

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of people who feel that the current automobile insurance Act infringes on their rights. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provision of the personal injuries benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act and adopt a return to an add-on insurance system that would provide benefits on a no-fault basis to all victims without taking away the innocent victim's right to seek compensation from the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition this morning are from the communities of Bienfait and Estevan. I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand today to present petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the provisions of the automobile insurance Act. The petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

That your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provision of the personal injuries benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act and adopt a return to an add-on insurance system that would provide benefits on a no-fault basis to all victims without taking away the innocent victim's right to seek compensation from the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury cost.

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

The petitioners on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Swift Current and Estevan.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also honoured today to be able to present a petition from the people from Swift Current and Estevan regarding no-fault insurance:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provisions of the personal injury benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act and adopt the return to an add-on insurance system that would provide benefits on a no-fault basis to all victims without taking away the innocent victim's right to seek compensation from the person responsible for the accident, but with the appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

The petition is signed by the good folks of Estevan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great responsibility that I present a petition respecting the automobile insurance Act. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provisions of the personal injury benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act and adopt a return to an add-on insurance system that would provide benefits at a no-fault basis to all victims without taking away the innocent victim's rights to seek compensation from the persons responsible for the accident, but with the appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

This petition is signed by the good folks of Estevan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present to this House on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provisions of the personal injury benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act and adopt a return to an add-on insurance system that would provide benefits on a no-fault basis to all victims without taking away the innocent victim's right to seek compensation from the person responsible for the accident, but with the appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

The petitioners are from Swift Current, Estevan, and Saskatoon.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the petitions presented at the last sitting have been reviewed and found to be in order. Pursuant to rule 12(7) these petitions are hereby received, of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly with respect to repealing the personal injury benefits contained in The Automobile Accident Insurance Act.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through to everyone in the Assembly, I'd like to introduce some very special people in the opposition gallery. My husband, Martin, is there; his brother, James, and his wife, Dianne, from BC (British Columbia) and their two daughters, Brenda and Lynn.

Their family left Saskatchewan 10 years to get a job outside of this province like many people and they're back right now for their son's graduation. He'll be graduating from the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) on Monday. So I'd like everyone to welcome them to the Assembly and back to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not very often that we get guests all the way from Prince Albert. So today, Mr. Speaker, it's a special pleasure to introduce five guests from our area.

First of all I want to introduce our constituency assistant, Rose Rothenburger, who is here with us today. Rose has been keenly interested in the political events in this province and is tuned in to us at the constituency office ordinarily at this time. I'm glad to see her here. And with her is Barb Falman-Martin, who is from Rosthern, and they're both here to attend the SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) convention.

While I'm introducing them, Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce three other guests in your gallery, three people I've associated with for some time, Stan Loewen, Dave Koester, and Trevor Klassen people prominent in business and political life in Prince Albert. And would all guests please welcome these five people to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I consider this next group, or at least this class, are regular visitors to the Legislative Assembly. And I would draw your attention, sir, to a group of grade 12 students who are seated in the west gallery. They're from Balfour Collegiate and they're accompanied here by their teacher Karen Scherle. I had the opportunity to meet with them before the session started today, and they had lots of good questions, like they do every year, and they take a keen interest in what we do here. And I would ask all members to make them feel very welcome here today.

And, Mr. Speaker, . . . and while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might just draw your attention and other members to two gentlemen who are seated in your gallery, sir. One of them will be known to most members here and that is a former Speaker of the House, John Brockelbank.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Seated . . . seated next to Mr. Brockelbank is a former engineer with the city of Regina. And I had the pleasure to do some work with him while I was a city councillor, Mr. Bill McLean.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you my wife Shirley, my brother and his wife.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too want to take this opportunity to welcome John Brockelbank to the House. John ably represented Saskatoon Westmount for many, many years. Saskatoon Westmount is now my riding of Saskatoon Idylwyld. So welcome, John.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although recognition has already been paid to John Brockelbank, I too want to welcome him here as he is one of the constituents of Saskatoon Meewasin. So I add my welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleague from Battleford-Cut Knife in welcoming his brother, Peter Peters to the legislature. As people will know, his brother is the former CEO (chief executive officer) of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. He's had a stellar career serving people in the province when it comes to cancer treatment and cancer issues. So I want to join with my colleague in welcoming Peter Peters to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with others in welcoming the former Speaker, Mr. Brockelbank. But the Minister of Economic Development said that she represented the area that he used to represent. And that's partly true but actually he also represented most of Saskatoon Mount Royal.

And one of my first political experiences was actually having Mr. Brockelbank, when he was our MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in Mount Royal, come and visit me as a very small child, and that was before I became a small man.

But I want to say that the reason that Mr. Brockelbank represented my constituency, as well as the Minister of Economic Development's constituency, is in those days the city of Saskatoon was divided up into six ridings, but two of them were so large, represented by Mr. Brockelbank and the current Premier and then four of them were very small. But the fact is Mr. Brockelbank represented just about all of the west side of Saskatoon at one time or another. And I'd like to join others in welcoming him here today as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Hon. members, I beg your indulgence to allow me also to welcome the former Speaker to this Legislative Assembly. And I will be under scrutiny; I appreciate that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Welcome to the New Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Prime Minister announced that Lynda Haverstock will become Saskatchewan's new Lieutenant Governor early next year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, while I'm not really fond of the Prime Minister's practice of turning this position into simply another patronage position, if he was determined to pick a Liberal for the post he could not have made a better choice than Lynda Haverstock.

Ms. Haverstock has made a large contribution to the public life of our province. Becoming leader of her party in 1991, she led the Liberals to official opposition status before she resigned her position. She also served the constituents of Saskatoon Greystone ably for eight years.

Prior to her time in politics, Ms. Haverstock worked as a psychologist and specialized in the area of farm stress — something we can certainly identify with today. Those who've heard Ms. Haverstock speak on this topic have nothing but praise for her.

Mr. Speaker, Lynda Haverstock's time in public life was marked with her desire to practice politics differently. She brought in a code of ethics for her party that is a good example of how we should all spend our time serving the people.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Lynda Haverstock and wish her well in her new role. I know she'll ably handle the duties well and will be a tremendous representative for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, it's true that in the past few weeks the federal government has made two announcements regarding the appointments of two outstanding Canadian women. First, Adrienne Clarkson was named Governor General of Canada. And yesterday, as we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition, Lynda Haverstock, formerly of this Assembly, was named the next Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan — to assume her duties next February first.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say two things — undoubtedly, more formal occasions will occur later — first, I want to thank and congratulate our current Lieutenant Governor, Jack Wiebe, for his five years of dedicated and joyful service as the Queen's representative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — He's brought his own brand of Saskatchewan regality to this position, and we thank him.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure, on behalf of our caucus, to congratulate and welcome Ms. Haverstock to her new position as Lieutenant Governor. Ms. Haverstock graced this Assembly for two terms in a style that engaged us in passionate and reasoned debate. She has spent much of her adult life in public service, first as a clinical psychologist with a specialty in farm stress, and then as political leader and MLA.

We welcome her appointment. We welcome her back to this legislature in her new role. And we already look forward to her first excellent Throne Speech. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CanGro Livestock Feed Manufacturing Centre

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am thrilled and delighted this morning that a cousin of mine has been named as Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. As we all

know, she has served this House and this province with grace, dignity, and flair, and we know she will continue to do so.

However I also rise on some other good news this morning. Unfortunately I am missing a grand opening in North Battleford of CanGro Processors Ltd. CanGro Livestock Feed Manufacturing Centre is opening in North Battleford. It is valued at \$10.8 million; it has created 15 new direct jobs, and a great deal more indirect jobs in our community.

CanGro is going to develop a complete line of hog feeds and products for swine and other livestock. CanGro is processing Saskatchewan grain, in Saskatchewan, for Saskatchewan.

Along with CanGro, we in the Battlefords recently welcomed new high throughputs by Pioneer, Cargill and Sask Wheat Pool, all erected and accounting for over \$40 million in new construction.

Walmart, Tim Horton's, Canadian Tire, the Real Canadian Wholesale Store have also announced expansions. The Maple Leaf plant was recently expanded to be that company's bacon processing plant for all of North America and Asia.

And we are getting a new bison . . . I'm sorry I don't have time to tell you all the wonderful things that are going on in North Battleford but it's a great community for businesses to locate in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division Logo Contest

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my pleasure to rise in the Assembly on behalf of one of my constituents from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, Miss Danielle Bodnarchuk, is a grade 9 student in the Birch Hills high school, a school approximately 22 miles south of Prince Albert. Danielle took the initiative to enter the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division logo contest.

Danielle's creative use of colours in using blue and green in depicting the rivers and trees of the parkland-like setting of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division enabled her to win the local contest ahead of 175 other entries.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Assembly and you to join me in congratulating Danielle Bodnarchuk on this achievement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Good News in Health Care

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some good news in the area of our health care that I would like to announce.

While some people continue to carp about the supposed deficiencies of our health system, the people who are involved in operating that system are quietly going about the business of helping make that system operate more effectively. As my colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow said the other day, we are doing good works, not just thinking about them.

A case in point. The magnetic resonance imaging system or MRI is a relatively new and very expensive diagnostic tool which offers a painless way to obtain information about the body, leading to early detection and treatment of a number of diseases and conditions.

There are two MRIs in Saskatoon and one in Regina. When the MRI at the Regina General Hospital became operational in April of this year, it ran for eight hours a day, five days a week. Recently, with enhanced funding from Saskatchewan Health, the hours were increased to 12 a day.

These extra 20 hours a week will allow approximately 4,200 people a year to receive this service. The annual budget for this one MRI is how much? 1.1 million to operate this one.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome this new addition to our health care system. I think the people will appreciate it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moosomin Hospital Operating Room Reopened

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just to bring to the attention of this Assembly and commend the good folks of Moosomin and Rocanville, I'd like to comment on a couple of initiatives that have been moved forward.

