we are quite concerned that we will not have an opportunity then to move into other areas that are on the order paper.

So that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been taking the time today to point out these areas of concern, the areas that my constituents are talking to me about — areas . . . the concern in the agricultural field.

And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of members, government members, the Premier himself, and individuals in this Assembly who have worked in fields that have been directly linked to agriculture and are quite concerned about. They're concerned because of the fact that a downturn in the agricultural economy affects everyone in the province of Saskatchewan.

It affects the businesses in our communities. And that impacts . . . And I was pleased to hear about a week ago on an agricultural news bulletin the fact that even the Department of Agriculture — and I believe it was the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool if I'm not mistaken — one of their spokespersons was pointing out the fact that when we talk about farmers having difficult times, the general public are not aware of the fact that about 45 per cent I believe of the industry and the jobs in this province are directly or indirectly linked to the agriculture community. They're linked to that farmer out who cannot pay his bills, and as a result maybe it's the equipment dealer, or it's the fuel dealer, or it's the fertilizer or the chemical dealer is impacted.

That in turn means that maybe two or three jobs in their employment then are laid off, and that impacts another family in a community. And it's not just the communities that I represent; it's the cities of Regina and Saskatoon as well. We're well aware of it. The Flexi-coil for example, and it's shut down having to . . . or cutting back because of the slowdown in the economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think we take this lightly. I don't think we just take this motion lightly. I don't think we just take our position in this Assembly lightly. I believe all members come here with a really, real strong feeling of trying to represent their constituents.

And indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, bringing to the point and

bringing to the attention of the Premier and his government, and to this government, the members opposite, that the fact that there are some major concerns that should be addressed. And it shouldn't be the opposition always raising them. The government should be indeed coming forward with some new ideas.

And that's why I feel that this, this motion as it stands, is somewhat premature — that the government should indeed have taken the time to give the members of this Assembly and should have come forward with a plan not just calling us back to address a power shortage or the problems with power or a labour dispute, but also have taken some time to stand in this Assembly and give us an idea of where they intend to go to in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly could go on in a number of other areas and raise concerns as to why I feel this motion before us is not . . . actually, should not have been brought forward at this time and that the government should have brought some forward for some new ideas. But I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be imperative for me to allow other members of the Assembly, and I'd certainly be willing to hear government members stand in their place, and address and tell us why they should . . . this motion should pass and it pass immediately.

But I would like to give other members of the Assembly an opportunity to speak as well and address their concerns in regard to the adjournment motion.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too rise with great pleasure to speak on the motion before us concerning the adjournment from this House without duly considering the affairs of the state of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that many individuals in this House have very good reasons why they may indeed want to leave. It's a beautiful day out. And I'm sure many of us have things that we would rather be doing in our homes, our yards, our community, maybe even having one last game of golf.

And Mr. Speaker, I understand that. I understand it very well because I too have a very good reason why I would rather be at home in Melfort than here. I have to tell the Assembly that over the course of the summer, our children Laurie and Michael in Calgary blessed us with another grandchild, Scott. And it's a great pleasure for me to say that because as any grandparent in this province knows, you would rather be with your grandchildren than doing almost anything else in the world.

And Laurie and Mike and Hayley, our granddaughter, and Scott are in Melfort as we speak. Two very, very beautiful grandchildren that I would like to share with everyone and I would like to be there with them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that would be something that would be important to me. To be able to say to Hayley and Scott, poppa's here, and let's have some fun together.

But, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's important that I am here in this Assembly today debating the issues before the people of Saskatchewan. That's the kind of commitment that we need to have to this province if we're going to effectively deal with the

issues before this province. We can't simply rush to adjournment after the one item that was important to this province was dealt with. We should have taken and should be taking the opportunity to deal with many issues that are in front of the people of this province at this current time.

(1615)

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk about one issue a bit that I think merited more discussion, that would merit debate and discussion in this House. And I speak of the *1998 Fall Report Volume 1* of the Provincial Auditor. And I would like to compliment the auditor on the work that he has done in this report because I think as usual when the Provincial Auditor releases a report — this released on September 23 of this year so it's very timely — he does an incredibly competent job of putting forward and in front of the people of this province the issues that they should be considering.

