

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a substantial number of petitions that I wish to present today and I believe these represent the feelings of people all across this province and therefore I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provision 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 a person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

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

And Mr. Speaker, these come from all across Saskatchewan — from Prince Albert, from Lloydminster, from Saskatoon, Regina, Wynyard, and literally all across Saskatchewan from people from around this province. And it's a petition that I think represents their attitude toward the no-fault problems.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the petitions presented at the last sitting have been reviewed and found to be in order. Therefore under rule 12(7) the following petition is received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to repeal the personal injury benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 11 ask the government the following question, and this is directed to the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) and I read:

What year was the Quebec task force on whiplash-associated disorders adopted by the SGI as a rehabilitation model to be used here and what other studies were used by SGI in developing its rehabilitation program; (2) what clinical studies were used by the government or SGI in making the decision to use the Quebec task force as a model for its personal injury protection plan; (3) has anyone at SGI or in the government studied the four different critiques that have now been published, arguing that the findings of the Quebec task force were faulty, and what is SGI's view of these critiques; and (4) what role does or did David Cassidy play in the research study being

conducted at the University of Saskatchewan and funded in part by SGI into no-fault insurance and rehabilitation, is Mr. Cassidy still working on this project, and if not, what are the circumstances surrounding his departure.

Thank you.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister responsible for Sask Water: (1) how many appeals are currently awaiting a hearing before or a decision by the Water Appeal Board; (2) how many appeals have been concluded by the Water Appeal Board in each month of 1999; (3) of the cases currently awaiting a hearing before give the length of time that each has been waiting for a hearing. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to the Assembly, in your gallery, Mr. Tom Felsing. Tom is the vice-president of the Saskatchewan Hemophilia Society, and we had a meeting this morning and he's here to watch proceedings. I would ask all members to please welcome Tom.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I have a number of introductions I'd like to make and they follow the petitions that I've just recently presented. There are three people with us today, one of them is already in your gallery and the other two will be joining them as soon as they're through with the media interviews. These people represent all of the Saskatchewan victims of no-fault, and those three people that are here today representing the no-fault victims are Lorie Terry, Brenda Kienas, and Patricia Schryver. And I would ask for the rest of the members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House, a couple of individuals who are seated in your gallery. First, Mr. Terry Mountjoy, who is the manager of social development for the city of Regina, and Ms. Christine Deiter, who is a program co-ordinator with the north-central community society safety services program. I would ask all members to extend these two visitors a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you today and to the other members of this Assembly, a group of students from the Robert Southey School. They are seated in the east gallery. They have had a busy day today I understand. This morning they attended the U of R (University of Regina). They also were out at CKCK-TV and also at the *Leader-Post*. They are the media 20 class from Robert Southey School. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Ritter, and one of the chaperones, Mrs. Hoffman.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there's another individual I'd like to introduce to you this afternoon, and that is a former member of Last Mountain-Touchwood, Mr. Dale Flavel. He's seated in your gallery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly a long-time friend of mine and a fine farmer and businessman from Marquis, Saskatchewan, in the east gallery, Mr. Chuck Guillaume. I'd ask the members to make him welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see someone else in your gallery that I should like to introduce to you and through you to the members. And I refer to Delora Parisian, who is a program co-ordinator with the Regina Action Committee for Children at Risk. I would also ask members to bid her a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, three gentlemen sitting in your gallery. Mr. George Godenir was the reeve of the R.M. (rural municipality) of Storthoaks No. 31; Roland Poirier from Bellegarde, and a neighbour of theirs from Manitoba, Murray, who are here to discuss some agricultural issues. And I would ask that the Assembly make them welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join the opposition Health critic in welcoming Tom Felsing to the Legislative Assembly. I'm no doubt looking forward to question period as is the member from the opposition Health critic. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If I may before we move on, I'd also like to add my welcome to everyone that's here today, and also to my neighbour and former colleague of this Assembly. Welcome to everybody.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Internet Site for Agricultural Sector

Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, this may be old news to many people in the province, but I was pleased to learn the other day that farmers and other members of the agricultural sector now have access to the latest information concerning their business — this by way of an Internet site operated by our Department of Agriculture and Food under the direction of Mr. Travis Asmundson.

Computers and the Internet have become important tools for most business and it's no different for farmers. They need fast information on commodity prices, input costs, and the latest

news on the federal government's inaction. The site can help by providing a wealth of information, and, Mr. Speaker, it can provide that information at any time of the day. Many of the 15,000 hits a month come at 5 or 6 in the morning.

This is just one more way our government is working with the agricultural community during this troubled time and all times. Mr. Speaker, this web site is a real help for the farmers in this province. The address is: www.agr.gov.sk.ca. I hope many use it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anderson Team Wins JVC Skins Games

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I would like to rise to bring notice on behalf of one of the constituents of Redberry Lake, and certainly one of the former constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Speaker, Sherry Anderson, curling out of the Saskatoon Nutana rink, this weekend won the Skins game in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, again one of Saskatchewan women's curling teams has brought great distinction to our province and, more specifically, to themselves. Although the financial reward is significant, Mr. Speaker, what needs to be noted is that Ms. Anderson and her team won all except one skin at the competition.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Assembly, please join me in congratulating the team of Sherry Anderson, Kim Hodson, Sandra Mulroney, and Donna Gignac.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Credit Union

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have some good news that I'm happy to say is coming out of my hometown of Saskatoon.

The Saskatoon Credit Union recently passed a resolution that flies in the face of the approach taken by the large financial institutions. Instead of announcing massive layoffs, the Saskatoon Credit Union has decided to offer its employees solid employment security and opportunities for personal development.

Quite a novel idea in today's business world. But the Saskatoon Credit Union knows that happy employees that work in a secure and positive environment will serve their members better.

A recent focus group showed that members value personal touch and a high level of trust in the staff that help them above all else. So the credit union is giving members what they want.

The Saskatoon Credit Union is 60 years old and has eight branches in Saskatoon and Warman. It employs over 200 people and serves more than 50,000 members.

The credit union is on the right track for building its own success, but also helping to build a stronger province. Please join me in my support for their employment security policy.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moosomin Hospital

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well, just to add a little more to the member's statement I gave on Friday regarding health services in my constituency.

Attending the opening of the new medical clinic in Rocanville, I had the privilege of talking to a couple of the doctors who are quite involved in the operating room that is just being resurrected in the community of Moosomin.

And certainly we have to say thank you as well. I think the minister is beginning to recognize that there is more than just Regina and Saskatoon.

And what I can say from the discussion, and not only with the doctors, but personnel involved in the operation of that operating room, is the fact that there are services available; people are using them. In fact in the local paper, I believe the comment was, rather than waiting for months at Moosomin right now, you can get the service within two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, what it does say, it just shows that people in Saskatchewan, if given the opportunity, can certainly provide the services that are needed; that health care can be delivered outside of our large urban centres. And again my hat goes off to the community of Moosomin and the medical staff and professionals for a service well-deserved, well-earned and I wish them well in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

United Way of Regina

Mr. Yates: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to give my sincere congratulations to the United Way of Regina on a stellar performance in this year's fundraising campaign.

United Way, with the help of organizations and individuals, has raised over \$1.9 million, surpassing the \$1.85 million dollar goal they set. I am certain this money will be spent in good ways, and it is nice to see this kind of charity and kindness during the holiday season.

I would especially like to thank our own provincial government employees who raised, collectively, \$205,000 towards the United Way campaign. This includes the people in our government departments, agencies, boards and commissions who organized fundraising activities and then gave what they could. I think their success, and the effort of the entire campaign is proof of the generous and co-operative attitude of Saskatchewan people. In fact, it would be nice to see all of us acting like this every single day.

Please join me in congratulating the United Way on its 1999 campaign. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Native Healing Centres

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In health care today we hear a great deal about million dollar machines and all the high-tech gizmos which we realize make diagnosis and treatment quicker and more effective, and a little more expensive.

However, Mr. Speaker, it's also a fact that we should not lose sight of what's traditionally made medicine and healing more human and humane. No matter how technologically advanced we get, we're still mortal and much of healing is still a mystery.

In recognition of this, the Regina General and the Pasqua Hospital have opened native healing centres. The opening at the General occurred last Friday. Both centres contain a circular area which provides space for cross-cultural training sessions, a sanctuary for families, a place for burning sweet grass and for holding healing ceremonies. Wasakaw Pisim Native Counselling Services, under director Lynda Francis, provides these services.

Mr. Speaker, the hospital for any of us can be a confusing and frightening place. It's important if we can improve the feeling of welcome and familiarity, that we do it. So I'm proud that our health system has the ability to recognize alternative healing methods and the courage to integrate them into the mix.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

No-fault Insurance

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for SGI's (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) faulty, no-fault insurance scheme.

Mr. Minister, your no-fault insurance system isn't working, at least it's not working for the people who need it the most. No-fault insurance is protecting common criminals who use motor vehicles to assault innocent victims.

No-fault insurance is protecting large multinational companies from product liability. But no-fault insurance is not protecting a lot of people who rely on it for the coverage after a serious accident.

Today the Saskatchewan Party tabled a petition signed by hundreds and hundreds of people who have had the unfortunate experience of dealing with SGI's no-fault insurance system. They all say the same thing, Mr. Minister. The NDP's (New Democratic Party) version of no-fault insurance is a failure.

Mr. Minister, where is the independent review of no-fault insurance? Why hasn't the NDP established an independent body to review the no-fault insurance system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the

legislation that created this personal injury protection plan for Saskatchewan Government Insurance, a review process was set in place in the legislation. The review is to take place within five years after the introduction of the legislation which was January 1, 1995.

We will be appointing that committee very shortly, within the next week. And in that time, that whole process will be set out in an independent way which will allow for those people who have concerns with the program to register them there.

I know that SGI is quite interested in hearing about good things that can be done to improve automobile insurance for all of us here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Minister, there are less than three weeks before the end of the year. Three weeks before the deadline for establishing a committee to review no-fault insurance. And still we get from the NDP lame excuses and hollow promises. Maybe you should consult your colleague, the NDP Minister of Education.

A few months back when the member from Saskatoon, masquerading as a Liberal candidate, promised to scrap the no-fault insurance system. In fact, the Saskatchewan Trial Lawyers Association even made your Minister of Education the anti-no-fault insurance poster boy.