Most recently, Mr. Speaker, the Moosomin Hospital again reopened its operating room. And, Mr. Speaker, the reason the operating room was opened up for service is because of the initiatives taken by a group of doctors in the community as well as the chamber of commerce and some local community organizations, such as the legion.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you think about it, the only reason the operating room has opened up is because groups like the legion and the community put forward over \$120,000 for the equipment to provide a much needed service not only in the community and surrounding area of Moosomin, but certainly for this province.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I look forward today to gathering together with the community of Rocanville for the official opening of their brand new clinic, totally done through community initiative. Again, Mr. Speaker, it just shows that there's a Saskatchewan spirit working and well in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Riffel High School Project

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We move from good news in health care, good news in schools to back to good news in Riffel High School here in Regina, where they have an exciting ongoing project titled "The Transition Years."

This project started as an assignment from their psychology teacher, Mr. Ken Merk, and the grade 11 class quickly picked it up and realized that it was bigger, much bigger than that.

What the project has done is interviewed grade 8 students across the north part of the city. They collated the results. They

even went so far, with the help of Cable Regina, Mr. Speaker, they put together a video that's available for parents, students, other schools, to help ease some of the fears that students have going from grade 8 into high school, grade 9 — those transition years which can be very tough.

As a result of this project that includes also a booklet — there's the video and the booklet — what they've found is that students entering grade 9 at Riffel have a much higher participation rate, Mr. Speaker. And I want to congratulate teacher Ken Merk, principal Joan McCulloch, Candice McIntosh of the students, and all the cast of hundreds at Riffel High School for their tremendous work, and I look forward to more in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Pacific Railway Heritage Grants

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every now and then you come across something that truly gives meaning to the expression "I didn't know whether to laugh or cry." It happened to me the other day when I saw a short article in one of our weekly papers. The article said, and I quote:

Canadian Pacific has created a \$2 Million fund to provide grants to communities to develop projects that preserve history . . .

. . . (the) Heritage Grants will be distributed across Canada in communities where CP and its subsidiaries have a presence. (Or perhaps where the CPR once had a presence.)

The announcement was made on the 114th anniversary of the last spike in 1885, the completion of a national dream of a railway from coast to coast.

Can you believe the chutzpah, Mr. Speaker. Where should these grants go, do you think? How about a plaque almost anywhere in Saskatchewan that would read: here on this spot once ran a Canadian Pacific branch line contributing to vital communities along the way, saving wear on our highways, and providing employment both on and along the track. So much for the national dream.

Or perhaps a small monument on the place where the first Saskatchewan farmer shook his fist at the sky and yelled the immortal words: blankety-blank the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway).

You can do a lot with \$2 million, Mr. Speaker, about a millionth of what the CPR made in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Throne Speech

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, today my question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Premier said we should be asking questions about the Throne Speech. The Throne Speech talks

about a fundamentally new approach to government yet we have an Education minister who believes in the worst kind of old-style politics: promise one thing then do exactly the opposite. The Education minister freely admits his election platform was nothing but political rhetoric. He seemed almost gleeful that he was able to pull a fast one on the people of Saskatchewan. It's no wonder voters are so cynical about politicians these days.

Mr. Premier, that's not a new approach to politics. It's the worst kind of crass old-style politics, and it's disgusting. Mr. Premier, how can you put up with this? Where is your new approach to government or was that just political rhetoric as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have said to the House before and I'll repeat again, I believe the Speech from the Throne, being a first speech of the throne from a new coalition government, was a very progressive Speech from the Throne, which set out a very detailed course of action subject to legislation which will be tabled in due course subject to a budget which is being developed and which will be tabled sometime in the spring months.

It is correct that in a coalition we have the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party coming together. It is correct that we are finding areas of agreement, finding areas of agreement upon which we can act to respond in the interest of the province of Saskatchewan; in some areas where we may not be able to agree to respond.

But when we do, we come together and present a government document like the Speech from the Throne, government legislation, a government budget, upon which we are prepared to defend and explain and to answer questions. That, I think, is opening up government and listening to government and is the new approach; it is a brand new day in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit it's now clear — the Liberals did have a lot of influence over the Throne Speech. The Liberal leader admits his platform was nothing but political rhetoric, and as it turns out, so was the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader promised to cut government travel. He promised to cut government advertising. And he promised to cut ministerial staff. But now that he's a minister, he likes government travel, he likes government advertising, and I heard him yesterday in person actually, he said he wants to increase — increase — his ministerial staff.

Mr. Premier, how can you talk about a new approach to government when one of your own ministers has such little regard for the truth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that I have already provided the answer respecting the Speech from the Throne and the documents which will be coming from the

duration of this coalition government.

A coalition government by definition has, at least in this case, two parties coming together to find common areas where we can act in a progressive and positive way. Maybe not all areas, but in the large measure most of the areas that proceed. And we try very hard to be as faithful as we can to those two documents, and we may have to compromise.

But while I'm on my feet and the Leader of the Opposition talks about new approach, I must say that the Leader of the Opposition is quoted on March 6, 1995 speaking to the *Rosetown Eagle*, saying the following in support of doing away with the Crow rate. He said, quote:

There are benefits to losing the Crow benefit. Kindersley-Lloydminster MP Elwin Hermanson said it will encourage development in the West. There'll be more incentive now not to ship grain out, is what Mr. Hermanson said. But today he says that he is in favour of not having done away with the Crow rate — before he was — today. So I think you have something else about . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, just to set the record straight. I voted against the discontinuance of the Crow rate and I argued as to how the funds that were going into the Crow rate should be put into a trade equalization payment, which we call the trade distortion program. But the Premier never relates that part of the story.

Isn't it a little more than ironic that this debate is taking place at the same time that Lynda Haverstock is being appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan? Lynda Haverstock developed the Liberal *Code Of Ethics* which they supposedly still follow today. There's a section in that code of ethics entitled, "Political Corruption and Impartiality." That code of ethic says, and I quote:

(I will not) countenance such immoral political practices as . . . deliberately misleading the public through false election promises.

(1030)

Mr. Speaker, false election promises are a direct violation of the Liberal *Code Of Ethics*. I'm sure this code of ethics meant something when Lynda Haverstock was the leader, but now it's just political rhetoric.

To the Minister of Education, will you stand up and explain your breach of the Liberal Party *Code Of Ethics*, or is the Premier going to have to explain that code for you?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make one absolute . . . one thing absolutely clear to this Legislative Assembly at this stage of the game. And I say this with respect to you, sir, and I say this with respect to every member of the House.

We will answer every question of government policy, government budget, government Bills, government legislation, and speeches from the throne, as government. We are not here to defend what the Liberal Party or NDP Party or what the Saskatchewan Party has to say with respect to this matter.

This is a Chamber of government, and it is a Chamber of government where the government answers on its expenses. That is the rule of the House, with the greatest of respect, and that is what we are going to follow and we are going to preach.

But while we are talking about a code of ethics for which the leader of the so-called Saskatchewan Party is talking about it, he might be well reminded to take a look at Ms. Haverstock's codes of ethics and ask himself about his desk mate, who as part of that code of ethics, one of which is loyalty. Him the member from Canora, her the member from Humboldt, her the member from . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order please. Order.

Hospital in Carrot River

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, it is hard to imagine how thing could get much worse with the NDP's failing health care system. Hard, yes, but not impossible, thanks to the NDP's disastrous mismanagement.

Madam Minister, last March during question period in this Assembly, my colleague, the member from Kelvington-Wadena, warned you that the good people of Carrot River Valley were fed up with the NDP health care disaster. Well, things were bad back then but yesterday things in Carrot River got a whole lot worse. That's because yesterday, Madam Minister, the people of Carrot River lost their hospital.

Another NDP promise tossed on the scrap heap.

Madam Minister, will you stand up today and apologize to the people of Carrot River and will you make a commitment to re-establish the hospital as you promised just eight short months ago?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, for the information of the public, the situation in Carrot River is this. That the physician that was providing services in Carrot River has returned, or is no longer in Carrot River. As I understand it, he has made a decision to return to South Africa.

Mr. Speaker, at present there is one physician. The physician has indicated that he cannot provide 24-hour coverage and as a result the hospital has daytime hours.

Mr. Speaker, this is an ongoing problem. I had an opportunity to go on a retreat with a number of young family medicine residents in this province in July. And they advised me that the days of solo practitioners are over, that at the minimum they would like to see a practice of five family physicians in order to

provide good quality service but also have a life for themselves.

And so I think what's important, Mr. Speaker, is that we recognize that solo doctors cannot provide 24-hour service any more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Madam Minister, you're starting to sound more like your new NDP (New Democratic Party) colleague, the so-called Education minister, who by the way as well, trekked out to Carrot River and promised them he would save their hospital. Apparently the Liberal leader isn't the only member of the NDP government who thinks it's all right to say one thing and then do the complete opposite.

Mr. Speaker, all NDP rhetoric aside, the bottom line is that the Carrot River Hospital has been reduced to the status of a health care centre. Madam Minister, the people of Carrot River are beginning to think this latest attack by the NDP government is just another part of a plan to systematically destroy their town.

Since the NDP came to power in 1991, the town of Carrot River has lost its rural service centre; they've lost their crop insurance services; Department of Highways yards have shut down; offices of SaskPower, SaskEnergy, provincial environmental services removed. And now it's going to lose its hospital.

Madam Minister, will you commit today that this temporary loss of the hospital in Carrot River won't become a permanent shutdown?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased that the members opposite can count to seven. It's too bad that they weren't able to count when they were in government between 1982 and 1991.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite don't want to hear the answer; that's why they shout from their seats. But the answer is this. That I am told by physicians in this province that the days of a solo doctor are basically over. And the reason, Mr. Speaker, is that they are no longer prepared, as a lifestyle issue, to provide 24-hour coverage.

In order for a hospital to operate as a 24-hour facility, you need to have 24-hour coverage by a physician. A physician has left the Carrot River area. There is one physician left, Dr. Fowler. Dr. Fowler has said as a lifestyle issue he simply cannot provide 24-hour care.

Now what I can assure the members is that the health district is continuing to look for a physician to come to Carrot River, and we are optimistic that the facility can return to a . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — The North-East Health District issued a notice on November 15 that the Carrot River Hospital would no longer provide obstetrical services as of the end of December.

Add to this the fact that Carrot River is now down to one ambulance, one doctor, and no hospital, and maybe you can start to understand why the NDP no longer represent Carrot River Valley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — You are right about one thing. Carrot River lost its hospital because they can't recruit a second doctor. And they can't recruit a second doctor because nobody wants to work in the health care disaster your government has created.