And in this report the auditor, in his executive summary . . . And I'll be fair in that I actually do quote more than just a very selective phrase or two that I think makes my purpose. And he says in his executive summary, he says, and I quote:

I think the Government's finances are improving because the economy of Saskatchewan has grown and because, during each of the past four years, the Government has spent less than it raised in revenues.

And the provincial government said that, and I think it's an important statement for us to be discussing. I think we should put it in front of the people and to have them try and understand what's going on in terms of the trends in the provincial economy.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting when you analyze this and you put this whole thing in context, and you say these are the kinds of things we should be doing and talking about instead of adjourning, that these are some interesting things that happen.

If a person would turn to page 22 and 23 of this very document, the Provincial Auditor has been kind enough to put in a very encapsulated form — on one or the two pages — the actual revenue and expenditures both of the General Revenue Fund and the activities in the Crowns which the Provincial Auditor has said is important to consider in their entirety, not just in isolation, where we talk about the General Revenue Fund at budget time and not the Crown corporations discussed separately when we feel like it or in the Crown Corporations Committee. But the people of the province should have a picture, a snapshot of what's going on in our province's economy in total.

And so the Provincial Auditor points out on page 22 and 23 that in 1991, for example, taxes were \$1.98 billion — and that's very interesting. But you know what they are in 1998 — \$3.116 billion; an increase of taxes to the people of this province of \$1.128 billion over that duration. And now that's easy to understand how the Provincial Auditor can say in his executive summary that revenues have grown. You bet you they have grown. They've grown to the tune of over a billion dollars out of taxpayers' pockets in this province.

But there's some other things that are interesting in here because it also says in 1991 the federal government by way of transfers was transferring to this province 1.6 billion; in 1998, that's down to \$675 billion. So it indicates that there is a great diminishment of federal transfers to our province over that same period of time. And another issue that we should be discussing instead of adjourning is: where is the federal government in their responsibility to our province?

It says as well that natural resources went from \$437 million to \$802 million — an increase of \$365 million from natural resources.

In total, the revenue from general programs in 1991 was \$4.9 billion; in 1998, 5.5 billion. And therein lies the increases.

But let's look at the Crowns as well if we could briefly. If you take energy — which is Power and SaskEnergy — Insurance, Liquor and Gaming, and Telephone, if you add them all up, the revenue from those Crowns came to about \$2.5 billion in 1991. In 1998, they're \$3.4 billion, an increase of \$900 million. Another great cash cow for this government; taxes, and our Crown corporations, and a captive audience of the people that have to pay the utility bills.

And so it's pretty easy to understand how this government has been able to balance the budget and to live up to the comment that the Provincial Auditor made that over the past years it is raised more revenues than it has spent. That's true.

So where did the expenditures change? Well in Agriculture in 1981, the government spent \$800 million; '98, \$250 million. Health care has gone up from 1.6 billion to 1.7 billion — that's an increased expenditure. Overall on expenditures we went from \$6 billion to 5.8 billion. So you bet things have been cut, mostly agriculture.

And so some of these areas again, are the areas that should be being debated in this House at this opportunity because it's timely and it's appropriate.

The Provincial Auditor goes on in the very next paragraph to state, and again I quote, and he says:

However, I also think that the Government's finances are still fragile because its accumulated deficit and revenue demands are large when compared to the size of Saskatchewan's economy, and because the economy of Saskatchewan is particularly vulnerable to changes in such factors as commodity prices, interest rates, foreign exchange rates, and the weather.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a whole change that's happened in this province over the course of the last six months, and it has to do with items and issues as the Provincial Auditor clearly points out, are not something necessarily that we have control of, but have an incredible impact on our province and its economy.

This spring we had very difficult weather where there was areas of this province were facing a severe drought, and happily in many areas of the province the rains came in time, but there still are areas of this province where they did not. And the farmers in those areas and the businesses in the communities that are in

those areas are suffering tremendously.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not a farmer. I farmed for 10 years in a past life and I have a real appreciation of what that's like. But, Mr. Speaker — and I may be a little wrong about these prices — but it strikes me that peas, for example, last year were about \$6 a bushel — \$6 a bushel give or take. I'm told by my friends that now it's about three and a quarter — almost half price.