Mr. Minister, is that the position of the NDP government? Will you be taking the position of your so called NDP-Liberal coalition partner and scrap the no-fault insurance program or is it just another Liberal platform promise that we can chalk up to meaningless Liberal campaign rhetoric.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in this matter things are unfolding as they should. The review will be held at the appropriate time. It'll be announced very shortly.

I think it's very important to note that when the legislation was created there was a built-in review because of the concerns that this is something new. What we do know is that, in the new government that we have here, we are working together with all of the information that we have from both of our coalition partners and we will continue to use that information after we have received the independent review from the committee that will be set-up. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before I call for the next question, I'm just going to remind members to please address their questions through the Chair.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, the Saskatchewan Party has been calling for an independent review of the no-fault insurance system as you know. We called for the review to be headed by a retired judge to ensure no government interference. We call for an extensive public consultation to be part of the review. And the Saskatchewan Party committed during the

election to have the review report back to the government before the end of 1999.

Mr. Minister, will you commit today to establish a fully independent committee headed by a retired judge to review the no-fault insurance system including a comprehensive public consultation, and will you make the commitment to have the review completed in time to report to the legislature on the first day of the spring session?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the independent will be . . . I mean, the review will be independent and it will take place over the next number of months. We are going to be making sure that the matter will be dealt with in a fair, reasonable way that deals with all of the concerns of the members of the public because we want to improve what is a very good automobile insurance system and make it even better, and the only way we can do that is if we listen carefully to our report from the independent review as well as the comments from the public and as well as the information that we have as coalition partners in this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Minister, you . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. I just want to remind the member to address your question through the Chair.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your Minister of Education went to a rally during the election last fall. He promised to scrap the no-fault insurance system. But today when the same people came to the legislature with petitions opposing no-fault, the so-called Liberal leader didn't have the courage to talk to them and refused to accept their petitions.

Mr. Speaker, when it came time for the Liberal leader to stand up and be counted, he chose instead to tuck . . . to tuck his top between his legs and run.

Is that what the people of Saskatchewan can expect from the Liberal-NDP coalition — broken campaign promises and ministers that run away from tough decisions? Mr. Minister, thousands of people have been devastated by the NDP no-fault insurance system.

Want to make you a commitment . . . We want you to make a commitment that you actually will keep. Will you commit today to a fully independent review of the no-fault insurance system headed by a retired judge; and will you commit to have the committee report back to the legislature no later than the end of March?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there never has been any other plan than to have an independent review and that is what's set out in the legislation to be dealt with. We are going to listen to what the people have to say through the independent commission. We're also going to listen to all the concerns that we've received over the last number of years. We're also going

to listen to all of those people who say that this new program has helped them in a better way than was ever possible before.

What we want is the best insurance system for our people in Saskatchewan and we ask that all members of this House contribute to that. We look forward to any advice that you might have and we'll look forward to all of the information that we get.

Our plan in this government, Mr. Speaker, is to work together and listen to the people of Saskatchewan. We know that even some of the members on that side of the House have said that this new legislature should include the views of all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Compensation for People Infected with Tainted Blood

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, many other provinces are now compensating persons who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood before 1986 or after 1990. However, here in Saskatchewan, these tainted blood victims receive nothing. It's another example of your two-tiered health care where people in Saskatchewan are treated like second-class citizens.

Madam Minister, more and more provinces across this country are moving towards fair compensation for all victims of tainted blood. When is Saskatchewan going to do the right thing and provide fair compensation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the federal government and the province of Saskatchewan, and in fact the majority of provinces in this country, agree that the most appropriate way to assist people infected with hepatitis C outside of the 1986 to 1991 window is to properly ensure that they have access to very good medical services.

Mr. Speaker, we support that position and we support continuing to work with the federal government to ensure that people infected have access to the very best services we can afford.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is again for the minister. Madam Minister, you say that the provinces are all in agreement with the federal government's position. That isn't quite correct.

Ontario has set aside \$200 million to compensate hep C victims directly. They have already provided \$10,000 for every victim, and that package is likely to increase to over \$30,000 with full comprehensive benefits over the next few weeks. Quebec is providing \$80 million to victims in that province. And Manitoba, your NDP neighbour, is moving towards compensation. Yet Saskatchewan is doing nothing.

Madam Minister, there are only 50 people in Saskatchewan

who require compensation. If you were to provide somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$30,000, like Ontario is considering, it would cost one and a half million dollars. That seems to be a reasonable price to pay to ensure fair treatment for those victims of tainted blood in Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, are you going to provide a fair compensation package for tainted blood victims or are you going to continue to treat them like second-class citizens?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the member knows financial assistance is available to people who were infected through the blood system between 1996 and 1990. It's during those periods that some of these infections could have been prevented had the Canadian blood system been introduced, and introduced certain kinds of screening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to maintain the position, as do a large majority of the provinces and territories in this country, that we want to ensure that people infected outside of the 1986 to 1990 window receive the very best health services that we can afford. And we anticipate that in the next several weeks, that the federal government and the provinces will have something to announce on this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Madam Minister, where is the compassion of your department in this province? It seems as if everything is run by a bunch of bean-counters and everything has to boil down to absolute dollars and cents.

But not everyone on that side of the House agrees with your position. The Education minister refuses to answer anything in this House but he seems to have no problem talking to reporters outside of it. And so maybe he will answer this question, even if it is about that, because he talks about it outside.

(1400)

Mr. Minister of Education, you promised that there'd be fair compensation for all tainted blood victims. You said the province has a moral obligation to treat all victims equally. You said you were going to help those people. Where are you when they need you? Are you going to provide fair compensation for these victims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, in September the people of this province sent a very important message, a very important message that they wanted their government to change in a number of important ways. They wanted all politicians in this legislature to listen carefully to them and to listen carefully to each other. They wanted a more open and more accountable government.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing this. We have two separate parties. We're finding common ground on a number of areas as we advance the cause of social justice in the province of

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We're going through our budget process for the year 2000-2001, and I think that you will see real evidence which we certainly saw in the Throne Speech. I think we'll see it in the budget when the coalition government takes its first budget to the people — the first budget of the new millennium, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Interim Rate Review Panel

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Mr. Minister, this morning the interim rate review panel recommended an increase of 9.1 per cent in SaskEnergy rates. The committee appears to have done a very thorough job in considering the date the increase will take effect — its effect on the consumers and on the cost of delivery and product for SaskEnergy.

Mr. Minister, while responding to questions from the media this morning, the interim committee chairperson indicated they will also be reviewing other rate increase proposals before a permanent committee is in place.

Mr. Minister, what other utility rate increases are being proposed? And if this is the case, why will you not name the permanent committee immediately?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are working with the Saskatchewan interim rate review panel and I would like to publicly thank them for doing a good job in a very quick period of time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We are using some of the information that we gather as this interim panel reviews various aspects of the public utility rates to form what we do when we develop a permanent body.

As we have said before, as we have said in the Throne Speech, we will be bringing forward a report to the Crown Corporations Committee of this legislature so that the legislature can have a debate within that committee and then obviously, following that, when we bring forth legislation in this House.

At the present time we are dealing with the SaskEnergy rate increase. We will be responding to other rate increases as they arise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, we just had the previous question not answered, but we also had some discussion on information that was presented by that particular committee.

This interim rate review committee said they didn't get the public response they expected during the consultation process.

Mr. Minister, the committee held two public meetings in Saskatoon and Regina. They didn't visit any other Saskatchewan communities. They received telephone calls, eleven written and eight e-mail submissions. They received four written reports from organizations.

Mr. Minister, this lack of public response can be attributed to the public simply not being aware of how to access the committee and that they were welcome to give input. It is also because the public lacks confidence in that particular process.

The committee stated this morning they want to look at how to make the process more open and accessible to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, how do you plan to ensure greater public access to this consultation process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question. Because what it does do is allow me the opportunity to say that we have set up an interim rate review panel which is independent. They set up their procedure on how they deal with these matters. I know that they are evaluating themselves what's happened in this last review part. And they will, if another rate review comes forward, look at some of the concerns.

If the hon. member or other members on the opposite side of the House have further suggestions about this, I would request that they direct them to Mr. Fiske as the Chair of that committee, and I'm sure that he will take their suggestions to heart and use them when they're necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that if this actually takes place, they would listen to all the concerns that were raised, not just some. Because if it's some, we know who's going to filter all the concerns. And that scares everybody in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this interim rate review committee has begun an important process, a process that should give the public most affected by the utility rate increases, more input before an increase is approved. A process which should instill confidence in the Saskatchewan taxpayers that the utility rates they pay are representative of the service they receive.

Mr. Minister, there is no reason to delay the appointment of a permanent committee to conduct this important process. Mr. Minister, if there are other Crowns preparing to hike their rates and if we need to re-examine the consultation process, then a permanent committee should be named immediately.

What purpose is this interim committee serving that a permanent one would not? Mr. Minister, when do you plan to appoint a permanent rate review committee. When?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the question on behalf of the government to say that there will be an announcement respecting the appointment of a permanent

committee as the minister has outlined already, repeatedly, in his statements.

We have now the current approach undertaken under the SaskEnergy application. We are going to go to Crown Corporations Committee for their input, as the Speech from the Throne has indicated. So there's no doubt about it that we're on that track and we should be clear about that.

I do want to, however, say before I take my place, Mr. Speaker, that in 1996 in a letter written to the project manager studying the Saskatchewan Crowns in this province, signed by . . . and I'm reading from a letter, so therefore, I'm not breaking the rules of the House . . . Bill Boyd, Leader of the PC (Progressive Conservative) Party, under a document entitled *The Privatization Dividend*. Quote: "The government immediately take steps to privatize SaskTel through a public share offering under the guidelines outlined in Section 3 of this . . . (section)."

And that was followed . . . and that was followed . . . on March 10, 1998, the Saskatchewan Party leadership candidates meet Kindersley constituency, quote, . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Next question.

Highway Maintenance

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, I recently received an e-mail regarding Highway 28, south of Radville. It's from a school bus driver who is very concerned about the safety of the children. It reads:

We travel alot of miles on this road and the children are scared . . . The dips and holes and bumps . . . (in) this road make it very hazardous. Not to mention, meeting another vehicle cause the bus to sway from side to side. If the bus sways towards a vehicle, it feels like we would collide. There are no shoulders on this highway, so it is impossible to pull over. We are very concerned about the safety of the children. We have had enough. What are you going to do about this?