Madam Minister, as you should be aware, the provision obligating foreign doctors to practise for a minimum of three years in communities of 10,000 or less has been lifted by the college of physicians and surgeons. This makes it practically impossible for the community of Carrot River and a multitude of other rural communities to ever attract doctors.

Madam Minister, you have the authority to require foreign doctors to work in rural Saskatchewan when they first come to the province. Will you take this action so that rural communities like Carrot River will not continue to lose their hospitals?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, listening to the member you would think that there will no longer be any services available in Carrot River. What I can assure the members is that nursing services, emergency services, lab and X-ray, community health services, wellness, home care, and observation beds will continue to be available in the Carrot River Hospital.

What I can say to the member is that the health district is continuing to try and recruit a physician to the Carrot River district. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the physician that was there has made a decision to return to South Africa. And obviously, we can't prevent people from returning to another community, in this country. That goes against the very principles of democracy.

What I can say to the member, given the Sask Party's commitment to fund health care at a freeze, the ongoing concerns that are being expressed about health services in this province would basically decline even further with a notion of a freeze when it comes to health spending.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Madam Minister, last night I spoke to district health board representatives from across the province attending the health board annual institute here in Regina. In one of their sessions, they were identifying columns of strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. This is what is known as the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis for strategic planning. These district health board members reported to me that the minister ended up on two of these lists — the weakness and threats column. Are you prepared to show some strength here and give the people of Carrot River some opportunity for survival?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that we hear this coming from the member, because this member represents a political party called the Saskatchewan Party that has said very clearly that they would freeze health spending. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what they have said as their answer to health services in the province, that they would privatize — privatize — health services in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in a publicly funded, publicly administered health system that is accessible to people. Mr. Speaker, they believe in a private health system and we see this in reports in our rural newspapers all across the province. They want to privatize health.

Mr. Speaker, the question that the member is addressing is the issue of physicians in this province. We know that physicians are no longer prepared to practise as single practitioners in communities for lifestyle reasons, Mr. Speaker. They want to have a cadre of support to them. Physicians are not prepared to practise singly.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, last spring your government tabled and passed legislation amending The Child and Family Services Act. These amendments increase the maximum fine under provincial law for people who sexually exploit children, and they would also increase the maximum jail term from just six months to two years.

Mr. Minister, I encouraged those amendments and I supported the legislation when it was passed. But, Mr. Minister, I confirmed yesterday that the amendments to The Child and Family Services Act have not yet been proclaimed.

Mr. Minister, it has been some seven months since these amendments were passed in this House. Why has this Act not been proclaimed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. The amendments, as I understand it, will be proclaimed next month. There is a normal time between the passage of legislation and the proclamation of legislation, because it takes us time to work with the various service providers and the police to establish the protocols that will be observed once the legislation is proclaimed.

So this is a normal course of events that normally occurs with most legislation where we expect police or other community service providers to be living up to certain legislation. That is what's taking place here.

I would point out for the member that in the case of Alberta there was a period of a year between the passage of their legislation and when their legislation was finally enacted. We

hope to do it sooner than that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services and the NDP made much of the fact they had made these amendments last spring. They stated it was urgent. They have stated on other occasions that this action is not to be tolerated against our children. Mr. Minister, you highlighted in your published election platform that amendment as an accomplishment. You stated that you passed legislation to get tough on johns who sexually abuse children involved in prostitution. But since the Act has not been proclaimed, it is obviously not law.

Mr. Minister, nothing has changed up to this point. How urgent is this matter to you? Children on the streets are still being exploited, suffering immediate and long-term trauma, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, you claim to be serious and caring about this issue. When will your government also stop contributing to the exploitation of this issue and proclaim the Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it is precisely because the government and, I think, all members of the Legislative Assembly and all people in Saskatchewan consider this to be a very serious problem, and in a sense a blight in our society, that the government moved last year or earlier this year to put amendments forward to The Child and Family Services Act.

But that's only one thing that we've done, Mr. Speaker. We also, prior to that, had a concerted public education effort. We've also provided, I think, close to \$1 million in funding to groups in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and La Ronge to help those groups deal very substantially with the problem on the streets, problems that are occurring in their communities.

We have always taken a position, Mr. Speaker, that once you have legislation, you have to set into place the procedures and the protocols for police and other people in the community who are working on this problem, for those protocols to be in place before the legislation is enacted. That is a normal course of events, Mr. Speaker, whenever legislation is put forward and we expect . . .

(1045)

The Speaker: — Order, please. Next question.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, as I've stated I've supported the amendments to The Child and Family Services Act when they were introduced last spring; and I have also gone on record pushing for even tougher penalties and tougher legislation. Tougher fines are needed to act as a deterrent discouraging and severely punishing people found guilty of sexual exploitation of children.

Mr. Minister, you criticized my call for tougher penalties in the media, referring to the amendments passed last spring as proof

of a recent action by your government on this issue. Mr. Minister, the action you have taken has not been quick enough. There have been Acts passed in this House in one day, and proclaimed, because your government deemed it necessary. Is this issue not as important?

Mr. Minister, I ask you to see to it that this Act is proclaimed immediately. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I indicated earlier that it's my expectation that this Act will be proclaimed next month. We will have completed the process to set into place the procedures that the police and the various service providers need, to be able to enforce the legislation, Mr. Speaker. It's no good having legislation if there's no process set in place to enforce that.

Now I know it makes great politics to stand here on the floor of the legislature and say, do something immediately. Mr. Speaker, more than doing it immediately, I want to make sure that this issue is attended to and dealt with well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Equipment Manufacturers and Dealers

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan's farm equipment dealers are being forced by major manufacturers to drop their short-line inventory. And that's bad news for dealers, it's bad news for farmers, and it's certainly bad news for an excellent farm equipment manufacturing industry here in Saskatchewan. Companies like Bourgault, Brandt, Flexi-coil, Degelman, Schulte, Morris, Leon Ram, and the list goes on.

These Saskatchewan companies produce excellent product and they employ hundreds of people here in Saskatchewan, but they are at risk because of major manufacturing companies are allowed to impose restrictive and unfair contracts on Saskatchewan dealers.

Mr. Minister, what are you doing to address this issue? We are prepared to introduce a piece of legislation here after question period and the important thing is that we're also prepared to work with you on this issue because of the importance of the issue. But it must happen soon, Mr. Minister, because the contracts that they're being asked to sign have to happen before December 31st.

Mr. Minister, are you prepared to act on this important issue or are you prepared to support our private members' legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I thank the member for the question because this is an issue that has been raised by a number of dealers, and the Department of Justice is working on this. I think the member will know as well though that there is not total support for which way to go within the industry itself.

And I would just mention to the member that he may want to meet with me and the association and the Department of Justice, because this is an important issue. But we want to make sure that the interest of all dealers and all manufacturers in the province is in fact dealt with, and that we're not picking and choosing as to who wins and loses on this issue.

But as to the regard of supporting your position or supporting my position, I think that's an irrelevant point. What we need to do is talk this issue through so that when we have the policy, the winners are in fact the manufacturers and the dealers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you are aware, and I'm sure your department is aware that the important consideration here is the December 31 deadline that the dealers are faced with, and that's why there is a need to move as quick as possible. We have a piece of private members' legislation and we're prepared to present it. With your support we could move that through really fast, certainly with leave in the Assembly.

If you have a piece of legislation that you are prepared to come forward with, we would be prepared to move very fast as well to give you leave to move it along quickly. But the important consideration here is obviously it has to happen before the end of this year.

Mr. Minister, can you give the implement dealers of Saskatchewan and the implement manufacturers of Saskatchewan the assurance that this piece of legislation, either yours or ours, will pass this legislature before the end of the year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite that obviously what we need to do is pass legislation that's good for all of the dealers and manufacturers, and to just . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, and time — that's another important consideration. But just to say we're going to pass a Bill and get it done right now sounds a little bit like your pressure to sign AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) last spring. That we pressure, pressure, get it done, and then you find out, then you find out that you have a piece of legislation that does damage to the very people you are trying to help.

The commitment I . . . Mr. Speaker, there's so much yelling from the members of the opposition that I can hardly hear, but if I . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member asks a question, then hollers from his seat, and I'd like to answer the question because it's very important.

But the issue here is, is sitting down together with the association, you and I and members who can support us from Justice, and drafting the legislation, and that is very important and my commitment to you is, we'll do exactly that to make sure that the legislation, when it's drafted, meets the needs of the manufacturers and the dealers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Post-Secondary Education

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from Throne this government announced its intention to consult the public on ways to ensure Saskatchewan people have affordable access to post-secondary education and skills training. Mr. Speaker, you will know that this is an important issue to the public and to this coalition government. I am pleased that the Minister of Education will join me as we will personally lead these consultations.

As lead minister for the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, I recently participated in the national launch of a wide-ranging review of barriers to the accessibility of post-secondary education. That project will identify ways of enhancing access to post-secondary education all across Canada.

In social policies Saskatchewan has always been a leader. Four years ago when other provinces were following the federal lead in cutting funds to post-secondary education, Saskatchewan added money to protect the system. At that time Saskatchewan was just beginning its university revitalization initiative which continues to pay important dividends today.

A year later we launched the Saskatchewan training strategy, and now we are turning our attention to improving access to our excellent universities and public training institutions.

The question of student financial access is an important one because we are setting our public priorities. It's important to every individual and every family in Saskatchewan because it's about getting a high quality education and living and working in Saskatchewan.

Any changes we make to financial access must honour three principles. They must support quality, post-secondary education, while responding to the realities of student expenses in a way that is fiscally prudent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that today Saskatchewan has among the most generous debt forgiveness policy in Canada, for students, as Saskatchewan's public education and training institutions also have among the lowest tuition rates in Canada. Internationally, these institutions are able to tell the world about Saskatchewan's low cost of living and high quality of life. A key component of that high quality of life is access to education.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a good place in Canada to be a student. We believe we can make it better. We believe post-secondary education must be affordable for everyone — students, their families, and the taxpayers.

The longest serving Minister of Education in Saskatchewan's history and a former Premier, Woodrow Lloyd, was a champion of democracy. He firmly believed in the wisdom of the people. And Woodrow Lloyd said that the function of education is, and I quote:

To produce people who can make the best of the present

and who have the intelligence and the will to plan a better future.