Last year I'm told that wheat prices were something in the order of \$3.50 a bushel, initial price at the elevator. This year they're about \$2, again about half price. I'm told that barley was about a dollar sixty at the elevator, initial price; this year, 70 cents, less than half price.

I'm not sure again exactly the numbers, but I understand from my rural friends that the price . . . the realized price for a finished hog is as well about half price of what it was a year ago.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not sure that people understand the magnitude of what that means. It's not as if everything has sort of been cut in half and relatively speaking it's not a big deal. It means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that all of the input costs, all of the costs of investment, all of the costs of equipment, all of the costs of chemical, all of the costs of raising your family and trying to provide the day-to-day needs to your family have stayed the same or gone up compared to last year, but the gross value of the product you produce has been cut in half.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is significant and a tremendous impact on this economy. It's going to have tremendous impact. It started this summer when people started realizing how badly commodity prices were changing. And ever since, ever since that time we have been saying in every opportunity we had, but especially we should have been saying it in this House, that this is going to have tremendous impact.

So what happened? The government said, well we've got to come together to deal with the issue and the problem in the Power corporation. And we agreed that it had to be dealt with because it was an important issue.

And then right after that issue was dealt with, the government moved to adjourn the place on Monday, and we said no. We said no, and rightly we said no.

And Tuesday morning we said that we have to debate the impact of what's happening in the commodity prices on agriculture. And you know what? An hour later the Agriculture minister must have read our press release because he thought that was a darn good idea as well. And an hour later he finally woke up and said, well I guess since we're here anyway, we might as well talk about agriculture.

But if we would have agreed to the adjournment motion on Monday, we wouldn't have discussed what happened in agriculture. The Agriculture minister wouldn't have got our press release calling for an emergency motion and he wouldn't have known that there was a problem.

But finally, we had an opportunity yesterday to talk about the issues surrounding agriculture and to come together and

unanimously vote in favour of a motion. We wouldn't have been able to do that if the House had adjourned on Monday.

Today we're having an opportunity . . . today again, first thing up, adjourn the place; let's go home. Well grandpa wants to go home, but I know it's more important for us to be here and talk about the issues that are facing the people we represent than to go home. And I think the government should understand that it would be more important to stay here and debate the issues that are facing the people than to go home. That is important. It's clearly, clearly of fundamental importance to us to understand what's going on.

And so the people on the front line right now, the people that are having an immediate, dramatic impact on their business are farmers. But farmers are businesses — businesses that all of us have contact with. Many of us have people that we know or family members that are either on the farm or in small business.

And think about what would happen to your small business, if it's a grocery store or a dry goods store or shoe store or a small confectionery store, any kind of a business you would like to put in your mind, and imagine that the total expenditures of your business stay exactly the same but the revenue is cut in half. What would that do to your business?

Well I don't know of any businesses that have a gross profit margin so lavish that they could stand that kind of an impact. They simply would be unable to continue in face of that.

Well our farmers are facing exactly that circumstance. That's irregardless of the quality of the crop; it's irregardless of the impact of the drought or any other thing. This is solely the impact of the war of the European Common Market and the Americans in terms of the subsidy war and what it's done to drive down commodity prices. That needs to be talked about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so the Provincial Auditor talked about the vulnerability of our economy. Well how's it going to affect it? Well I would suspect that there were a good number of farm people over the last number of years paid income tax. The income tax figures that the Provincial Auditor talks about don't come out of thin air. They come from the fact people work and make profit, earn revenue, and then they pay income tax.

Well if your revenue is cut in half and your expenses stay the same, there's no profit to pay tax on. That's going to have a dramatic impact on our province's revenue picture. And so it should be being talked about. It should be being debated so that we can make the adjustments that we need in terms of looking where we're headed.

The Provincial Auditor also said that there were other factors to be considered. He said that we are vulnerable not only to commodity prices but to interest rates.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I guess one of the good things that seem to be happening, if you follow the volatility in the world market right now and the impact of the Asian flu and the economy in Brazil and what's happening in Russia, is that the American Federal Reserve is getting very concerned that we could be facing a worldwide recession and that the only engine

right now that seems to be having some strength in terms of being able to create the demand and the energy to prevent that from happening, is the American consumer economy.