Mr. Minister, your highways are endangering lives. What are you going to do about it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, of course, we in the Ministry of Highways are equally concerned of the safety of students as they ride the buses to school on the roads. Also, the highways budget has increased over the last number of years, and certainly, if we had the federal funding to put into the highways we would do considerably better on the roads that we have here in Saskatchewan.

As an example, Mr. Speaker, over the last ten years, the average contribution by the federal government to our highways has been \$8 million a year. Obviously, if we had more money from the federal government we could do a lot more on roads that the member describes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this is not a new issue. The former Highways minister who was from this constituency was told about the danger and did nothing about it. Mr. Minister, children should not have to fear for their safety every time they take the bus to school. Parents should not have to worry every time they put their children on a school bus. Yet that's exactly what's happening south of Radville.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, this is unacceptable; when are you going to fix Highway 28?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my earlier answer, we as well are obviously concerned about the safety of the public and especially the school children if they're riding back and forth on buses to schools.

Again we'll do our very best to ensure that the roads are safe. This past . . . about three weeks ago . . . we announced the winter highway projects tenders, I should say, at least three weeks in advance. That tender included \$44 million which of course will go to the improvements of roads.

We're doing our very best with the budget that we have, but as I've said often in many speeches that I've given, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has more roads than Alberta and Manitoba combined, with barely a third of the population. It's a huge infrastructure to maintain for a very small population and tax base. We'll do our very best, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Premier asked why the Saskatchewan Party is so concerned about the coalition government. It's because your deal to buy off the Liberal means four more years of the same unacceptable government Saskatchewan people voted against on September 16. The Liberals promised to spend every dime of fuel tax on highways, but the NDP platform contained no new money for highways. And it's the NDP platform that won the day.

Mr. Premier, you said you wanted a serious question. Here's a serious question: how much longer do parents have to fear for the safety of their children when they put them on the school bus to Radville?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to underline the words said by the Minister of Highways, who I think very responsibly has indicated the task which is facing us.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have more highways in Saskatchewan than the province of Ontario at 11 million people. We have more highways than Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and P.E.I. put together.

This is an enormous task and we understand how the history of this arose. And we're repairing highways in a very, very

top-notch manner — in the best manner that we can afford with respect to the budget of the province of Saskatchewan.

But I noticed something about this session, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the so-called Saskatchewan Party. If you take a look at the questions that have been advanced by the so-called Saskatchewan Party, they have tremendous ideas to spend money on everything. On absolutely everything. And they have tremendous ideas not only how to spend money but how they're going to give us more money by tax cuts. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it didn't work in the 1980s and it isn't going to work today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 206 — The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that item no. 6, Bill No. 206, The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act now be read the first time.

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

(1415)

Bill No. 1 — The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 1999 be now read the first time.

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

Bill No. 2 — The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 2, The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999, now be introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 3 — The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 4, The

Saskatchewan Pension Amendment Act, 1999, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 5 — The Parks Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 5, The Parks Amendment Act, 1999, be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Bill No. 6 — The Mentally Disordered Persons Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, The Mentally Disordered Persons Amendment Act, 1999 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I would ask for leave of the Assembly to introduce a motion to establish a special committee of the Assembly to address and to make recommendations on the issue of the abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade; and I would ask for that leave, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Special Committee on Child Sexual Abuse

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I have said many times before, and that is that we cannot allow the sexual exploitation of children, some as young as nine years old, to continue on the streets of our cities.

As a government we have taken a comprehensive approach to this problem, which I believe is sound, and which is based upon the advice and opinions of those who know best the problems these young people face and how they might most effectively be addressed. I am referring, of course, to youth themselves, as well as those who are directly involved with them on a daily basis. We have listened to their advice and we have acted on it.

In 1997-98, the government introduced a five-point strategy to fight the exploitation of children and youth on our streets. We amended The Child and Family Services Act to enable us to better protect child victims of sexual exploitation and increase penalties for offenders. These amendments will be proclaimed early in the new year. These changes, along with changes to the Criminal Code, have strengthened our legislative capacity to address this issue.

Over the past three years, we have contributed nearly \$1 million to outreach services for street youth and those whose are

sexually exploited on the street. Services were developed at the local level by community agencies involved in working with these children and youth.

And now, Mr. Speaker, as promised in the Speech from the Throne, we will be appointing an all-party committee of this House to provide further guidance to the government on this very serious issue.

As I said a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, considerable consultation and work has already been done by individuals, community, and professional groups working in partnership with the government.

In meeting the challenge which is put before them, the members of the all-party committee will build upon that valuable work. We believe the way to end the exploitation and victimization of our young people by those involved in the sex trade, Mr. Speaker, is to work together to find solutions.

Our children count on us, all of us, regardless of our political ideology, to protect them from those who would take advantage of their age and vulnerability. To this end, the government, we look forward to receiving the recommendations of this extremely important all-party committee.

Mr. Speaker, I would move:

That the members Julé, Prebble, Harper, Jones, Yates, Toth, and Draude be constituted a special committee to address and to make recommendations on the issue of the abuse and exploitation of children through the sex trade, and to consider and report on: (a) consultations with stakeholders that have an interest in this issue to determine the work that has been done to date by community representatives and service providers and seek their input on next steps to be taken by community and government; (b) the strategies employed by other jurisdictions and the effectiveness of their approaches; (c) reasons why children end up on the street in the first place and supports that may be necessary to help communities effectively deal with the sexual exploitation of children; (d) such other consultations that may be germane.

And that the committee have the power to sit during intersessional period and during the legislative session, except when the Assembly is sitting; and that the committee have the power to send for persons, papers, and records; to examine witnesses under oath; to receive representations from interested parties and individuals; to engage such advisers and assistants as are required for the purposes of the inquiry; and to hold meetings away from the seat of government in order that the fullest representations may be received without unduly inconveniencing those desired to be heard; and that the committee be instructed to submit its first report to the Legislative Assembly in the spring of the year 2000.

I so move, Mr. Speaker; seconded by the member for Humboldt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand today to second the motion put forth by the Minister of Social Services regarding the establishment of a special committee to deal with the subject of sexual abuse and exploitation of our children here in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is such an important committee because it is referring to the need our children have to be free from exploitation. Children are subject to exploitation, Mr. Speaker. And they are just that, Mr. Speaker. They are children. They are not clients; they are not short criminals or sexually promiscuous youngsters. They are God's children. And the commercial sexual exploitation of children is a form of child abuse and slavery.

Governments, communities, and society as a whole are responsible and must be held accountable for the sexual exploitation of children and youth. And, Mr. Speaker, it is in my view that existing strategies that are in place — be it the government has put some in place that they felt necessary and would work — it is my view that these strategies are not working effectively enough. There are gaps in the system that need to be addressed or our children will continue to be exploited.

A comprehensive agenda for action must be developed and recommendations implemented, because without all of the pieces in place, Mr. Speaker, children and youth in Saskatchewan will continue to be robbed of a normal childhood and will also continue to suffer sexual exploitation and its many interrelated consequences and detrimental impacts.

It is my greatest hope that the work of an all-party committee will result in bringing forward a comprehensive action plan to protect sexually exploited children and youth in Saskatchewan, to protect them from further violation and to assist them in healing on their journey through life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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. Kowalsky: — First of all, congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on taking on the challenge of the Speaker's Chair. It's a difficult job; there are times when all eyes are upon you. It requires a professional attitude. I know that you're up to it because you've shown your respect for this institution. And you've shown respect for democracy, you've shown a respect for the parliamentary system, and you've shown a respect for rule of law.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that you will follow the tradition of your predecessors and it's my hope, not only that you will perform competently, but that you will enjoy your new role as Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's good to be back. I'm kind of pleased about being back. And, Mr. Speaker, when I think about it, I think everybody in this Assembly should be pleased to be here. All the Saskatchewan Party people should be pleased. Because, Mr. Speaker . . . and they should be happy because they got more seats than they were expecting and anybody was expecting them to get. All the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, should be happy because they got more influence in government than anybody expected them to have. And, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats should be happy too because to come back for a third term into government, that's an accomplishment in itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take a minute to thank my family and my friends and my supporters back in Prince Albert Carlton for their continued support. For me this is my fourth election. It doesn't get any easier, Mr. Speaker, as you go into it. Every election has its own challenge. But I do want to mention that people that have stuck with me for four elections, and some new people that were added, I am very grateful.

I particularly want to thank for support my wife, Olesia, and our two daughters, Lisa and Laura. As you know, Mr. Speaker, when one enters a political arena, there's considerable adjustment on the part of a family. And the family has to learn to live with having a family member in politics and the fact that they have to accept that there's a father or a husband or a relative that is a politician. And I do have to say that I'm grateful for that and I'm glad that we have been able to make these adjustments.

(1430)

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about several items that arise from the Speech to the Throne. I want to talk first about jobs and the economy; secondly, about a couple of items about agriculture which is a very prominent part of Saskatchewan politics these days. And if time permits, to go on to issues regarding taxation, health, perhaps a bit about post-secondary education, and education.

Starting with jobs, Mr. Speaker, and the economy. When I was on the election trail, this was one of the topics that was most often spoken about and addressed and people were commenting on. People, first of all, liked our general approach because in our city and particularly, in particular in my constituency, they felt that the pressure on job availability had been . . . has improved. More people in Saskatchewan are working ever . . . more people than ever before are working in Saskatchewan; certainly more people than ever before are working in Prince Albert.

We have had an economy that is more diversified than ever, Mr. Speaker. We're diversified into mining and oil and manufacturing and processing. Forestry is diversifying and our service industry is very, very well-developed. And that's good,

Mr. Speaker.

We in Saskatchewan are blessed with natural resources; we are blessed with a work ethic. And what we need to do is to combine our strengths and our skills with the capital of investors to go on further, Mr. Speaker, and to make this even a better place to live.

I want to spend some time talking about the forest industry as an example of what's happening in our province, as it pertains to jobs. If you sort of take a look at the overall picture of our Saskatchewan forests, what you see there is a natural resource that's available, more so maybe than in other provinces at this time.

What you also see is a lot of people living there that don't have jobs. There's labour that's available. And we also have found out that there are investors who are willing to form partnerships with First Nations and to go in and to put these things together so that we can have jobs.