Mr. Speaker, part of Woodrow Lloyd's legacy is a well-educated population that can make the best of the present and can help its province to build a better future.

I look forward to our public consultations on student financial access. I invite every member of the Assembly and every citizen of Saskatchewan to make their views and ideas known through this public consultation process. We will be across Saskatchewan during the month of January and we will be listening carefully.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — With leave to respond to the minister's statement.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to respond to the minister's statement because this is an issue that is very important to our province.

Mr. Speaker, the state of our post-secondary education institutions and our students' access to those schools will do a lot to shape the future of our province.

Saskatchewan's post-secondary education schools are something that all residents of Saskatchewan should be proud of. Both the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) and the U of R (University of Regina) are programs that are recognized nationwide.

SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) does a very good job of educating our youth in the increasingly important technical trades.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to realize why student tuition and student debt has risen so much under this government. While much anger over rising tuition is usually directed at the institutions themselves, the fact of the matter is that provincial funding to those schools by this government has simply not kept up with the rising costs. And those costs have been passed along to the students.

And so I hope the government is willing to discuss that when they are consulting around the province.

Another thing I hope the government will be mindful of is the fact that tuition for many students is only a fraction of the true cost of attending a post-secondary education. For those students who are from outside the larger centres, the main costs are the day-to-day living expenses, and so I hope the government knows it must look beyond simply tuition costs and look at all the costs for all students.

Another issue of course is the interest rates that students must pay on their student loans. These rates are often several points higher than the average borrower has to pay, and add immense cost to the overall cost of the student loan. Hopefully more can

be done to work with the banks to bring this rate down.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the best tool at students' disposal for paying back the debt is a good job. Unfortunately for many, to find such jobs means leaving the province. If the government truly wants to do something to help our students, it will get this economy turned around so that we can improve our job situation here at home and allow our students not only to pay for their education, but also to apply their education right here in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Human Rights Day in Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in my House today . . . in my seat today to commemorate Human Rights Day. But as this is my first opportunity to speak in the House, let me congratulate you on your election and I look forward very much to your wisdom and guidance in the next few days.

December 10 has been proclaimed Human Rights Day in Saskatchewan. This proclamation commemorates the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 51 years ago today.

Saskatchewan, as we all know, has always been a leader in human rights protection. Indeed in 1947, 18 months before the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Douglas government passed The Saskatchewan Bill of Rights Act.

Premier Douglas at that time said of Saskatchewan's original Bill of Rights:

Freedom, like peace, is indivisible. I must protect my neighbour's rights in order to safeguard my own.

This pioneering effort and commitment, Mr. Speaker, to human rights has ensured that everyone in Saskatchewan enjoys the freedoms they have today: freedom from discrimination, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and so on.

Saskatchewan can be proud of the progress made towards fundamental rights to which all citizens are entitled. It's truly important that all individuals have the right to be treated with respect and fairness. Human rights are indeed the birthright of everyone.

Respect for human rights has become a genuine part of the spirit of our times, and our government has continued this commitment to human rights. Let me just give three more recent examples, Mr. Speaker.

Our commitment to children's rights is clear in Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children. The action plan priorities include reducing child poverty, strengthening early childhood development, supporting vulnerable children and families, and helping youth at risk.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we're supporting the rights of children through the review of custody and access; and, just as the last example, Mr. Speaker, we're reinforcing the rights and safety of individuals through The Victims of Domestic Violence Act.

Today, Mr. Speaker — Human Rights Day in Saskatchewan — is a recognition of how essential it is that human rights, tolerance, non-discrimination, and cultural pluralism continue to guide the future of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1100)

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Justice critic for the official opposition, I'd like to take this opportunity to respond to the minister's statement; but, also would like to thank the Minister of Justice for providing an advance copy of the statement this morning.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition joins with the government in commemorating Human Rights Day. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dear cost of the rights that we enjoy today and to honour those who paid that cost.

I would add, Mr. Speaker, that we believe those inherent rights of mankind can only be truly enshrined and protected through the responsibilities each of us accepts as individuals. Too often we speak about rights with no mention of responsibilities, Mr. Speaker. Human rights proclamations and pronouncements from governments alone will always fall short if we are not prepared to match deeds with words, if we as members of the human race are not prepared to take responsibility for our actions and our attitudes towards others.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members opposite to join with us this morning in taking a major step to ensure another important human right for Saskatchewan people. All members of the Assembly can take a concrete step in that direction, Mr. Speaker, in supporting a private members' Bill sponsored by my colleague, the member for Cannington.

Mr. Speaker, should they pledge that support, not only will they be supporting the property rights of Saskatchewan people but they will also be putting some action behind their words of opposition to Bill C-68. The Opposition House Leader's Bill, Mr. Speaker, would ensure that every Saskatchewan person would have the right to acquire, hold, use, and sell property, and not be deprived of it, except in the accordance of fundamental justice which, for the purposes of that Bill, Mr. Speaker, includes fair market compensation for confiscation of any property.

This would offer something more than just words in the struggle against, be it Bill C-68, one of the most significant affronts to the rights of Saskatchewan people being perpetrated by the Liberal government in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no greater way for the government to celebrate Human Rights Day than for the minister and his colleagues to indicate their support for that private member's Bill this very morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I rise today in the Assembly to report on a meeting of ministers of Agriculture in Toronto that I just returned from. And, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that yesterday's *Globe and Mail* has a story on B27 which says "Wheat hits a nine-year low as global glut set to grow." Nothing could continue to be more important than the issue of grain subsidies.

And as I indicated yesterday, I took the opportunity to present the verbatim message as presented by 17 farm organizations and others that appeared before the Standing Committee on Agriculture here in the Assembly as well as providing other ministers with the speeches and comments made by members during the debate in committee as well as the emergency debate. I showed them the data developed by the farm coalition which clearly demonstrates the impact of the trade war on our export commodities and the impact it is having on farm incomes but more importantly on farm families.

I also ensured that federal Minister of Finance, the Hon. Paul Martin, has received a copy of the verbatim of the motion unanimously passed by members of the Assembly here in Saskatchewan and the speeches that were presented so that the Minister of Finance is well aware of the issue and the high priority that we expect from that department when the budget is developed.

At the meeting, Mr. Speaker, I asked the question of my colleagues across Canada and I said, why is the federal government not standing behind the grain farmers the way they stand behind every other industry in Canada, be it steel, forestry, auto industry. And I emphasized that they must stand behind and protect our grain farmers here in Saskatchewan.

We also discussed safety net programs, programs such as crop insurance and NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account). And I might add very solid Canadian programs, although they need improvement, are the basis of some pretty good farm policy. And we had a frank discussion about the level of federal safety net funding and how it should be allocated across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, some provinces want to change the allocation formula, and I might add change it so that their province would get more at the expense of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Now I indicated to my colleagues present, the ministers at that meeting, that not only could we not agree to any changes in allocation that would put our farmers at a disadvantage but that we could not conclude the discussion on safety nets until a decision was made on the trade equalization payment.

I took the opportunity while in Toronto to meet bilaterally with the ministers of Agriculture from Ontario and Quebec. And I again explained to them why Saskatchewan farmers need a trade equalization payment. They are now more fully aware of the impact of the US (United States) and the US subsidies are having on our farm families.

And I also made it clear to them that Saskatchewan farmers are not asking for support to be reduced to other farmers in Canada.

And we argued and made the point that it's the duty and obligation of the Government of Canada to make the trade equalization to Saskatchewan not at the expense of other Canadian farmers, and I think that's an important part of what we're discussing here in this Assembly.

But we do want the federal government to stand behind our farmers and to put them on a level playing field so that relative to farmers in EU (European Union) and in the United States the way that they have stood and our federal government does stand behind other industries and other manufacturers in this country.

While in Toronto, I also took the opportunity to meet with the editorial board of The Toronto Star. And I must say that it was a very interesting meeting because dealing with the editorial board of The Toronto Star is not automatic that they jump on the side of subsidies for Western grain farmers. But I can tell you that the interest shown in the differentiation between the way our grain farmers are treated and the way the auto industry, there was a very, very interesting and detailed analysis being done by that group.

We also met with the report on business television channel and did a number of interviews outlining the outcome of the strategy meeting and the emergency debate here in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring that other Canadians are aware of our farm income situation and the need for our federal government to protect an important industry continues to be a priority of our government and, I believe, of the members of the opposition. And we commit ourselves to continuing to work with the farm coalition and with our colleagues here in the legislature to ensure that all Canadians become more aware of this situation.

I want to also congratulate all members of the Assembly and the 17 farm organizations and others that appeared before the Standing Committee on Agriculture on Tuesday. I believe that all should be commended for bringing forward a unified position on farm income issue here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the official opposition to respond to the minister's ministerial statement.

Coming out of the meetings, what we had heard was very disturbing news to Saskatchewan farm families in this province when you have the federal Minister of Agriculture saying that there is no new money for farmers in Western Canada. And it is, after all of the efforts that have been made in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa, representing in Ottawa as well as the all-party delegation to Ottawa as well as the unprecedented step that was taken in the legislature having the farm groups come in here, it is disheartening to say the least, that kind of news coming out of the meetings that the minister attended.

We have to wonder in this province: when is the federal government and when indeed is the provincial government going to put forward their plans on the direction of agriculture here in Saskatchewan. We have virtually no plan from this

government with respect to a short-term bailout, short-term help for the farmers of this province, trade equalization payments . . .

Yes, you're calling on the federal government, but what is the province's response in terms of supporting agriculture? We haven't seen anything whatsoever with respect to a long-term safety net from the provincial government here in Saskatchewan. Is it going to be a tripartite type program? Is it going to be income support? Is it going to be risk management? What types of plans are you looking at, Mr. Minister, in your department?

When will you be introducing as promised in the Throne Speech your special adviser on agriculture? We'll be looking forward to that. We sincerely hope that we will not see some recycled NDP, old politician — perhaps the previous minister of Agriculture or the one before that or the like — coming forward. Because I think clearly, I think . . .

An Hon. Member: — Could be the one before that.

Mr. Boyd: — Could be the one before that, the Premier says. Well I think clearly the people of Saskatchewan voiced their concerns about the previous couple of ministers of Agriculture, three or four that you've had in fact.