But even there, there is concern. And we've seen over the last few weeks two successive decreases in the Federal Reserve rate of a quarter point each time. And so in this exercise it may well be that there'll be some easing of interest rates and that is going to have some positive effect on the situation for people that are borrowing money.

(1630)

But as everyone knows, for people that have modest investments and are looking for a return on their investments by way of interest to generate some income, it's going to have a negative effect. And again, if you don't earn interest income, you don't pay tax. And so again it has a direct impact potentially on our provincial economy and we should be talking about it. We shouldn't be in a rush to head home for whatever good reason we have. This government should be saying we need to talk about this, because we need to come together in some purpose to see what can be done in order to prevent the problems that seem to be happening.

The auditor also pointed to foreign exchange rates and the whole run on the dollar. Well, that has its pluses and minuses as you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On the positive sign a low dollar means that our commodity prices are more affordable in the world market. But that only is true, not in comparison to the American market, it only is true is if our customer's economy and currency is also staying strong. It doesn't do us any good to try to sell peas in Brazil if their currency is nose-diving way worse than ours. It makes our product even more expensive. And hence, it explains partially at least why the offering price in Canadian dollars is as low as it is for peas.

The people of South America use peas grown in Saskatchewan for a major source of their protein. But if their currency is in turmoil, worse turmoil than ours, our prices become relatively more expensive. And so the whole issue of currency exchange rates are not only how our dollar compares to the American dollar but how other currencies fare in comparison as well, relative to the American dollar and to ours. And so potentially, while it always say well, woe is us because our dollar is low compared to the Americans, the real concern is what's the comparison between ourselves and our major customers, the Americans being one of them.

And so all of those things are issues that we should be debating, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're not. We can't if we adjourn. We simply can't. It is impossible to have effective debate and discussion about these issues by press releases and by MLA reports in our own newspapers. It has to be done in this forum where people all across this province can watch and observe and listen and make intelligent judgments as to how these things are going to play out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I talked a bit about how this is going to impact on our farm community but everyone knows that the general Saskatchewan economy is only a heartbeat away from agriculture. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is it going to do to our towns and cities in Saskatchewan?

Well I live in Melfort and I have a small business in Melfort and I have been involved with my colleagues in the business world in that community for almost 20 years. And I can tell you over those 20 years you could plot the success and relative prosperity of our business climate in those communities in direct relationship to how well the farm community was doing.

Instantly — instantly — when we end up with a situation that the agriculture community has difficulties, instantly following that, the business community has difficulty and it starts out in rural Saskatchewan and it's like a wave that builds into the cities.

The cities are going to see the impact a little later than we will out in rural areas themselves because, if your income is cut, your gross income is cut in half and your expenses stay the same, you have zero — zero — discretionary income.

You have little money to do and say, I think I would like to do this and this would be fun for myself and my family. This would be just a nice thing to do. The discretionary kind of thing that says let's go out for a treat or let's buy an extra piece of clothing or an extra sports article or any of those sorts of things. Let's hang on to our vehicle for an extra year instead of replacing it. Let's make the tires go an extra few kilometres instead of replacing them.

All of those discretionary decisions that families have in the agriculture community are going to be deferred. They're also going to defer the major issues, of course. They're not going to decide to buy a major purchase of a cultivator or a tractor or a piece of agricultural equipment. They'll say no, this year we can put on a new set of bearings, we can grease it up, tighten the belts, and we'll make it go another year — discretionary decisions.

If something happens where you have no choice you have to deal with it; that's true. But the discretionary things which make up a huge percentage of the expenditure decisions of people in the province are going to be turned off or certainly turned down in a major, major way.

And so instantly when this reality of where we're going to be with commodity prices hit . . . our businesses started feeling the impact in terms of the downturn in their sales. And it's been quoted on the media, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the impact.

I've heard from implement dealers; we've heard from major short-line and local implement manufacturers, all of them are cutting back. All of them are cutting back on their production; all of them are cutting back and they're laying off people.