Very recently in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a decision by Weyerhaeuser corporation, who is a dominant corporation in Prince Albert, they are putting together a big expansion and a refit. They are setting up a co-generation plant.

This is a plant which will generate power for their own consumption and own use. This will enable the company to be more efficient. It'll also reduce some of the pressure on SaskPower, our corporation, to deliver power into the next few years. And besides that, it has environmental benefits because they will be able to burn up all of the big pile of bark and sawdust that are being stored in various parts of northern Saskatchewan, and certainly right adjacent to our city.

So we really welcome this expansion. It's an expansion that's been in place now . . . the construction phase has been in place for about a year and a half. In fact anybody that's driving to catch a plane about 6 o'clock in the morning on their way to the airport can get caught in a mini traffic jam because of all the construction and shift workers that are going out on the route to the pulp mill, Mr. Speaker.

We are very pleased about that. And I congratulate Weyerhaeuser on choosing Saskatchewan as a place to expand, and we look forward to working with them.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the congratulations to Weyerhaeuser goes further than that. Because while they're expanding their production, they have also relinquished some of the rights to trees in their FMLA, their forest management lease agreement. And they have relinquished these rights because it's forests excess to their needs, and as a result there are other expansions that are bound to happen within that area and throughout northern Saskatchewan using our forests.

We've already got two new saw mills in Prince Albert. Together they employ about a hundred people who live right in town, and that's not counting the people that are involved in the logging and the hauling, in the road building, in servicing, and in reforestation.

This summer we had a local volunteer group, together with our

chamber of commerce and the alliance, what we call the economic alliance in Prince Albert, sponsored a forestry exposition. This is something that could be called parallel to an agribition, where suppliers bring all of their equipment, various supplies, and show off the technology that's available for forestry. It was a first for Prince Albert; it certainly was a first for Saskatchewan.

And they're planning another one in a couple of years, Mr. Speaker. Anybody who has an opportunity, I think, to take a look at that or come to that in the summertime would find that it's quite a learning experience. It also shows that companies are interested in what is happening in Saskatchewan in the forest industry.

I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the government has committed in the Throne Speech to plant 25 million trees per year over a period of four years, minimum of a hundred million trees.

Good forest practices are important, Mr. Speaker. What we do in these areas now is we have the systems that can assess what type of reforestation is best — whether it requires planting, whether it requires scarification, or whether other methods, whether natural regeneration will take place. And with a commitment to use some of the money that comes from stumpage fees to go directly back into the forest, we'll be able to make this whole industry renewable.

So, Mr. Speaker, along with that, there is a commitment to increased forest harvesting and to increased forest wood product development. And so many may ask, well how is this possible? How can you all of a sudden get more out of the forests than you were getting before?

It amounts to, Mr. Speaker, better utilization of the forest products that are available. In the first place . . . which starts really with the pulp mills. When the pulp mill in Prince Albert was first developed, we were bringing in logs of all sizes. True, there were a lot of the logs were first taken — the bigger logs, the bigger spruce logs were taken to Hudson Bay for the pulp . . . to the plywood mill, and they were peeled there. But there were still many logs that were . . . large logs, of a large diameter, that were put through and chipped for a pulp.

But what is happening, Mr. Speaker, is we found that you can get more value out of a log if the first thing you do with it after you peel it is you put it through a saw mill. So pretty well all softwood logs are now aimed for a saw mill first where the high value product is taken out, and then after that, the scraps and the slabs are put into chips. The chips are transported to the pulp mill and as a result of that, you can get more value out of the product and you can still have enough supply for the mill.

Mr. Speaker, the other new technology that has evolved, of course, is that pulp is now not made only out of softwood, but it is also made out of hardwood. So, Mr. Speaker, the pulp mills in Saskatchewan are able to use what was once a weed, the poplar plant, for making into good pulp.

Mr. Speaker, there is also new technologies, such things as finger joints which . . . finger jointers, which can put together short pieces of wood, glue them together strongly and use them

for things like window frames and door jambs.

Ms. Speaker, I mention these things because while we're in the process of expanding this industry, we're also being very cognizant of the fact that conservation of that industry is very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, I love trees. I plant a tree or several trees every spring, and I like to see them grow. I don't plant them commercially, but I understand what people say and what people mean and what they feel like when they say it's important not just to cut off everything and leave it to waste.

What I don't like, Mr. Speaker, is I don't like burnt forests. I think it's a waste. I like forest renewal. I know forests can be renewed. I like to see grasses growing; I like to see shrubs coming up, and new trees coming through. And so I'm . . . I know I don't like to see, Mr. Speaker, a forest that's just left, because if it's left, here's what happens. Forests grow, then they rot, sometimes they burn.

What we have to do is stop the burning and reduce the amount that's rotting. And if we manage it properly and we have a department and we have personnel in Saskatchewan now which have worked on management processes that we can . . . they tell us that we can do these things and get much more out of our forest and get much more employment out of our forest.

It's most important to understand that forests cannot be frozen in time. We can take a picture of a forest and then later on come back and take a look at the forest and it will not represent the forest, much like you can take a picture of a wheat field or any kind of field in southern Saskatchewan. They are not static, Mr. Speaker. They continue to evolve and they continue to grow just like our southern prairies do. That's natural.

It used to be natural for the prairies, Mr. Speaker, to have fires coming through, but farming has changed that. There's very little burning now. In fact we're advised that burning is harmful in many cases. In forestry, I think burning is a waste. Good regeneration is not necessarily guaranteed after a fire, and regeneration can be enhanced after a good forest harvest.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if anybody from the House or from the general public wants to see various phases, there's a model forest set up north of the city of Prince Albert in the Anglin Lake district. And you can see forest development in various stages and various types of cuttings and get a good feel for exactly how it is that forests over . . . you can get a capsule of what happens over a period of 70 years by just driving through there, and it might take 15 minutes to half an hour.

I want to mention one more thing, Mr. Speaker. Our current annual cut of forestry is actually less than one-tenth of one per cent of all of the forested land in Saskatchewan. That's how much is cut annually right now.

By comparison, about one and a half per cent burns annually. So the objective now is to set up a system where you've got better fire control and therefore you'll be able to cut more of that one and a half per cent that burns and increase the annual cut and still have margin for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to speaking a little bit about agriculture. But before I do, I want to congratulate the minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), and the successive ministers of SERM really, that have developed the new plan for forestry in Saskatchewan. And I want to congratulate all of the employees of SERM for the work that they are putting into this.

Because I know that northern residents in particular will benefit from it and I know that the taxpayers in general will benefit from it. And the spinoff industry will be felt not only in Prince Albert and Meadow Lake and Hudson Bay, but it'll be felt through to Saskatoon and further south.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes and talk about agriculture in rural Saskatchewan. One thing that's happening is I've felt that things on the farm, we know that they've been changing. But I think that more recently they're changing faster than ever.

What's happening is the farms are becoming larger faster. They're producing more, whether it's grains or livestock. There's more value added. But if you take a look at the overall conditions of farmers, we know that there is a crisis in Saskatchewan in farming right now. It really comes down to the fact that commodity prices are too low and the costs are too high. And as a result, there's no net from which a farmer can produce an income.

Mr. Speaker, the situation is getting grave. There are farmers who have gone to their bankers to have their loans extended, only to have a sentence come at them to say they want . . . that the bankers want more money and they want it now, because the prices have gone down and there's a sort of a . . . and the farm, the value of the equity in the farm is going down. That's like getting hit by a double whammy, Mr. Speaker.

(1445)

I spent some time with some friends of mine who are in farming from the district that I grew up in, Mr. Speaker. And I try to keep in touch with what's happening there. And we just sort of, sitting around the table, did an assessment of where is this particular farmer at, where is that farmer at, and what kind of shape is this guy in, and this fellow. And in all we armchaired, we armchaired 42 farmers, Mr. Speaker — 42 farmers in a district the circumference of, well, maybe 10 miles across by maybe six or seven miles the other way.

And out of those 42 farm families, it was our sort of conclusion that within three to five years, 17 of those farm families will not be there — three to five years. They won't make it, Mr. Speaker, under current conditions. Nine have already sold or are in the process of selling. And there's eight that maybe would sell or have a very difficult time making it that may have to end up selling or doing something else in the near future. That's within the next three to five years, Mr. Speaker.

Seventeen out of 42 comes out to about 40 per cent — 40 per cent of those farmers will likely not be there.

There are another 25 of those which we assessed probably would survive. Four of them because they're into livestock

quite heavily; 10 of them because they have off-farm income and are able to subsidize their farm operations with their off-farm income; and 11 of them who can probably survive for three or four years because they are big enough and they have a lot of assets on their farms and their land has been paid for.

But, Mr. Speaker, our assessment was that this trend that we see there is probably generalizable across three-quarters of our farm population across the Parkland belt, sort of across from Yorkton on the east through to Lloydminster on the west in the Parkland area. And I'm not sure just how it would work in the further part of Saskatchewan, in the southern part of Saskatchewan.

Though we know that if this happens, Mr. Speaker, the overall effect would be that the communities would be depopulated, and also that the farm service sector will also be . . . will suffer as a result of that.

In order for a person who maybe have been on a farm at one time and has a difficult time understanding how is it that a farmer who has the equipment which looks expensive, farmland which looks expensive and is expensive . . . (inaudible) . . . how is it that you can get into this kind of trouble? What is it?

And if you've been on a farm, Mr. Speaker, you can understand what the words fertilizer, and fuel, and chemical means. I asked him this question, let's take a look and let's look at what a typical farmer's up against. And they said, well for example, a typical farmer: fertilizer, \$40 per acre; fuel, \$20 per acre; chemicals, \$20 per acre — and that's cheap, that's going the low end, Mr. Speaker — freight, \$30 per acre; harvesting, \$16 per acre; taxes, property taxes, about \$6 per acre; insurance, about \$5 per acre.

Mr. Speaker, that comes out to very close to \$140 per acre right there for input costs. And it's not taking into account anything about rental costs or interest costs or upkeep of the farm. And that's \$140 already.

And then if you take what you can produce off of that acre in wheat. Let's say you grew a darn good crop, 50 bushels per acre. How much is a bushel of grain worth today?

An Hon. Member: — Probably about two-fifty.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Two-fifty. Let's make it even \$3, Mr. Speaker. If it was \$3, you'd get, for 50 bushels of grain . . . 50 bushels of wheat, you'd get \$150 — maximum nowadays, maximum.