Mr. Speaker, federalism is a two-way street — the Premier . . . and we've congratulated the Premier for his work at the federal level on a number of national issues — but it's a two-way street, Mr. Premier. And you know it's a two-way street.

The farm groups and the farm families of this province are waiting for your response. Yes, you are going to help on national issues. But in return, the farmers of this province are going to wait and see whether federalism works for them. Because at this point there's a dangerous mood starting to develop in Saskatchewan with respect to alienation.

The federal government clearly has a role, yes; you clearly have a role as well. What is your plan for agriculture in this province? You have responsibility in terms of taxation; you have responsibility in some regard in terms of transportation; you have responsibility in terms of farm input costs, the ones that you can deal with.

It's time for the federal government to do the right thing. Mr. Premier, and Mr. Agriculture Minister, it's time for you also to do the right thing for agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Agriculture Implements Amendment Act, 1999

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill, Bill No. 209, An Act to amend The Agricultural Implements Act, 1999 of Saskatchewan.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, yesterday the Government House Leader raised a point of order concerning the language used by a member of the opposition during oral question period. At the time I reserved my ruling so I could review *Hansard*, and I'm now prepared to rule on this matter.

Since the opening of this new session, the conduct of members during oral question period has given me some concern. Some of that concern can be attributed to the inexperience of members and their unfamiliarity with the rules of the Assembly — this Assembly.

An example of this is the application of rule 28 which states in part that all members are to address their remarks to the Speaker. In particular, members are not to address their comments to another member directly but are to address each other in the third person, by their constituency, or portfolio.

(1115)

This rule has been frequently broken over the past three days and I would ask all members to follow the practice.

A great concern also is a choice of language being used to describe colleagues. There were several instances yesterday when members of the opposition referred to the Liberal members of a coalition government as having been bought. Other inferences in the guise of humour were personal attacks and were not parliamentary. It is not permissible to reflect upon the conduct of another member nor is it acceptable to impute to any member unworthy motives for their actions. I direct members to Beauschene's, 6th Edition, paragraph 484(3), and to numerous rulings by previous Speakers.

I bring these points to the attention of members in the interest of upholding the rules and practices of this Assembly. It is a basic principle of procedure that proceedings are conducted in terms of a free and civil discourse. By requiring that members address their colleagues by their constituency or portfolio, and by requiring that remarks are addressed through the Speaker, personal attacks on other members or direct heated exchanges are less likely to interfere with the flow of debate.

Debate carried on in this way enhances public respect for this legislature and for the members without diminishing the passion that members bring to their debates.

The point of order raised by the Deputy Government House Leader is not the only instance when unparliamentary language has been used. Therefore I will not single out the member for Saskatchewan Rivers. However, I caution all members today that in future I will not hesitate to intervene and apply appropriate sanctions should such language be used again.

I remind members that these are not my rules. They are the Assembly rules. My duty is to interpret the rules and apply them accordingly. Any changes to the rules are made by the Assembly itself, and I have every confidence, my hon. colleagues, in all members that they will be diligent in ensuring a level of debate which reflects the dignity of this venerable institution.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, with leave . . . (inaudible) . . . to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to introduce my cousin, Jack Wartman. Jack lives and farms up at Ridgedale, raises and trains quarter horses, and teaches riders. I haven't seen him for a few years and it was very nice to see him up in the gallery there.

Jack, welcome to our forum here, our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Addley, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Hermanson.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my reply to the Speech from the Throne, I wish to state that I am very proud to represent the constituency of Thunder Creek.

Thunder Creek is a huge constituency. It extends almost from Regina to Swift Current, from east to west, and is no less than 54 miles from north to south at its narrowest point.

Thunder Creek, Mr. Speaker, is mostly an agricultural constituency consisting of terrain varying from the fertile, flat farmland of the Regina plains to rolling hills, to hundreds of square miles of native grass ranchland.

The industrious, hand-working, determined farmers and ranchers of my constituency produce all of the major crops grown in the province and many specialty crops, as well as some of the finest beef cattle in the world.

Mr. Speaker, Thunder Creek people live on their farms and ranches and in several small communities, including Gravelbourg, Herbert, Hodgeville, Vanguard, Rouleau, Avonlea, Mossbank, Morris, Caron, Caronport, Waldeck, Chaplin, and my home community of Pense, as well as several other smaller villages and hamlets.

Thunder Creek also contains such heavy industry as Saskferco, IMC Kalium, the Canadian salt plant at Belle Plaine, and Chaplin Lake sodium sulphate plant at Chaplin. We also attract many tourists to our parks, golf courses, and attractions such as the Claybank brick plant and the beautiful French community of Gravelbourg.

Mr. Speaker, Thunder Creek surrounds the city of Moose Jaw.

Moose Jaw is Saskatchewan's third largest city and home to two packing plants, Canadian Forces Base, the Snowbirds, and considerable light industry, as well as the great Moose Jaw Warriors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I have seen the deterioration of our health care; the near destruction of our highway; the abandonment of our rail lines; the closing of our schools; the decline in our standard of living; the uncertain future of our farmers; the depopulation of rural Saskatchewan; the overtaxing of our people. And I have seen our young people leaving the province in ever increasing numbers to seek lower taxes and better opportunity in Alberta and elsewhere.

I have three grown children, Mr. Minister, and two of them have already left this province. Unfortunately, that is pretty typical of our bright, educated young people these days. And, Mr. Speaker, I want my children back. We can't force our young people to stay in this province. But I believe that we can create an environment in which they will want to stay here.

It's my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan has marvellous potential for growth and economic development. It is our duty as residents of Saskatchewan to see that government ceases to be master and tax collector and begins to be the facilitator for economic development and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Thunder Creek share a vision of what we think this province can be. We see a place where people are encouraged to invest. People from here and people from other places. These investors will build businesses and industries that will extract our oil and gas and minerals from the ground, build equipment and new plants and new homes, and process more of our crops and livestock here, reducing our transportation costs and enhancing the value of our greatest raw material of all — our agricultural produce.

We see a place where Saskatchewan calves can be fed Saskatchewan grain in Saskatchewan feedlots by Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Thus providing our farmers with local markets for their grain and our ranchers with local markets for their calves.

We see more of these cattle being slaughtered in Saskatchewan packing plants. We see a place where more specialty crops will be processed in Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan wheat will be milled in our own flour mills and durum in our own pasta plants, and a place for more Saskatchewan barley will be malted in Saskatchewan by Saskatchewan people, and a place where more of our oil seeds will be crushed here in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we see a place where our vast oil and gas reserves will be finally brought into production and heavy oil upgrading will be expanded. A place for our own oil and gas support industry will emerge as an equal to its Alberta counterpart.

We see a place where steelmaking and manufacturing can

flourish and support more Saskatchewan families. In this place that we can all visualize, our children and grandchildren will have good jobs and successful businesses. They will build homes and they will buy clothing and gas and cars and trucks, and they will be able to afford a rich family life filled with recreational activities, and they will help to keep our schools and hospitals going, and our roads in good repair. Then, Mr. Speaker, we'll be able to afford our social programs. As we add more and more taxpayers, our taxes will decrease more and our tourism will flourish and even more jobs will be created, and more people will want to return to the Saskatchewan that we all love so much.

But this vision that the people of Thunder Creek share is not the reality of today, Mr. Speaker. Today the people of Thunder Creek see businesses closing on the main streets of their communities; closing because of high taxes and a depressed economy. And, Mr. Speaker, the owners of these businesses that are in trouble on our main streets will tell you that it's not just the taxes that they are required to pay that hurt them so much, it is all of the accumulated taxes that their customers are required to pay, and the back door taxation of this government through Crown utilities that is killing them.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the second highest tax jurisdiction in North America and we have the poorest job creation record in this country. Worst of all, our people won't stay and put up with it and are heading for neighbouring provinces in increasing numbers. I don't see any cohesive plan in the Speech from the Throne that will even begin to turn this around.

Our taxes must be brought in line with those of Alberta and not just income tax, but the PST, (provincial sales tax) corporate tax, utility rates, and every other form of taxation imposed by this government direct or indirect.

Mr. Speaker, investment dollars are like water, they follow the course of least resistance. At the present time Saskatchewan offers the second highest rate of resistance to investment dollars in this country. Is it any wonder that we can't repair our roads, that health care is crumbling, our small businesses and farmers are in crisis, and our best and brightest young people are leaving the province?

Mr. Speaker, I see a government that is old and tired and totally bereft of new ideas. I see a government that is totally without expertise and even experience in modern agriculture. I see a government that has no understanding of how to stimulate an economy and I see a government that watches as our health care and highways deteriorate and does nothing about it. And I see a government that watches as our bright, energetic young people leave this province and doesn't care.

I see a government that will stoop to anything and cut any kind of a deal with anyone to hang onto power. I see a government that just doesn't care any more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that the decent, honest, earnest, hard-working people of Saskatchewan deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, I see a government before me that is out of ideas and completely out of touch with the people of Saskatchewan. I view the Speech from the Throne as nothing more than this government admitting to eight years of NDP mismanagement.

Taxes are too high in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and families need a break. As we are coming upon the holiday season, I have spoken to families that inform me that they will be unable to afford a decent Christmas for their families.

There's something very wrong with that, Mr. Speaker. How many times has Canada been voted as the best country to live in by the United Nations? Unfortunately, I do not see this as being the case in Saskatchewan at the present time.

(1130)

Mr. Speaker, I read the suggestions that this government's income tax review committee came up with, and essentially they are planning on reducing the personal income tax and raising the consumption tax. Mr. Speaker, that is just another way that this government proposes to give something with one hand and take it away with the other.

The province of Saskatchewan has the longest hospital waiting list in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, this government has not given any indication that they intend to address this problem. The constituents of Thunder Creek come to me with the fear that there is not going to be a health care system there for them, if and when they need it. In addition to this, those who are unfortunate enough to have to use our health care system do not necessarily get the treatment they need.

It is somewhat encouraging, Mr. Speaker, that this government has at least acknowledged that there is a problem in health care. There is a shortage of doctors and nurses and it is the patients that are suffering, Mr. Speaker. Those patients that have paid taxes all of their lives and deserve the best possible care.