And now we have a situation that has a double impact potentially for the government. We have a situation where not only were the farmers are not going to pay income tax or taxes on their operation, we now have people that have been laid off because the next level up is cutting back. And why are they cutting back? Because they're not selling things. If they're not selling things at a profit, they too now, the next level, is not going to be paying income tax.

And so again the impact on the economy of Saskatchewan starts to snowball and we should be talking about that. That is the

kind of things that we have to get our heads around and really begin to understand what's happening so that people of this province can understand and make adjustments. So we don't panic. So we deal out of a position of strength, a position of looking forward instead of saying looking back and say what happened, of trying to understand the dynamics of what's going on here.

And the next step happens when the whole situation moves to the cities, in terms of the agricultural spending patterns that will happen. And of course we say well it is true that agriculture as a percentage of the total Saskatchewan economy has diminished. That's true. And we have other sectors that are picking up the pace to some extent.

And so, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look briefly at that. My colleagues who are in the oil sector and things of that nature have talked about what's happening in those areas. But suffice it to say is that, compared to where the projections of the Finance department were in the spring budget, compared to what has been happening in reality over this period of time, if you look at that we see a tremendous decrease in the price of a barrel of oil for example. And so what happens is that the oil patch, suddenly like the farmers, is going to lose a tremendous amount of revenue. And I doubt very much if their expenses have dropped off.

So again you have a situation whereby revenue is down dramatically, there's going to be a direct impact on the provincial economy, and we should be staying here talking about what that's going to do to the provincial economy across the piece.

I understand because of the Asian flu, that the prices that the Asian customers that we have, are bidding less for our potash for example. So in another major area of this province's economy we potentially are going to see diminished commodity prices. The Provincial Auditor said that, that that is a thing that we're very vulnerable to. Commodity prices are not strictly grain prices. They are prices across the piece of the things that this province has an abundance of. And so that happens.

If we end up looking at the impact of what's going on in the Russian economy, a tremendous, tremendous upheaval, and they are having a very difficult time meeting any kind of currency requirements. So they're one of the major producers of uranium in the world, our single largest competitor I believe. I stand to be corrected, but certainly very significant.

So what are they going to do? They need to generate American dollars. They need to sell something. And so they start discounting a product like that on the market. What's going to happen? It potentially decreases the value that we're getting out of the North from the uranium wealth that we have. All across the piece what's happening in the economy is having an impact in a dramatic way, as we speak, on our provincial economy.

And instead of talking about it, instead of dealing with it, instead of facing it in an honest and a concerted way, we want to bail out and go home. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that simply is not responsible. It's simply not good enough. And you can go through the whole segment of what these commodity prices are and the impact that's happening and we will see that this is

happening in each and every segment of the revenue side of our province's economy. And we need to deal with this. We simply must deal with it. And I think that we are neglecting our responsibility if we do not do that.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at all of these things we can say that there should be overwhelming willingness for this legislature to continue to sit. There should be overwhelming willingness for the government members opposite, instead of wanting to go home and rake the leaves and forget about what their responsibilities are, is to stay here and talk about what's really going on, what's really going on in our communities across this province. There are major, major issues out there that we simply have to deal with.

And on the other side, we have situations that are creating an expense problem. You know, we end up now saying, well oil's gone down, but aren't we lucky natural gas is really high and expensive. Oh boy, are we ever lucky! Because going into the winter at the coldest time of the year where everybody needs natural gas, we're told that we got to pay a third more for it. Thirty per cent I believe is how much the gas, the actual gas cost is going up.

And so what they do then, they say for the average family what they do is they take the delivery cost and say, oh that isn't going up. They're taking the service charge and say that isn't going up. And then they kind of package this in their phony-baloney little program called this review program and they say, oh but it only amounts to 10 per cent when you add all that together. It's only going to be seven bucks for the average family.

Well maybe it is going to be only seven bucks a month for the average family, but there's going to be lots of families that pay more than that because who's average? And that's what's going to happen. So we're going to have an increase on the expense side. Never mind that revenue is going downhill big time; now we're blessed with the fact that our expenses are also going up.