So there you have for one acre of land, Mr. Speaker, operating costs — \$140; and your profit and your costs, your what you could make, would be \$150. So you're working with a margin of \$10 on that wheat. That's under ideal conditions. If you add to that rental costs or interest costs, then the cost of production will exceed. I mention these things, Mr. Speaker, just to kind of help bring to a more concrete example of what a typical farmer might be faced with.

So, Mr. Speaker, if a farmer has a thousand acres of land, just to take this one step further, and he's able, in order to make a living, to say earn \$30,000 in a year off of his farm, you would need a \$30 break or profit. And, the example that I gave you

shows that in this year, that's completely impossible.

So, Mr. Speaker, what happened? Why did this happen all of a sudden when we had a fairly good farming situation not a few . . . not too long ago? It comes down to two big items. First of all the loss of the grain transportation subsidy, and to the average farmer that could be 20 to \$30,000 a year, just what they need to make or break it . . . make it right now. And the second thing is, Mr. Speaker, was the reduction in grain prices due to the international trade wars, Mr. Speaker. Those are the two big problems.

So what is it that can be done? And what is it that we're attempting to do here?

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that there was an all-party agreement in this House . . . that came into this House to back the farmers of rural Saskatchewan, to back rural people in Saskatchewan, to back the service, farm-service industry, in Saskatchewan and passed a motion here requesting one more time from the federal government that they consider providing the aid that's necessary in the interim until things change in some way or other.

And we needn't be shy, Mr. Speaker, about asking for a billion dollars. We need that in order that the farmers can use that money, either to diversify or get new jobs, or do whatever is needed to be done to keep farms viable into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, what else can government do? Our government sent the minister to represent us at the World Trade talks. I'm very pleased he was able to make some contacts there, Mr. Speaker. The people in the House have heard about that. There are several initiatives that are listed right in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

One of the initiatives is to withdraw from AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) and send that money directly to farmers. We're looking at ways to extend the payment terms for crop insurance. We're looking at ways to . . . at extended leasebacks. And we're looking at ways of working on the property tax, Mr. Speaker.

I want to mention though that these things are over and above what the taxpayer already does. The taxpayer of Saskatchewan is committed to \$299 per capita to Saskatchewan farmers. That's more than any other province . . . In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's more than twice as much than any other province does for their agricultural scene in their situations, and it's something that the taxpayers, through the Government of Saskatchewan, is putting in. I believe we will have to continue to put it in. We should continue to put it in, Mr. Speaker, but nobody should say that the taxpayer is not contributing as well.

Mr. Speaker, the solution for a more permanent situation, other than the billion dollars right now . . . In my mind one of two things has to happen: either the freight subsidy, which I would say varies between 20 and \$30,000 for the average farmer, needs replacement in some form. If that's a problem then an alternate method of payment needs to be made regularly to farmers to make up for the trade . . . unequal situation in trade,

Mr. Speaker.

So I want to close by congratulating first of all the Minister of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture for keeping and for making this a priority in Saskatchewan right now. I want to encourage anybody that has time, has a pencil and paper, or is on Internet, or has even got a telephone to take some time to contact the Minister of Agriculture federally, tell him what you understand about the farming situation because this is not just a problem in this legislature, it's not just a problem for Saskatchewan farmers, it's a problem for all of us here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are several other items in this Throne Speech which I would like to address. I don't want to take up too much time so I think what I'm going to do is I'm going to cut it down to one or two more other items.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech addresses health care which is something that I have heard a lot about while I was on the campaign trail. When I was going door to door, actually this was one of the most often-raised issues. I found out that people have a tremendous, tremendous loyalty to medicare in Saskatchewan. It has just been reaffirmed every time you go out on the doorstep, Mr. Speaker.

There's a great concern that we maintain our medicare system. They appreciate the services that are available and they particularly asked us to take a look at things like waiting lists. There's concern there. They're concerned about the need for front-line care, bedside care, right at their home . . . at home hospitals, Mr. Speaker. It's quite phenomenal, Mr. Speaker, just to take a look at one or two statistics about what happens in health care in Saskatchewan.

For example, in Saskatchewan there are 35,000 residents served daily through our hospital system — 35,000 residents have some contact, some type of contact with our health care system. If you look at another example, Mr. Speaker, you've got hip and knee replacements; they're not rare any more. There are 1,900 hip or knee replacements in Saskatchewan done annually. And cataracts — I think we break all records there, Mr. Speaker — over the last year they did 10,500 per year.

So you can see how important this is, Mr. Speaker, in terms of health care, how important it is for us to maintain services. And actually there's a big demand for services. And this is one of my fears, Mr. Speaker, is that the demand for health care services will exceed our ability to pay for the services that we've got. And, Mr. Speaker, what's happened is that the percentage of the budget that the health care uses is now up to about . . . it's approaching 40 per cent, close to it.

Now there's going to be one of two things are going to have to happen, Mr. Speaker. Either there's going to have to be a cap put on this eventually and some things would have to go by the board, or we're going to have to ask the federal government to take a look at this and what is happening across the nation, because this is not a unique Saskatchewan problem, and take a look again at what they're doing with their health and social transfer funds.

Mr. Speaker, I think if you go to any province in the country

you'll find that they've got the same commitments to medicare that we have here in Saskatchewan. I think you'll find the same increases in demand for services, and I think you'll find that the demands on the treasury are increasing at a faster rate in every province than their revenue is for health care.

So I say to the federal government, Mr. Speaker, take a look at this again. Put this on your agenda as well as agriculture for Saskatchewan because this is where we need the help.

(1500)

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the issue of taxation. I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, of the record of this government when it comes to attacking the taxation issues. Mr. Speaker, we set out several years ago with a commitment that as soon as the budget was balanced, that we would take a portion of the surplus and we would move it into reducing taxes. And we have done that, Mr. Speaker, we have reduced the income taxes to some extent. We've reduced the PST (provincial sales tax). That's probably the one that most people know about. Manufacturing tax has been decreased, business tax for small business tax has been decreased.

Mr. Speaker, as I went door-to-door, the people said keep up the good work and go further, and go further. And some people said, well I'd like to see property taxes reduced, other people said, well I'd like to see the PST reduced another cent, but most people said to me, reduce the income tax, that should be your next step.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that here in our Throne Speech that there is commitment to reduce the income tax and to work on that in the next budget. And I am expecting to see that in the next budget, Mr. Speaker.

And in mentioning that, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate a former minister of Finance, the current Minister of Finance, and the entire cabinet for the way they set up their priorities. To set it up so that we do have continued growth in Saskatchewan to enable us to reduce the income tax in the next budget.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the work that they've done shows that they were doing it in a very thoughtful manner. I am reminded of a little parable that was used in a life skills class, it's used to apply to setting priorities in life, but I think that it applies very much to this government, Mr. Speaker, and the parable goes something like this.

There is an instructor who has got a bowl in front of him, a jar in front of him, and he's got a little pile or rocks there beside the jar. And he takes one rock from the pile and puts it into the jar until he can no longer get these rocks into the jar. And then he asks his students if the jar is full, and quite often the students will nod yes. So then, at that stage, from underneath his desk, he pulls out some gravel. And he takes those little, wee stones and he tinkles them in amongst the rocks, and he says to the students, well is it full? Well, they're getting a little wary, but they say, well, we think so. And then he pulls out some sand and he pours it in there. Of course by now they're wise and they say no, it's not full, because when he pulls out the water and fills it up, then they say okay, now it's full.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the lesson of course in there is that they should set up . . . that when you're making your decisions on life is to make sure that you get those rocks in there first. And I have to congratulate the government and the ministers of Finance, when they're planning the budgets over the last few years, congratulate them for getting the ingredients into that jar and getting them in there in the right order so that we are able to progress and sustain our tax reduction, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — There are other items, Mr. Speaker, that I want to talk about, but I also think that they would be quite well . . . I could address them equally well during the Throne Speech debates. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to take my seat after I make one more, one more comment. And that is the comment about the new . . . about working together in a coalition and working together for a brand new day as is mentioned here in the Throne Speech.

I think, Mr. Speaker, when the people of Saskatchewan elect a government to a minority situation that it requires some rethinking and some new thinking and new ways of governing. And I'm pleased that this Throne Speech mentioned several new things that we, certainly in the time that I've been here, have not done before.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, towards the end of the Throne Speech there is a commitment to set up several committees, all-party committees. One was put into place today, Mr. Speaker, and that was an all-party legislative committee to deal with the sexual abuse of children through prostitution. There's another one that was put in place a day before or two days before, Mr. Speaker. It's an all-party committee on tobacco control in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's a permanent body being set up to review our utility rates, and another thing which was . . . formed part of a question period today, and that is a full and independent review of SGI's no fault insurance.

Some new things, Mr. Speaker, new ways of looking at things, new ways of involving members. And when you put together the membership on those committees, I think you will see 20 additional private members on these committees who will now have direct influence on some of . . . or more direct influence and responsibility for the governance on certain laws within this province of Saskatchewan. And I think that's what the people of Saskatchewan elected him for and I'm glad to see him move in this direction.

And I close, Mr. Speaker, then by quoting from the Throne Speech paragraph on the very last page. It says this:

The people told us on September 16th to set aside the rancour and discord of the election just past; to stop shouting at each other and past each other; and to work together to better serve the people who elected this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I think that statement is worth repeating more than once. It's a good reminder, I think, to all of us sitting on both sides of the House, a good guideline as we get into further

debates in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, in through the term of office.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in the Assembly again after the provincial election held on September 16, and to speak on behalf of the people of Canora-Pelly. But more importantly, to speak on behalf of all the people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I want to begin by congratulating all members in this Assembly. I know that of course at the moment we have 56 out of 58 members present here in the Assembly. But I want to congratulate each and every one of those 56 for their election or their re-election. And I know that it's a trust that has been placed in our hands and it's an honour that I think each and every one of us holds very, very dear to our hearts.

I want to especially congratulate the members sitting on my side of the House. Mr. Speaker, we have 25 members who have been elected for not the first time under the Saskatchewan Party banner because that honour is held by my colleague from Cypress Hills who actually was elected back three months before the election as the first elected member of the Saskatchewan Party. But now, Mr. Speaker, we have 25.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Twenty-five members who have been told by the people in their constituencies: we heard you; we heard you speak during the campaign; we liked what we saw in your platform; and we believe that we must do something different in this province. And as a result, the Saskatchewan Party picked up 40 per cent of the popular vote, Mr. Speaker — more than any other political party in this last election.