Mr. Speaker, there's another serious problem that our province is facing and that is that we are losing our best and brightest to not only other provinces, but also other countries. Mr. Speaker, the youth of our province are very quickly waking up to the fact that there are not a lot of employment opportunities for them when they complete their education.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to survive as a province, it is our duty as legislators in Saskatchewan to stop the exodus of youth and create an environment where they can stay in their home province and contribute to society.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by saying that the constituents of Thunder Creek elected me to represent their views in this Assembly in the most fair and reasonable way possible. I have every intention of doing my job to the best of my abilities; and I look forward to lively debate that I will be participating in, with the members opposite.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, it's an honour for me to stand in the Assembly this morning to address the comments in the Throne Speech. And before I begin my formal comments, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your election as Speaker and I wish you a very successful term in the House. I know you will serve the House well, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — I also want to express appreciation to my family who have been a great source of support to me throughout the electoral process. I want to express appreciation to wife, Louise; to my mother, Trudy, and to my sons Mark, James, and Michael for all the support they've given me over the last year and the support that has helped to make it possible for me to enter this House on behalf of my constituents.

And I also want to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Greystone who have done me the great honour of electing me as their representative. It's an honour to return to this House, and I treasure this Assembly, and I promise to work hard to represent them to the very best of my ability.

I also this morning, Mr. Speaker, want to extend my congratulations to all members of the Assembly on their election and to extend my congratulations to Lynda Haverstock with the announcement that she's going to be our new Lieutenant Governor. I know Lynda Haverstock well. We've differed on some political issues but I have great respect for her and I know she'll do well in her new role.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to now turn to the Throne Speech which I think is an exciting document. It provides us with a very positive blueprint for the future. And I want to speak first to the commitment that's made in the Throne Speech to make post-secondary education more accessible to the students of our province. And to set in process a consultation mechanism seeking advice from the people of Saskatchewan and from students and from our post-secondary institutions on what the best method is for making post-secondary education more accessible.

I have many students in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. Several thousand students attend the University of Saskatchewan and I represent those students. And I know that some of their major concerns are an easing of student debt loads, which are currently very high, making it easier to get into first year and providing some support to those who are in their final year of their studies and who are graduating and are proving themselves and need that extra bit of help to complete their studies. And I hope that the commission, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and the Minister of Education in their course of their consultations, will look at all those issues — I am sure they will — and will bring back a report to this House which addresses all those concerns.

I also want to say as a member who is representing a university riding that we must not overlook in this Assembly the importance of adequately funding both of our universities. The University of Saskatchewan is a great jewel of our province and in this last two years we have taken steps to improve funding to

the University of Saskatchewan — a 5 per cent increase now in the last two fiscal years. We need to keep on that track record, Mr. Speaker, to improve the quality of education on our campus, on both our campuses.

It's not just a matter of accessibility, it's also a matter of providing high quality post-secondary education, and I know that all members in this Assembly will share with me in wanting to pursue that objective.

I am going to work very hard, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the operating and capital budgets of our universities reflect that objective.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — I want to turn to the issue of taxation, Mr. Speaker, and say that I welcome the commitment in the Throne Speech to reduce personal income tax in the next budget. I know this is a concern for many of my constituents. And I also welcome the commitment to remove thousands of low income families from the tax rolls altogether. That is indeed a progressive and exciting idea, Mr. Speaker.

And I also welcome the commitment to take a balanced approach to investing in lower taxes, better services, and lower debt. We have to look at income tax reduction in the context of a balanced approach because we want to protect our public services and keep paying down our debt and not just talk about reducing taxes.

Now recently our government received the final report of the Saskatchewan personal income tax review committee. I welcome the recommendations of the committee. I want to thank the members of the committee for their hard work. And I want to particularly say that I welcome the recommendations with respect to moving to a tax-on-income system and to introducing higher non-refundable income tax credits. I think these are positive recommendations that I personally support.

There are some recommendations in the tax review committee report that I do not support. I want to particularly make reference to one of those today, Mr. Speaker, and that is the proposal from the committee to broaden the sales tax base to include essential items such as residential electricity, residential natural gas, used goods, repair services, and children's clothing and footwear.

While there may be some items on which the sale tax base can be broadened, purchases essential to the well-being of every family in this province should, in my view, continue to be exempted from the provincial sales tax.

That is my view, Mr. Speaker, and I will be urging the government to look seriously at that issue. I hope that recommendation in the report will not be adopted.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I also think that we need to be careful about the depth of the tax cut that we adopt. To move to the committee's recommendation that we follow the path of Alberta with respect to income tax policy has to be approached with caution.

We need to reduce personal income taxes — make no mistake about that — just as the NDP pledged to do in the last provincial election. But we also need to be careful to have on hand the moneys we need for good health care, good education, good post-secondary education, environmental protection, a strong social services safety net, and, Mr. Speaker — and this is a very important addition — we need to have the resources on hand to continue to pay down the debt. Because it's getting that debt down that is our mechanism for long-term sustainable tax cuts in this province right across the board. We continue to face a situation, Mr. Speaker, where we have to pay out more than \$700 million a year in interest payments on the provincial debt.

I heard the member from Thunder Creek opposite, Mr. Speaker, say to this Assembly that he wants to see us take the Alberta approach. And I say that's not feasible if we're going to keep paying down the debt.

And it's not feasible, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to have strong public services in this province. Do we want to cut kindergarten services like Alberta's done? Do we want to cut health care services like Alberta did throughout the mid 1990s?

Do we want, Mr. Speaker, to follow the Ontario model where we see 118 per cent increase in child poverty in Ontario as a result of the policies of the PC (Progressive Conservative) government there? That's what massive tax cuts translate into, Mr. Speaker — tax cuts that are not sustainable.

I favour tax cuts but sustainable tax cuts and tax cuts that are not delivered on the backs of axing our public services in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to health care and say that I welcome the expressed intention in the Throne Speech to expand home care services and to train, recruit, and hire more health care providers. Those are exciting commitments, Mr. Speaker, and I know commitments that will be well received by my constituents.

And I'm also pleased to see the announcement of a policy to standardize ambulance services because there are great discrepancies now in what people pay for ambulance service depending on where they live in this province, Mr. Speaker. And it's nice to see that we're going to move towards a more standardized fee structure — one that will be fairer for everyone.

So I'm excited about these commitments around health care and our overall commitment to continue to strengthen our medicare system that we started in this province — our gift to the rest of the country, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm going to be working within our government to urge a more preventative approach to the delivery of health-care services. I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is the next important step in improving health care outside of the commitments that have already been made in the Throne Speech, is to take a more preventative approach to the delivery of health care.

That, Mr. Speaker, will translate into not only better quality of health for the residents of this province but also into making for a more economically sustainable health care system. If we're going to contain health care costs and protect the health of our residents, we've got to pay more attention to prevention.

Some of the measures that I'll be working to advance include, first of all, a major initiative around prevention of cancer, which I consider to be a major priority in this province. We're losing a lot of our friends and neighbours to the disease of cancer, Mr. Speaker.

And we know in looking around the world that it is possible to achieve lower cancer rates than we're currently experiencing in this province. I just say look at the Japanese. And let's ask ourselves in this Assembly, in an industrialized society like Japan, why is it that women in Japan have a breast cancer rate that is only one-eighth of women in Canada and women on the Prairies?

That, Mr. Speaker, is an example to me of the fact that breast cancer can be prevented. Most forms of cancer can be prevented, Mr. Speaker.

And I say that we need to do more through the Department of Health, through this Assembly, to advance that promotion, Mr. Speaker. We need to look and advise our residents and support our residents in improving their diets, in reducing their exposure to cancer-causing substances. And we need to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that that commitment is extended to our workplaces, and, Mr. Speaker, that that advice is provided through mechanisms such as our cancer clinic.

(1145)

We need to declare war on cancer in this province, Mr. Speaker. We need to bring our cancer rates down in this province and across the country. And we need to look at the role that diet, lifestyle, exposure to carcinogenic substances — including tobacco products and pesticides — play in that process, Mr. Speaker.

I'm committed to working for that goal. I just don't think we can afford the cancer rates that we currently experience. I'm tired of losing friends and neighbours to this terrible disease, and I think we, in this Assembly, have to pledge ourselves to do everything we can to prevent it and to take a broader approach than we're currently doing through our health care delivery system.

Mr. Speaker, similarly we need to do the same around diabetes, and the Canadian Diabetes Association and its Saskatchewan branch has some exciting ideas around this. We face the prospect of an epidemic in diabetes unless we take major steps to confront that health care problem, Mr. Speaker, and I'm committed to seeing us work on a prevention approach to diabetes.

Similarly I want to see us expand the team approach to the delivery of health care. I look at our community clinics — our five community clinics — in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I see an excellent model for the delivery of health care services.

I see, Mr. Speaker, a model that results in reduced hospitalization for people who are members of those clinics, when you compare them with the rest of the population in our province, Mr. Speaker.

I see a model that provides an excellent team approach among health care professionals to the delivery of health care services. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that we need to promote and expand that model and use it as a model for delivering preventive health care services to the residents of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Similarly, Mr. Speaker, we need to look at issues around accident prevention among children and youth, and make that a major priority in terms of preventive health care in our province.

And we need to make a systematic effort to reduce child abuse in the home and in our community. And there are many exciting models around the world, Mr. Speaker, that we can look to as mechanisms for doing that.

One of the ones that I'm excited about is what the Government of Hawaii has done in terms of reducing child abuse, domestic child abuse in portions of their state by over 70 per cent. And very simply what they do, Mr. Speaker, is they screen at birth to identify children who may be at risk of suffering abuse or neglect in their home by virtue of their unfortunate circumstances. And they offer to each of the families that has been identified as being at risk, a home visitation service that is carried out by a paraprofessional who's acting in a quasi-volunteer role but receives some remuneration.

And that volunteer, Mr. Speaker, visits each home that's been identified on a regular basis — on a weekly or bi-weekly basis — for a period of four or five years. And, Mr. Speaker, do you know that in the cases of all homes that have received such visits, the rate of domestic abuse in the home has dropped by 70 per cent or more?

Now that's a very significant achievement, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say that I consider the problem of child abuse to be a serious problem in our province. I think we need to look to a program like the one that's been adopted by the Government of Hawaii as a major initiative to reduce domestic abuse in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be working to urge our government to look seriously at that program. I think it's an exciting one.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I also would like our government to look at an aggressive initiative aimed at reducing the use of tobacco among young people in our province. The latter should include an aggressive advertising campaign aimed at children and youth.