And so it's not exactly a real good deal when we say on one side gas prices are high. We forget they might be a good deal for government but it's not necessarily a good deal for our families. And what we have to remember in all of this — and we get to forget it — even the Provincial Auditor, when he looks at these numbers, they get pretty clinical. You know you can be buried in all of this stuff, and you say, h'm, maybe this is a pretty good deal, maybe the government is doing well.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important to have that discussion and this document is very good in terms of putting things in a factual way. But that has to be taken in context of what is happening to our families.

I remember in 1981, I believe, that the big thing was the family of Crown corporations. And we're almost getting back to that again because we're so proud of how our Crown corporations are doing. We're so proud about the fact that the Crown corporations, as the Provincial Auditor pointed out, is making a whole bunch of money. I mean they made \$900 million more in 1998 than they did in 1991. That's something really to be proud of — I guess it is.

If you look at all of these issues I guess it is a good deal. But we

always forget that somebody is paying for it. We forget that those very people that are putting this money into this nice balance sheet are the people of the province. They're the people we represent. And so when we talk about this, we can't just talk about how proud we are of government as if we were some entity outside of the people we represent. We are the people we represent, and we should be close to them and understand what's going on.

And if I knew, if I knew that everyone was going to go home and talk to their constituents to really get an honest assessment of what's going on, I might even be a little more forgiving about saying this House should adjourn. But where have they been the last while?

Where have the government members been until Tuesday morning when they finally woke up to the fact there was a crisis in agriculture? And we were glad to support and unanimously agreed that there is a crisis, and that something needs to be focused and looked at by our federal Liberal government to get into the game here. Somebody's got to be screaming from the rooftops about the impact of the subsidy war at the Common Market and the United States.

(1645)

What do we hear out of these guys? Nothing. Nothing. Our rural people out there are just craving for someone to stand up and say we understand, and within the limits of the things that we can do and the tools that we have at our disposal we're going to be there for you. They know they're not.

I mean what we have is an Agriculture minister in Saskatchewan that wanted to go home on Monday, woke up on Tuesday morning to find a Saskatchewan Party press release calling for an emergency debate, and he says, oh my God, there must be a crisis in agriculture. And whoa, by gosh, I got the press release from him about 11:30. And I thought this was great.

And I was really impressed even to see the member from Rosetown get into the debate. I remember him when I wasn't even farming. He was the guy that took the GRIP program away from farmers. I asked him yesterday. I said, I'm a town kid; I don't know exactly how the GRIP thing worked; why don't you explain it to us. He didn't say a word. Nothing about that whole issue. He wasn't going to do it. The farmers know what happened out there. We should be talking about that today and to say, what's going on here.

And if we had gone home on Monday like this government wanted to, we wouldn't even have known that there was an agriculture crisis, because these guys spent their whole summer doing something other than talking to their people. Had to be. I don't know what they were doing. I mean, they were busy wondering what was going on, eh?

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that it is important that this Assembly remain in session to talk about these issues. They're critical. They're so critical, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we do that because it doesn't just affect farmers. I've heard people say, well what do you guys know; you're all rural MLAs; the people in the cities don't feel the same way about this. Well just a

minute, I think that maybe people in the cities are not nearly as naïve as this government opposite would like to think they are.

People in the cities understand that the heart and soul, the lifeblood of Saskatchewan is rooted in agriculture. It may always be that. And members opposite who do represent the few rural seats that they hold know that people are saying that to them. They understand that. But it doesn't get through because this government thinks its base is in the urban centre, and the urban centre doesn't care what happens in rural Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rural Saskatchewan is important to Saskatoon and Regina and Moose Jaw and Prince Albert and Yorkton. It's critically important to our larger centres just as our larger centres are critically important to rural Saskatchewan.

People in this province understand there's only a million of us in this great province and there is absolutely no sense in thinking that we can live without each other. And it doesn't matter if you're a person in Saskatoon or Regina that works in an office tower or a retail outlet or in a service industry or in a manufacturing plant that has nothing to do with agriculture. They understand that what happens to agriculture into rural Saskatchewan is going to have an impact on them very, very quickly. There might be a little drag time, that's true, but it's going to happen. And the two are going to come together and we're all in this together.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to be talking about that. We need to be talking about that in this Assembly and we shouldn't be going home. Shame on us for rushing home. We should be here in the government, by the procedures of the House, should have been bringing forward motions and legislation that could be debated, that could have dealt with some of the issues of things that are going on.