And I think that . . . that's a message that the people have delivered not only to us, Mr. Speaker, but to the government opposite. They said to the government opposite that their efforts over the last eight years — or maybe, Mr. Speaker, a better term would be their lack of effort over the last eight years — was not something that they supported, that they wanted to see a change. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is what the Saskatchewan Party would like to see happen — change to improve the position of Saskatchewan.

You know, as the campaign was called, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure each and every one of us back on August 19 was at some other function or doing something different than actually preparing for an election. And I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I heard throughout the campaigning that farmers were not pleased with the calling of the election.

I recall travelling to many farmers' yards and the very first thing that a farmer would indicate to me was: why were we having an election in the province of Saskatchewan for the first time ever in the month of September? They couldn't understand that. They felt that the government was indeed slapping them in the face by calling an election for September. And there was not

a lot of respect for the Premier.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, the one person who I think was . . . was the most, most concerned and most upset with the calling of the election was indeed my wife. And I'll have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that on August 19 my family was headed to a family wedding in British Columbia, in the Shuswaps, Mr. Speaker — our first opportunity to attend my niece's wedding. And you know what happened, Mr. Speaker. That very day when the Premier called the election, my daughter continued on to that family wedding, and my wife and I travelled back to the Canora/Pelly constituency to begin that campaign. And while I understood and had to get to work, as far as the campaign, I don't think my wife still has forgiven the Premier for calling that election and missing out on that . . . on that family wedding.

But you know, during the campaign, Mr. Speaker, one other thing came through very, very clear . . . in that in the last election, you know, Mr. Speaker, I had the distinction as being the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) elected with the smallest plurality. My margin of victory back in 1995 was 50 votes. Not a large landslide but in some of the coffee shops, Mr. Speaker, they did indeed refer to that as a landslide victory. But you know what happened in this last election, Mr. Speaker, has given me a great deal of confidence in representing the people of Canora-Pelly, for after the election that we just had on September 16, my margin of victory is in excess of 2,300 votes.

So you know, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — I want to thank those people of Canora-Pelly, who indeed saw that I would represent them to the best of my ability, that I would represent all the people in my constituency. And that indeed the Saskatchewan Party, and of course all the members now that you see sitting with me, would be able to represent their best interests much better than the government that you see opposite.

I want to thank all the volunteers, all the people who were affected in the campaign and who helped. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I don't only want to thank those people who voted for me. I want to thank the 7,815 people who came out to vote. Because for the first time we had an election in September in this province, and I believe that the government was feeling — or maybe the Premier was feeling — that people wouldn't turn out to vote and indeed that was going to assist the NDP in returning to power. But over 7,800 people came out in Canora-Pelly to elect me as a representative of the Saskatchewan Party and for that I am extremely grateful.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my family. I've mentioned my wife Gail. I think as we sit in this legislature and I'm sure it's true for yourself who is a family member, to understand that to do the job of the position that we hold, to be a member of the Legislative Assembly, I think the most effect is felt by our families. And I know for people that live a greater distance away from Regina than what I do, I'm sure that the effect on the family is even greater than mine. But I want to publicly thank my wife Gail and my son Bryce and my daughter Lindsay for helping, to be there for me, to support me, to encourage me, and

to do all the things that are necessary to keep the family home back in Invermay functioning.

You know, in the last number of days, Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot about the election platforms: the platform of the NDP Party, the platform of the Liberal Party and the Saskatchewan Party. I think what we saw on September 16, Mr. Speaker, was the election of a minority government. And the very first thing I heard about that election result, Mr. Speaker, was that people felt that there was an opportunity to have different things done, to have maybe some better things done.

And I recall immediately on September 17 or 18 where people felt that the Liberals were dealt an extremely positive card . . . that that card would be the balance of power in a minority government. And there were quotations in the paper that said that this was a great position to be in. I had people phone me and said: you know, this might be something good for the province, how will you react? And I said: well it will be something that we're going to watch and we're going to be able to assist in developing the kinds of things that we stood for during the election and the kinds of things that we need in this province to see it grow.

(1515)

But you know what we've heard lately is that the promises made in the Liberal platform were just political rhetoric. They were put into a platform to encourage the people to vote for something like that. And in the end all it was was rhetoric. It wasn't there to develop policies., It wasn't there to provide better opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan. It was there to get elected. And, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the agreement — the agreement signed between the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan and the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan — I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, also that a number of students in my constituency have contacted me for the copies of this document because they're doing class projects. They've found this so interesting — and they're not even of eligible voting age yet — but they found this to be so interesting that they want to understand it.

Two of the paragraphs or two of the points, Mr. Speaker, in this document when people read it, they've highlighted them for me. And they say: how is this going to work; this is an NDP government, this isn't a coalition. And those two points — and I quote directly from page 3 of the document, Mr. Speaker. Point number 1 says:

To adhere to the position of the Government on all matters before the Legislative Assembly.

That's what the two parties have agreed to. So is there two entities here, Mr. Speaker, I don't think so. People are saying this is the NDP; this is definitely the NDP.

Second paragraph says:

That the Members of the Legislative Assembly, who are Members of the Parties to this Agreement, shall not support policies advanced by a political party that is not a Party to this Agreement, or by a private member . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've heard so much of this brand new day. About doing things differently. What this is saying, Mr. Speaker, is that for any private member, even if it's the best idea to come along, it cannot be supported by any one of those members who have signed their name to this agreement.

That sounds like old-time politics. You know and, Mr. Speaker, for two years, I listened to the Premier and the Deputy Premier talk about a deal in the dead of night. And that finger continued to wag over the last two years about the deal in the dead of night.

Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is worse that a deal in the dead of night. This is taking away from the people of Saskatchewan. The people who voted for a minority government, and in the end, a deal was cooked in the backrooms. A deal was cooked to not only put two members who were elected as opposition members, but to put them into cabinet. I don't think the people of Saskatchewan want that, Mr. Speaker. And I dare say, the very next election, there will be a change.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the things that we see in the Throne Speech have highlighted some of the things that have been missing for the last three or four years. One of the things that we really were surprised at, and my colleague the critic for Highways mentioned that, that in the Throne Speech, we don't see a mention, hardly a mention of highways.

Well, Mr. Speaker, is it little wonder that the provincial infrastructure program with the federal Department of Highways or the federal Transportation department says that the funding for Saskatchewan over a three-year period for highway improvements is zero, zero, and zero.

That's the kind of respect that the federal government has given us. That shows the people of Saskatchewan that we haven't been doing our job as a government. That this government has not been in Ottawa to get better results for the province of Saskatchewan.

And that also leads to last week, Mr. Speaker. We had an excellent presentation here on agriculture. We had our agricultural minister attending a very, very important meeting in Ottawa.

But you know, when the Finance ministers of all the provinces of Saskatchewan were meeting together with Paul Martin as the federal Finance minister, where was the Saskatchewan Finance minister? Sitting here in the legislature and touring around Regina. At a time, Mr. Speaker, when we should have been sending the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of Finance. We're trying to tell Paul Martin and the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Chrétien, that this is important. That we want a billion dollars worth of assistance. And when the Finance ministers meet, Saskatchewan Finance minister chooses to send a deputy minister.

I don't think that's the kind of picture that we want to have happen in Ottawa. We want the federal government to consider a billion dollars. We want it to recognize it that this is the most important thing that's happening here in Saskatchewan. And our government chose not to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to a couple of areas that have affected people in my constituency. And the first one I want to talk about is the area of health. Over the last four years, Mr. Speaker, I think by far the largest number of concerns that have come into my office, either in Canora-Pelly or my home or here in the Legislative Chamber, have been concerns about health care.

You know, and I listened last week when, I think it's the member for Regina Northeast said, during campaigning, he couldn't find a name. He couldn't find anyone who had a problem in the health care.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I will not mention those names today but I can provide for the minister the exact names of the very individuals that I'm talking to you about today. And they're not . . . this is just the tip of the iceberg.

But I do want to tell him about a few concerns because we have heard about waiting lists. We have heard about the fact that the level 3 and 4 homes across this province have limited spaces and there is a greater need. We have heard that the funding, of course, for level 1 and 2 has been totally eliminated and there was a need for that kind of care for level 1 and 2 patients.

But I want to specifically deal with individuals. I want to tell you about a gentleman, Mr. Speaker, from the community of Foam Lake, an elderly gentleman who was placed on the hip replacement surgery waiting list on August 19, 1998. And he waited on that list and he contacted my office late last fall. His son contacted my office. And I phoned his doctor and I phoned people in Saskatoon to encourage them to move this person forward because his condition was deteriorating and that there were other complications developing.

This continued throughout the entire winter, Mr. Speaker. And when this House adjourned back in May, I contacted the gentleman and he still had not had his surgery. The patient was in a great deal of pain; there were other complications, and still no surgery.

I talked to the individual this morning, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to report that his surgery took place on November 26 of 1999 — 15 months after being placed on that waiting list.

And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? That individual, according to his son-in-law is . . . emotionally he is, he's feeling great. He's showing tremendous signs of recovery. And all that the family wonders is: why did it take 15 months? This man was in pain already for the last eight, nine, ten months, and it took until November 26. This cannot be something that I'm sure the government opposite or any one condones. And it has to be rectified, Mr. Speaker.

I want to tell you about another individual who had an emergency attack — a person living right here in Regina — and was taken to the Pasqua Hospital on a Wednesday evening, supposedly a gallbladder attack. But because it was such a serious attack and because there were no beds to be placed, the person remained in the observation bed in the emergency room. And I'm sure you've seen those — they're very public areas — remained in that bed Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Not till Saturday evening was there a bed for the person to be moved upstairs. And then finally Sunday afternoon the gallbladder surgery takes place, and the gallbladder is removed. Four days of waiting in an observation bed while there is a waiting list for a room. Hardly acceptable, Mr. Speaker.