I welcome the appointment of an all-party committee on tobacco control announced by the Associate Minister of Health yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I know that committee will serve us well. I like the approach of an all-party committee on that issue. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we'll see from that committee strong recommendations aimed at reducing the use of tobacco among our young people.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I would like our government to look at a policy of saying to pharmacies — as the providers of health care products — that they should no longer be selling tobacco as part of their retail business.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word now about the commitment in the Throne Speech to families, and we see some very positive commitments in the Throne Speech to families. And our government has taken some very positive steps over the past couple of years with respect to expanding support to families — particularly low-income families — low-income working families in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the announcement that we're going to move forward on amendments to legislation that will enshrine the right to family leave on items of family necessity as a piece of legislation in the upcoming session, Mr. Speaker.

I think the idea of guaranteeing every family in this province the right to family leave from their workplace if they have to attend a funeral, if they have a sick child, if they have a pressing family need, Mr. Speaker, is something that we ought to be able to guarantee every family in this province. And I'm excited that we're committed to doing it, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm also excited that we're going to consult around amendments to The Labour Standards Act that would make it possible for people to have the opportunity, if they've done overtime work, to looking at time off as a compensation for that rather than simply additional pay, because people value having time at home, Mr. Speaker. Many people are having a difficult time balancing work and family commitments, and as a government we need to make it possible for them to . . . we need to make it easier for them to balance work and family.

We had an exciting initiative in this last year, Mr. Speaker, around setting up a task force to look at just this subject. And we need to keep working on this issue, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to see a commitment to doing that in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say a word about the initiatives that the Minister of Social Services has taken to help lower income families. We've taken some very positive steps with respect to supporting lower income working families in this province. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased now to see that we have 9,500 families with children who are receiving the Saskatchewan employment supplement. And we have 23,000 working families who are now receiving family health benefits, Mr. Speaker.

Those are families that weren't getting that income support before. They weren't getting those family benefits before. These were previously reserved for families who were on social assistance. They have now been extended to low-income working families, Mr. Speaker. Families that are doing their level best to make ends meet, who are working hard in the workplace, and who needed that extra money to top up their income so that they wouldn't be living in poverty, Mr. Speaker.

And we've made important strides in this regard and I want to congratulate the Minister of Social Services in our government for those steps, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say that I point with

pride to the fact that Saskatchewan, under our NDP government and now under our NDP-Liberal coalition government, is the only province in this country to have reduced the rate of child poverty from 1989 to 1999, Mr. Speaker — the only province in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And where do we see some of the worst records in the country, Mr. Speaker? We see them from governments who've pursued hard-line, conservative right-wing policies, like Ontario, where the poverty rate among children has increased by 118 per cent, Mr. Speaker—118 per cent. Ours has gone down by 8 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

That's why I sit on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker; that's why I'm committed to the work that's happening on the government side of the House; that's, Mr. Speaker, why we must reject the policies that come from the hon. members of the opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe there's a great deal more that we can do in this whole area of addressing poverty, and I will be encouraging our government to expand our social housing initiatives. I'll be encouraging our government to increase the minimum wage, and I'm going to be encouraging our government to look at sharply increasing benefits to those with disabilities, Mr. Speaker. I think these are important areas.

People, Mr. Speaker, ought to be able to work full-time at minimum wage and have a livelihood above the poverty line in this province, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to see our minimum wage move in that direction.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to, I want to make sure that every person who has a disability in this province has an adequate income to live on. And I know that that's an objective that's shared by all members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I personally favour an increase in the basic allowance for those on social assistance as it applies to food, clothing, Mr. Speaker — food, clothing, and personal items. I think we need to increase this, Mr. Speaker. This I know, Mr. Speaker, is not something that other members of the House advocate. I advocate it, Mr. Speaker. I want to see lineups at food banks go down, not up.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think . . . I know that many of those who use our food banks are those on social assistance. And I think that the only way of getting those lineups down, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that we combine a commitment to promote independence and work, with compassion in our social assistance system, Mr. Speaker. So I stand for an increase in the basic allowance on food, clothing, and personal items, Mr. Speaker, and I also stand for a commitment to promote independence and reduce the number of people who are employable on our social assistance rolls.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And, Mr. Speaker, that means providing even more incentives for those on assistance to move into the

workplace and keep more of their money when they do. It means, Mr. Speaker, ensuring a decent minimum wage in this province. It means providing new work opportunities, like the support we've given to the Quint Neighbourhood Development Corporation in Saskatoon, to people living in low-income neighbourhoods, and it means a decent income security safety net, Mr. Speaker. And those all have to be there in combination. If they're not, Mr. Speaker, we won't crack this problem.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word about our environmental policies in closing my throne . . . my role in the Throne Speech debate. And I want to say that I welcome the announcement that our government has made on a forest renewal program to plant at least a hundred million new trees over the next four years.

That's an exciting commitment, Mr. Speaker. It's a commitment that's going to provide jobs in the North, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's going to also result, Mr. Speaker, in an important initiative in terms of forest renewal in our province.

And I also, Mr. Speaker, want to say how pleased I am to see the commitment that's being made by our government to increase assistance to municipalities fighting Dutch elm disease. This, Mr. Speaker, is something we really need to keep . . . we need to keep our eye on the ball with respect to Dutch elm disease. It is steadily spreading throughout our province.

And the best measure, Mr. Speaker, is to take preventive action, and that means good pruning programs in all the municipalities in our province. That's the best way to guard against Dutch elm disease, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased to see a commitment from our government to increase assistance to municipalities in this regard.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say with respect to the environment that I pledge my commitment, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly, to work for policies that will enhance our environment. I think that all governments in this country need to pay more attention to a sustainable environmental policy, and there are many, many exciting things that we can do in this regard. And I want to make reference to a few of them this morning, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that first of all I think that there is a great deal more that we can be doing in this Assembly to promote an environmentally sustainable energy policy. And this is something that I hope will ultimately be endorsed by all members of this House. This, Mr. Speaker, should not be a political issue. This is a matter of simply an environmentally responsible approach to human behaviour on our planet.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you look around at what other jurisdictions in Europe and North America are doing, you can see a lot of evidence of the success of initiatives around energy conservation and renewable energy development. I see, Mr. Speaker, that two are east. The governments in the United States have pursued successfully major conservation initiatives, especially in the New England states. Mr. Speaker.

(1200)

I look immediately to our south and I see that many of the

southern states have now got wind generation projects going. In fact our neighbouring province of Alberta has a very successful wind generating initiative, Mr. Speaker.

My dream, Mr. Speaker, is that our government, with support from all members of this House, will launch a major initiative around energy conservation and renewable energy development with a major focus on wind power, a major focus on solar energy, and a massive focus on job creation effort around energy conservation.

And I want say, Mr. Speaker, that I see the beginnings of that in the very positive announcements by the Minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation, of the agreement between SaskPower and Honeywell and SaskEnergy and Honeywell on the conducting of energy audits for both commercial customers and residential customers. That's a very positive announcement, Mr. Speaker, and it will lay the foundation for the kind of a program that I'm envisioning.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that we need to take a more aggressive approach around all our policies with respect to climate change. There is now growing evidence that even the commitments that were made at Kyoto will not be enough to grapple with the climate change problem. What scientists, renowned scientists around the world are saying is, we've got to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 30 to 40 per cent of what they were in 1990 — not just 6 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

That's going to require a determined effort by all members of this Assembly. We need to look at our transportation system. We need to look at all aspects of our energy system and we need to come forward with an aggressive climate change, greenhouse gas reduction program, Mr. Speaker. That's what I'll be standing for and supporting in this Assembly on behalf of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to see our government focus more attention on the development of neighbourhood based recycling centres in all our urban municipalities. Any urban municipality that's interested, Mr. Speaker, in advancing their recycling program, I'd like to see the province working with that municipality and providing with assistance. I don't think we can afford door-to-door recycling services in our province but I think we can afford to set up effective neighbourhood recycling centres, Mr. Speaker, in all our communities, and that's what I'd like to see us achieve.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to see us take action with respect to reducing public exposure to pesticide contamination. And I think one of the ways we could begin to do that, Mr. Speaker, and show respect for each other, is to encourage municipal governments and look at possibly legislation at the provincial level which would require in urban settings individuals to post their lawns before they spray with pesticides, Mr. Speaker. I think that that would be a progressive measure, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I hear other members of the Assembly have been saying to me, have been asking me about my views on uranium, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to assure you that my views on uranium mining have not changed.

I also, Mr. Speaker, know that a decision on uranium mining

has been made. I continue to hold the view that we shouldn't expand the uranium industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. My mind has not changed on that because of the relationship between uranium mining and nuclear weapons proliferation, Mr. Speaker, and because of our inability to yet find a safe way of disposing of nuclear waste.

But I respect the decision that my party has made on this issue. I respect the decision that my government has made on this issue even though I don't agree with it, Mr. Speaker.

There are many, many other exciting environmental issues to work on. I'm going to work, Mr. Speaker, to do my best to make sure that Saskatchewan uranium doesn't go into nuclear weapons. I'm going to do my best, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we have a safe method of disposing of our uranium tailings in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to say that I both respect the decision of my colleagues and continue to hold my views, Mr. Speaker, and appreciate the fact that my colleagues respect my views even though they don't share them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — So, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be on this side of the House with the kind of support that I have from my colleagues and respecting my ability to take a position on this issue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a great many positive initiatives put forward in the Speech from the Throne. I'm proud of this agenda, Mr. Speaker. I think it's one of the most progressive agendas that the New Democratic Party has run on. And I see many, many commitments that we made in the election reflected in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. I think our government will in many ways be enhanced now through the coalition arrangement that we have because we'll have some of the best ideas from the Liberal Party platform to consider as well in this coalition.

That, Mr. Speaker, I think will be very positive. Because the people of this province sent us a clear message — and the message that I'm committed to — and that is to work more together among the parties to advance the well-being of the people in this province. And I give my commitment, Mr. Speaker, to work with all hon. members on issues to see if we can find common ground as much as possible to advance the well-being of people in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity that I've had to participate in this Throne Speech debate and I want to say in closing that I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting the government motion.