They're not going to just happen and become a problem or become a challenge in February or March when the government hitches up the courage to call the House again — it's happening now.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, instead of dealing with it in hindsight, instead of looking in the rear-view mirror as this government only seems to be able to do, why don't we focus forward for once. Why don't we look forward and say, let's be a little bit proactive. Let's understand the challenges that are happening and let's be a little bit proactive about what could be done.

Let's do that. Let's create an environment where people are more capable of dealing with these issues. Let's see if there's any way that we can get . . . leave money in people's hands so they can make the decisions that are necessary to affect their livelihood, and let them create the jobs instead of thinking that we're the ones that can do it.

Mr. Speaker, the people of our cities understand this; they're just insulated from it a little bit. You can't tell me that a person in the biggest law firm or the biggest accounting firm or the biggest computer firm in Regina or Saskatoon are immune, are immune from what happens in agriculture. You can't tell me that it isn't going to impact on the success of their business very

directly.

You can't tell me that the person that lives in Saskatoon or Regina or other larger centres, that works in the service industry or works in small manufacturing or any of the other of those areas, is not going to be directly impacted by what's happening in the rest of the province in rural Saskatchewan.

And so we're all involved in this. We should all be talking about it. We should all be coming together in this session and saying, what are we going to do — what decisions need to be made now in order to mitigate the severity of what is likely to happen in this province. Why aren't we doing that?

What are the members opposite so busy doing between now and March that we can't stay here and talk about this? Why can't we be talking about these issues? Why can't we be sitting here and saying, let's deal with these issues. I mean I understand, it's a nice day, he wants to go home. Well I want to go home. I said that. I think I got as good a reason as anybody in this Assembly for wanting to go home. But it's important for us to deal with this issue.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is simply a wrong decision to adjourn this House. It's a wrong decision. And the only way we have as an opposition within the tools and the legislative agenda that there's there, if the government refuses, if the government refuses, if I look on the blues today, what have we got?

We got orders of the day, government motions to adjourn. That's it — number one, let's go home. There isn't a number two or a three or a four or a five or a ten of things that could be done that potentially would be important to mitigate the severity of the issues that I've talked about, the economy of this province. All that there is on government motions is let's go home. That's it.

But there's a whole lot of other things that have been placed before this Assembly through the course of the session that we could be debating, and my colleagues have talked about a whole lot of them. Of issues and Bills and private members' Bills, of ideas and concepts that we should be discussing and debating that go from number 1 to 36.

There are 36 opposition private member Bills on the order paper that this government doesn't even want to talk about. And what do we have from the government? We got one, and what does the one thing that it says? It's interesting, because look at it. It's on the page here that says government motions, orders of the day, government motions, let's go home. That's it. One item. Let's go home. So . . .

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

Mr. Boyd: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon we have a very special guest in the Chamber, Mr. Nicholas

D'Autremont, the son of the member from Cannington. I believe Nicholas's mother is in the Assembly somewhere too. She may be back at . . . not present currently, but she will be perhaps before very long.

Nicholas has suffered indeed a tragedy as we all know in this Assembly. But just as at times we think it's such a tragedy that we can't carry on, Nicholas has showed us all I think a great deal of courage. And we should be congratulating him for the kind of courage that he has shown in the face of adversity.

We all from time to time think we are pretty hard done by, but given the circumstances here, it makes us all feel pretty lucky I think to have our health. But at the same time, we can look at people like Nicholas for inspiration. And I think that that's very, very important given the circumstances that he faces now and into the future.

So I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming him here this afternoon to the legislature and say, hooray for the young man that we have before us.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

House Adjournment

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In light of our guest in the Assembly and in light of the time of the day, I would ask if we would be able to adjourn for the day. If the government would agree to that, I think it would be appropriate.

An Hon. Member: — Move to adjourn debate.

Mr. Gantefer: — Okay. Thank you very much, then, Mr. Speaker. In light of the guest we have and the time of the day, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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