The other person I want to talk to you about is an individual in my constituency who, back in June of 1996, had a mild heart attack. And after a number of tests that took place over the year there was a conclusion that bypass surgery was needed. It was reconfirmed in September of 1998 that the person would require surgery and should be done as soon as possible — that's September of 1998. In the spring of 1999, in June, in fact specifically June 22, an angiogram was done and said surgery is necessary and should be done as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, that person was transferred from the Canora hospital to Regina on September 30 — pardon me — on September 30 for surgery on October 1. When the person arrived, Mr. Speaker, on September 30 by ambulance, they found out that indeed the operating room time had been booked and there was the ability for the surgeon to perform that surgery, but there wasn't further bookings upstairs, and there was no bed available.

So the individual waited basically on a stretcher, and thank goodness that the ambulance people waited as well. And then she was put back in the ambulance and she was taken back to Canora hospital.

Mr. Speaker, family members had already booked time from their employment to be here for their mother's surgery. And the surgery is not held because there isn't a communication between the operating room and the beds necessary for recovery.

You know, what really also indicates how silly this is, Mr. Speaker, is that the individual has been sent an ambulance bill for \$1,072.50. And you know what also has happened, Mr. Speaker, since that surgery, which was supposed to be on October 1, 1999? The condition of the individual has worsened to the point now . . . where the doctor has concluded that surgery is not probably something that the patient will make it through.

From 1997 to 1999, surgery is supposed to be done, and it doesn't happen. The patient is transported at a cost of \$1,072 and sent back, because there was a communication breakdown.

This is typical of the health system that we work in, Mr. Speaker. And for the member from Regina Northeast to stand in this House and say he can't find anybody who has had a problem with the health care system, he better wake up to reality, Mr. Speaker. And the reality is that this is occurring all over the place.

There are people that need specific surgeries and are not getting them. There are people who are sitting on waiting lists and further complications develop. This is not acceptable. And for the government to say that everything is fine and that thousands of people are using the health care system. Of course; what do they expect? But we are not moving in a direction to alleviate the concerns, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about education. I want to talk about education because, you know, a lot has happened in this area. You know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the lack of programs from this government, the member opposite has just highlighted something that doesn't require money. It requires improved communication, it requires leadership — leadership that this government has not shown, Mr. Speaker. That's what this requires.

You know, in education over the last number of years we've seen a tremendous amount of downloading, and we see many examples of how this has affected people. We see school closures. We see grade discontinuance. We see program eliminations. And on top of that now, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing tax revolts. Because, Mr. Speaker, since this government took office in 1991, tremendous amounts of money has been taken out of the education sector.

And I want to highlight some numbers, Mr. Speaker. Because when you take a look at the whole picture, I think it's easy to understand why the public has already come to the point of understanding that the property tax is the only way that education is being delivered; that the government's commitment to education has been totally decreased.

(1530)

In 1991, Mr. Speaker, the capital and operating money that this government provided to school boards was \$452 million, a significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker — 452 million. Of that 452 million, Mr. Speaker, 70 million was in the area of capital.

Along came the election of the NDP. And now we see that in '92 that number of 452 million was decreased to 436 million. And it continued to go down and down and down. This very year, very fiscal year that we're in now, the total commitment for capital and operating is \$416 million. That's a drop, still a drop of 24 million from 1991.

Now let's look at capital. Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, 70 million in '91 for capital; this year's budget is 30 million, a decrease of \$2 million from last year.

Now everyone knows that operating costs, newly negotiated contracts, inflation, utility rate increases — all of those things that have happened over the last decade have driven education costs up. What has happened? All of that has been picked up by the people of Saskatchewan at the local level.

You know, and having been a member of a school board and having been a teacher in the education system, we want to have a quality education system in this province. But it's very, very difficult for school boards to try to balance their budget when all they're getting is political rhetoric.

Political rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. Because you know . . . I read with interest, I read the Throne Speech over and over again. And I looked at the section on education, and it says:

My government will introduce a plan to place our K-12 . . . system on a sound . . . sustainable footing by, over time . . .

That's the words used, Mr. Speaker.

You know, three years ago I heard that very same thing. It wasn't quite the same words, over time. What it said back then was, as time permits.

I'm sure you recall that phrase, Mr. Speaker, when the government said that the presentation from the school trustees association and the teachers' federation and all of the people in Saskatchewan that said we're funding education in entirely the wrong way; the government is not committing as much as it should. And the cabinet and the minister of Education said, we recognize that. We understand, and we're going to, as time permits, move to change that. Political rhetoric for four years, Mr. Speaker.

The other comment, it says that — and I mention the numbers in capital because it says, my government will provide financial support for school construction and renovation projects. It doesn't say, will provide additional financial support. It doesn't say it will provide financial support for every project. It says . . . will provide financial support.

You know well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, this year's capital money is \$2 million less than last year. Is the government providing financial support? Of course they are, but they're not going to address the concerns that are out there in the province. There are hundreds of projects waiting to happen. But the government has, over time, backed totally out of funding those projects.

You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has happened in a very, very positively way in the Canora-Pelly constituency, and I believe that it is a positive move and I think that it showed that indeed the people were willing to look at another alternative — and that was an amalgamation of two school divisions. The Canora School Division and the Timberline School Division have amalgamated and have formed the Crystal Lakes School Division.

You know, Mr. Speaker, many years ago before I entered this political life, we were part of that. I was part of that and we had the opportunity to meet with a number of other school divisions to look at a better delivery of services and a better way of ensuring that children received the most comprehensive education possible at the best possible dollar.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, what has happened in the Crystal Lakes School Division, is that even though amalgamation has taken place, as I mentioned this to the Education minister of the time, the difficulty in negotiating a new local agreement still hasn't taken place. There is extreme difficulty in actually getting a new agreement in place.

The areas on the borders of this new school division . . . those concerns have not been addressed because the government refused to provide leadership in addressing the boundary problems. So while the amalgamation concept is a good concept and is moving ahead, there are things that the government should have been involved with, could have been involved with, and chose not to. And as a result, we have bickering and we have problems that are occurring in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn for a few moments to post-secondary education. And I observed with interest back during the campaign of the NDP promise and the Liberal promise for dealing with the ever increasing cost of a post-secondary education. It almost seemed like it was a bidding war. Somebody was going to provide a thousand dollars and somebody was going to provide a free year of education and on and on.

Well you know, Mr. Speaker, what we have to really look at, that providing a scholarship of a thousand dollars is not the answer if you don't provide any additional monies to the universities or the technical schools. Everyone understands that those costs of operating are real and if the university doesn't receive any money, how will it balance.

Well let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, one of the sources of revenue for those institutions is tuition. So providing a thousand dollars as I had many students come up to me during the campaign said, when they looked at those plans, they said this is ludicrous. I'm going to get a thousand dollar scholarship and on the other side the university or the technical school is going to increase my tuition by \$1,500. So who's further ahead?

What we have to see is we have to see a plan in place that shows our commitment, that shows our commitment to the publicly funded institutions that we do have, to ensure that that cost is at a specific amount.

You know, Mr. Speaker, back a number of years ago — and I was surprised, it is a number of years ago — the Student Assistance Task Group Report, a public document that was delivered to then Minister Mitchell, Bob Mitchell received this document. It's dated June 1997, and it recommends a number of things with dealing with student funding, with dealing with tuition fees, with dealing with students who of course have to travel to a new place from their homes to receive their education, hundreds of recommendations.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I wonder how many of these recommendations have been implemented. People are still waiting. They're still waiting for a lot of good things that were recommended to happen. And I think the Minister of Post-Secondary Education has to definitely take a look at this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little bit of time on agriculture, something that of course is very, very important to the people of Canora-Pelly and to all of Saskatchewan. And I listened with interest to the member from Prince Albert Northcote talk about a real situation, and I think that is what we have to do more and more often, Mr. Speaker, especially when we look at what happened last Tuesday with the presentations made by 17 farm groups — excellent presentations talking about what is reality here in the province of Saskatchewan, not what someone in Toronto thinks or someone in Vancouver hears in the media, but what is real to the farmers and the people of this province.

And you know I have a number letters from various groups and I have one from the Foam Lake Chamber of Commerce who state very emphatically in the letter:

This is not a farm crisis; this is a Saskatchewan crisis. This is not a rural problem; it's everyone's problem.

That's the kind of effect that they see the agriculture crisis having.

The example that the member from Prince Albert Northcote cited in his comments is a very real example, and I did the very same thing this morning. I phoned the elevator back in my home community and inquired, because you know I thought I do still farm one quarter of land even though I've rented my other property out. And from that one quarter of land, Mr. Speaker, I grew a crop of barley. And I thought I had grown a pretty decent crop this last year. It was 55 bushels more or less per acre. So I thought well I'll find out from my elevator agent exactly what I would receive for that product grown.

An Hon. Member: — How bad was it?

Mr. Krawetz: — It was really bad. You know today's price on the open market for feed barley, Mr. Speaker, is \$1.40 per bushel — 1.40 per bushel. At 55 bushels an acre, Mr. Speaker, that translates . . . If I sold my crop tomorrow, that would translate into \$77 per acre. That's what I would receive.

You know over the last while I've kept an accurate record of exactly what it cost me to put that crop in, to ensure that it had insurance and sprayed, and all those kinds of things that the member identified. And while that member identified some other costs that were relevant, I did not include the freight costs because my price of \$1.40 has already the freight deducted. But you know, Mr. Speaker, my costs, including taxes but not allowing anything for principal, my costs are \$95 per acre. So if I sold my crop tomorrow, I will receive \$77 per acre and my costs are 95.

And I know the member from Prince Albert Northcote tried to make . . . or made that very same example. That's what's real, and I think that's what we have to have more and more individuals do is to explain not only to people outside of Saskatchewan but also to some people who live here in Saskatchewan in the urban centres, to understand the dilemma and the problems that are facing our farm families. It's not that our farmers aren't working hard. It's not that they're not efficient. It's not that they're not incorporating the newest technologies. It's the fact that the price, no matter how good a crop they grow, the value for that product will not enable them to even break even, never mind make a profit.

So you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you took my one single example of one quarter of barley, if you expanded that to eight quarters or ten quarters, they're not making any more money. You may be able to save a little bit on some of the efficiencies that I described, but not very much. You will still be losing somewhere between 15 and \$20 per acre — no money set aside for the cost of living or providing for a family. That's what is facing our farm family.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've had, during the campaign and subsequent to the campaign, I've had the opportunity to talk to many people about what has happened in agriculture. And the best example that I can use is my own example, Mr. Speaker. I entered the teaching force in the early '70s. And back then my salary was somewhere — and it's a gross salary — of about \$6,000. In 1972, a gross salary of \$6,000. That same salary today, with in excess of 10 years of experience, that salary

would be \$48,000, gross as well.