And I want to, again, express my deep appreciation to the residents of Saskatoon Greystone for the trust that they have placed in me and promise them that I will do my very best to serve them well in the months and years ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pride that I rise this afternoon — I see now after the noon hour — on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Rivers is one of those unique little ridings or constituencies we have in this province. It surrounds the city of Prince Albert; we're a doughnut. We're trying to put the squeeze on it, so to speak. And, Mr. Speaker, what gives me great pride today, is in . . . for the first time in almost a decade that the constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers will have someone who will represent all the electors in this legislature and not just some of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, the breadth and depth of Saskatchewan Rivers flows from the towns of Birch Hills and Weldon, the native community of James Smith Indian reservation, north to the Prince Albert National Park. It goes on the west side from the communities of Mayview and Cookson and west — or east, pardon me — to a small village where everyone is in Love.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard many comments through the election and in this House about the highway system, and I want to say a few words about the highway system in my riding. I'm actually quite proud of it and, on a rare occasion, I want to thank actually the cabinet of the NDP government for the highways that I have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — The No. 55 highway from Prince Albert north to Meath Park; the No. 3 Highway that comes through the riding, going past the towns of Weldon, Birch Hills, and then north certainly on the No. 2 Highway to the national park. Of course, I am afraid that the reason that those highways are so well-maintained is to allow the MLA from the opposite side the opportunities to get to their cabins in the summertime.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, I want at this time to just take a few moments to thank all the constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers who have graciously awarded me the opportunity to spend some time in this House. We are looking forward to many, many years of representation here.

And I personally want to thank all those people who worked so diligently to ensure that I would be the representative for Saskatchewan Rivers. Mr. Speaker, many of my friends have taken great pride in the fact that finally in Saskatchewan Rivers one of their own, so to speak, is going to be here.

But I also want to take a little time, a personal note, to my family. My son and my daughter and my wife have made a great commitment and a great sacrifice so that someone such as myself, and all the members of the House, Mr. Speaker, can give of their personal time at many occasions to be able to participate in the exciting debates that take place in this House; and I am looking forward to taking part in many of those

debates in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the history of myself in politics has been long and, although for many years, certainly small time. For my family it has also been a large commitment for us to be involved in our community development. One of the great pleasures that we hold dear to our hearts is that when this province was formed in 1905, there was a small school district formed, east of Weyburn, a community of Griffin, and one of the founding members of that school board was my grandfather.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, one of the large parts of the riding is the farming community. We are very blessed this year. We've heard speeches. We have had the debate here on Tuesday that took us well into the evening — very interesting I must say, Mr. Speaker — and I am very proud of this House to have allowed that to happen. We're going to go down into history, a little footnote so to speak, but still we will go down in history for having that happen.

Fortunately, unfortunately for us though in the North is that even though prices are depressed and families are having a hard time making ends meet, this year we were blessed with a bumper crop and families will be able to get by for one more year.

But farming of course is not the only things that are happening in my constituency. Some of the communities are being very progressive, try to develop a new future for themselves so that they not become solely reliant on the farming community.

Mr. Speaker, one of the communities, Birch Hills, is actually working quite hard to develop their own processing plant where they will produce strawboard for a very large market. Strawboard, Mr. Speaker, is a very economically produced product, very strong in strength, but it's taking quite a bit of work on the part of the community to pull all of this together. They're having a great deal of trouble getting future capital that they so desperately need, but they are determined to go ahead and make it happen, and we should salute them; and I am going to work with them.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly blessed in that I have inside my riding the national park of Prince Albert. And, Mr. Speaker, one thing we really like to brag about in our part of the world is the pristine beauty of the park, the welcoming nature of the community of Waskesiu as they welcome visitors every year. And of course one of the most outstanding features of the park, Mr. Speaker, is that it has a world-class golf course.

(1215)

But of course we're also blessed in my constituency is immediately outside the golf course — as the cabinet opposite is well aware — is we have a second world-class golf course. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency alone, there are 12 golf courses so we are truly a constituency that promotes, encourages, and welcomes tourism.

The north part of the riding, taking in the resort communities of Candle Lake, Anglin Lake, Christopher Lake, Emma Lake, and

certainly the national park — both one of the active and progressive resorts in the province, Mr. Speaker — these communities of course are not that well populated in the wintertime, often shrinking to several hundred people. But in the summertime when people are able to take their holidays, enjoy time with their family and friends, these communities swell into the tens of thousands bringing much-needed dollars into these communities. Many of these visitors are certainly from outside the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's important at this time not only to speak about where I'm from and a little bit about who I am, I think it's very important that we spend some time talking about the Throne Speech that the Governor General brought to us on Monday. We were certainly, on this side of the House, very anticipatory, looking forward to some exciting change from the coalition government.

It certainly, in my mind, was a brand new day. Unfortunately, that day was sad. It is rare — very rare, Mr. Speaker — that a government admits that having been in power for eight years, they're not able to talk about the accomplishments that they've had being as, Mr. Speaker, there was none.

They spoke about poverty, our children leaving the province. They talk about a government having to speak up for farmers. They spoke about the health care system. They spoke about developing new partnerships with our Aboriginal communities. And they spoke to some small degree about education in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is Canada, this is Saskatchewan. I think it is with a great deal of regret that we need to talk about poverty in this hallowed hall. With the wealth that is in this province and with proper management, poverty should not exist to any extent at all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, in a previous life, having worked with children, it was always distressing to me that we had to have programs in place so that children who came to school in the morning could have breakfast. Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan this should not be an existing program.

The Throne Speech talks about reducing this problem. Mr. Speaker, this is Saskatchewan. With the wealth of this province this should not even be existing. We should be talking about eliminating it, period.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, we've heard figures in this House that poverty has been reduced to a small degree. Unfortunately, what I feel very strongly about is that those families finally gave up on this government, gave up on this province. And instead of the government taking credit for reducing the poverty, we're probably having to give credit to our neighbours in Alberta for taking those families in and providing them with quality jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — We talked about the kids leaving this province to escape the poverty that we have here. Is there a plan to keep those kids here? No.

Mr. Speaker, it is a proven fact that the only way to develop this province, keep our kids here for the future so that we will have future taxpayers in this province, is to reduce taxes. And we need to reduce taxes, not in graduated steps, not a little bit at a time, but by large amounts and in the very near, near future as promoted by the tax review committee established by the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — It is only through tax deductions, tax reductions, Mr. Speaker, that jobs can and will be created. It is much easier for a family to work in an environment that promotes good wealth and good health, that a family will stay. We are not promoting that today, Mr. Speaker, and we should be ashamed of ourselves.

And we need to work very hard to ensure that the kids that we are training in our universities and in our post-secondary institutions remain here to become an integral part of the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we woke up on September 17 with the realization that politics in Saskatchewan have changed forever. That, Mr. Speaker, was the brand new day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what we found out on September 17 was that there is a divisiveness in this province that hurts me to the very core. We found out on that day that the people of the cities of Saskatchewan have been left out of the problems that the farming community is suffering. They felt as though they were isolated from it. The government promised them that they would be isolated from it.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this fall the province has finally admitted that the reality is the cities are starting to feel the brunt of the downturn in the farm economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that this House stand up for that most basic element of Saskatchewan's economic backbone and that is the farm community. There are many good things happening in this province, and many more good economic possibilities could be developed.

But, Mr. Speaker, farming is the backbone that built this province, and farming is the backbone that will carry it into the new millennium. And it is time for all of us to stand up, Mr. Speaker, and protect that very element of our society that got us to where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, there were some notes in the Throne Speech — and I refer to them as notes — about changes in the health care system. Now I am quite concerned about changes to the health care system. We were promised change before; health care will be better.

Well, Mr. Speaker, health care became better for the

administrators. There was jobs created in the health care sector, Mr. Speaker, for the administrators. Hospitals were closed, nurses let go, replaced with administrators. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've even heard that we may not even need doctors that much; we can replace them with administrators.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, what we need are health care providers. We have lots of administrators in the health care system already. If we are going to reduce the amount of health care centres we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, we do not need to maintain the amount of administrators that we have had in the past. The fewer health care centres, the fewer administrators. We should in fact, Mr. Speaker, have more dollars in that case to put into front-line health care.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that has not been the vision of this government. The vision of this government, Mr. Speaker, seems to have been to actually attack the very fabric that has protected our long cherished health care system created in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid that there are people who have long since left us who must be turning over in their graves thinking about the health care system and the legacy that has been created in this province.

Mr. Speaker, living in a constituency that has six native communities, I'm certainly lucky to have an opportunity to know a lot of the issues surrounding Aboriginals, the First Nation communities — their desires, their wants for the future, what they are expecting from us and from themselves for now and in the future, and certainly for their children. But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, a lot of their dreams do not coincide with the dreams of the government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, one of the communities that I'm actually very blessed, I must say, to have in my constituency is the community of Muskoday. Muskoday, as you may know, Mr. Speaker, has been recognized as developing one of the first self-governing communities for Aboriginals in the country. It is progressive; it is dynamic; and they are determined not to follow the status quo of this province. And they are going to, Mr. Speaker, create jobs in their community, for their children, for the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — They are not going to have a run-amok social assistance system in their community that simply throws out dollars so that reduces the dignity of their community. They want to reverse that trend, Mr. Speaker, so that dignity is restored to their community, restored to their people, and we should applaud them for their progressive and aggressive attitude.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, it's getting to that time of the day that I'm starting to get dry in the throat and you're probably getting tired of listening of me, but I want to take a minute just to offer my Season's Greetings to you, to the rest of the House, and may you all have a joyous Christmas season.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that I am in favour of the amendment as brought forth by the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are into the debates following the Speech from the Throne, and we've heard some excellent debates, Mr. Speaker.

And there is a lot to talk about in this document because it's a great document. I want to be able to do so at a bit more length than just a minute or two, and I know that there are members in this House now that feel this is about the appropriate time to close the House down and to go home to our families and our friends for the weekend, Mr. Speaker.

So with that I would move that the debate now adjourn.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The government Deputy House Leader has moved that the House do now adjourn. Before I call for the question may I beg again your indulgence to commend each and every one of the new members here on their presentations and their sincere efforts on behalf of the people that have allowed them to serve on their behalf here in this Assembly.

And also wish each and every one of you a safe journey home and some quality time with the loved ones that I'm sure will be happy to see you spend some time with them this weekend. Have an enjoyable weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