Now let's take a look at the farm example that I just described. In 1972 the price for a bushel of barley was about \$1.40, the same price as the elevator agent quoted to me this morning, \$1.40. Now if \$6,000 was the correct salary for someone or any other starting individuals in 1972-73 and today they're receiving 40, 45,000, which is a salary that is multiplied by seven or eight, if that is accurate in all of the other occupations, what happened to \$1.40 per bushel for barley? That should be somewhere in the area of 6 or 7 or \$8 a bushel. And that's what is facing our farm families, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not only barley. You can look at the oats price today, Mr. Speaker. Do you know that oats today can be purchased for \$1.01 a bushel? Many farmers grow an 80 or a 90 bushel an acre crop. And people who don't understand farming hear 80 bushel per acre production and they think, wow, that's a tremendous amount of grain grown. And it is, but at \$1.01? You're receiving \$80 per acre. Costs probably for growing oats — also in that area of 95 to \$100 per acre. They're losing money.

And that's what has to be dealt with very, very quickly. I think we have to look at a plan. We had the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program in Saskatchewan that was the revenue insurance program. And I think that's what farmers are looking for. You have to be able to produce something at a cost. Everyone does that. Businesses look at the cost of production of a particular article, and then determine the price that they must charge to have a return on those costs.

Farmers can't do that. Farmers produce a product, and hope. And they're losing hope, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure, as indicated by the member, we're also going to be losing many, many farmers.

A document that I received this morning, Mr. Speaker, is written by Rose Olfert and Jack Stabler and it's a document of agrifood innovation Saskatchewan. And in this document . . . it's relevant to the east central area, our area of the province, Mr. Speaker, where it talks about the economic restructuring necessary in east central region.

(1545)

And I want to quote one paragraph, Mr. Speaker, to help people understand what is happening in the agriculture sector. And this is a quotation, as I said, from this document by Olfert and Stabler. I quote:

More recently as prices have fallen, it is clear that additional, major restructuring will be required, as the current situation is not sustainable. Although the price nature of these changes cannot be accurately predicted, the range of possibilities can be enumerated. Some combination of the various alternatives is likely.

And here's the alternatives, Mr. Speaker:

A decrease in land values. Changing the type of production by moving to now relatively more profitable types of crops and rotations. Increasing farm size to realize economies of

scale. Some conversion to forage and livestock. Exits from farming from the rural areas and from the region. More commuting. Businesses in small communities closing as they lose critical market size. Smaller communities declining more quickly.

That's a very depressing paragraph, Mr. Speaker, because when you start to look at those comments made and how these two people perceive the eastern side of the province dealing with the agriculture crisis, those are not things that I think businessmen want to see in our region. Those are things that farmers don't want to see. But if we don't address the concerns that we're seeing, we're going to see the kinds of things that are now starting to affect the non-agriculture community. You know, Mr. Speaker, I understand as early as last week IMCC (International Minerals and Chemical Corporation (Canada) Ltd.) in Belle Plaine and Esterhazy has laid off dozens of workers; they've been let go because sales have declined and as a result, they have to restructure. That's the kind of effect that I think we're going to see beyond the agriculture community.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to spend a few moments on a few, very specific things that are occurring in my constituency. I want to commend, first of all, I want to commend the council of the town of Canora. Canora is the largest community in my constituency and for a number of years they've struggled with the quality of water, the actual drinking water that the town residents consume. They have initiated a very large project — in excess of a million dollars — where they're going to be able to have water piped in from a aquifer just out of Canora. And it's moving along and it's a matter of maybe . . . maybe it's even occurred today, Mr. Speaker, but that system's going to be up and running.

But you know I want to highlight one of the concerns that the town officials raised with me. And the concern is that when they started this project a number of months ago, Mr. Speaker, they inquired with SaskTel about running a direct line from the wellhead to the town of Canora. And the reply was that SaskTel says, and I quote from a letter to myself dated November 22, 1999, it says: "the price for such an installation at that time would have been \$492." And this was early in the spring.

Mr. Speaker, since then we've had a revision in SaskTel regulations and controls. And on March 1, this new pricing policy came into effect, and this is again a quote from this letter and it says:

Under this new policy, SaskTel charges \$1,300 per mile for installations. The cost to provide a monitoring line to the Canora wellhead site, which is seven miles from the rate centre, is therefore \$9,100, plus the standard \$92 network access fee, for a total of \$9,192 plus taxes.

Four hundred and ninety two this spring and now we're at 9,192. Well, my colleagues indicate that that possibly is inflation. What that is, is a disgrace for the province of Saskatchewan. Because now the people of the town of Canora, who looked at this project, who were encouraged by this project, suddenly are looking at an additional almost \$9,000 bill because of a change in policy.

So you know when we talk about how this government has

balanced this budget, it's been balanced by doing things like this, Mr. Speaker.

The community of Foam Lake, Mr. Speaker, has had a number of concerns. And Foam Lake is a very vibrant community; a beautiful community hall that was done there by the people of the area. But their major concerns over the last while, Mr. Speaker, have centred in probably three areas. One is in the area of health care. And they're very concerned that the Jubilee nursing home — which is a very fine facility — will have 11 bed reduction at a time when a waiting list exists and there are six people waiting to be admitted into a level 3, 4 home — and we're seeing bed reduction. And the people of that area just can't quite understand that, Mr. Speaker, as to why you would be reducing beds when you have a waiting list.

One of the other concerns that I have raised in this House before, Mr. Speaker — and it has not been dealt with — is the fact that the Fishing Lake, which is a body of water located north of Foam Lake, has had tremendous flooding occur in there. And in fact this last summer the estimate is somewhere between 100 and 125 cabins were unusable. But you know the economic spinoff of that, Mr. Speaker — and I fully didn't understand that last year, with that many residences being unoccupied — it's not for the people that actually live there, Mr. Speaker, it's the people that visit. It's the people that come to those cabins with families to spend time with relatives or friends, and as a result they go to Foam Lake or they go to Wadena to do some shopping. And the tremendous economic loss has been felt by that entire area because of that flooding problem that has occurred, has occurred at Fishing Lake.

So the people of that area, of that Foam Lake area, want to see something happen. They don't want Sask Water to continue monitoring and studying and monitoring and studying, they want to see some action.

Mr. Speaker, one of the communities in my area is the town of Norquay. One of the changes made by this government, and highlighted by of course the fine work of the people at SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), was dealing with policing costs because policing costs have been a tremendous problem to many, many communities, especially those communities that were just over 500 people, and Norquay was one of those. They had a population of 502 people, and they paid tens of thousands of policing . . . of dollars in policing costs because they were just over 500. Neighbouring communities that has less than 500 didn't pay any.

So as a result, with the changes made by this government, we see a little more of a sharing of policing costs. There have been some other problems created, but on the whole we see that policing costs have been dealt with.

Norquay was one of those initial places where a closure of a hospital occurred — one of those 52 original hospitals that closed — and that fear is still there, Mr. Speaker. The fear that indeed that health centre that exists right now, with one doctor providing that care, is not going to continue forever. And there is always concern in a community of 500 people that that health care facility be maintained.

One of the concerns that they've raised, Mr. Speaker, though is

how can communication be improved because there is a great deal of distance between facilities. And they have asked SaskTel to consider a cellular tower because that is an area that is not served currently by cellular telephone. And the response has been: well until we see a demand for it, we don't think that that's a possibility. Well how do you have demand if you don't have a tower. You know, it's the chicken and the egg kind of thing, Mr. Speaker. And the people of that area would like to see those kinds of things happen.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I could mention a lot of communities in my constituency who are very concerned about revenue sharing. Communities of Preeceville and Theodore and Invermay are concerned that this government has cut back on revenue sharing and as a result, communities have had to pass on additional costs to their taxpayers.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter whether you talk about Whitebeech, or whether you talk about West Bend in my constituency, everyone is dependent upon farming and agriculture. And we need to see this government take agriculture very, very seriously. We need to see that indeed we've pushed the federal government to ensure that there is assistance to our farmers and so that we can grow.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by indicating that it has been an honour, of course, to represent the people of Canora-Pelly and Saskatchewan over the last four years, and I hope to continue to be able to deal with the concerns that are brought forward to my office by every individual in Canora-Pelly. I've taken a look at the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and it is lacking. It is lacking very, very much and for that reason I will not support the Throne Speech, and I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the Saskatchewan Party.

Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, before I take my place, I want to, on behalf of my family, extend to all of my colleagues, and to all the people in Saskatchewan who may be watching today, a very Merry Christmas and all the best in the New Year, in the new millennium. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, and members of this House, first let me offer congratulations to all members, especially those who are participating in this debate for the first time. I have enjoyed listening to the maiden addresses of many of the members, Mr. Speaker, and trust that this is the first of many contributions that they will make to debate in this House and in public debate in the province generally.

Listening to the members reminded me of my own introduction to this House. When I was being introduced to the Speaker as the member for North Battleford, proceedings were interrupted by one member from the other side who interrupted by yelling out, he's only the temporary member, he's the temporary interim member for North Battleford only. This shocked me because I had previously been on the North Battleford city council and nothing of this sort ever happened to interrupt our deliberations there. Well I think you know the sequel to the story. I'm back and the member who shouted that I'd be thrown out at the next election, is not.

But seriously, I now realize that the former member with the strong lungs was right. I am a temporary member. We are all temporary members. We are here for a brief time and must some day make way for other members and other voices. All we can hope is that our time here, however long or short, will be to the credit of ourselves, our constituencies, and our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I've enjoyed, Mr. Speaker, the comments of many Saskatchewan Party MLAs to the effect that their good showing on September 16 shocked the pollsters and pundits. Well, Mr. Speaker, the so-called political experts of this province have been unanimous and unrelenting in predicting my early death. My own theory is that if the day ever comes when the political commentators of Saskatchewan predict that I am headed for a landslide in North Battleford, that's when I'll know I'm all washed up . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, no, the hon. members opposite say there's no chance of me being all washed up in North Battleford. That is a very, very wise observation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — And as long as they keep attacking me for working too hard for the people of North Battleford, they're certainly helping me, and I congratulate them for their efforts on my behalf.

Well, Mr. Speaker, shortly after the September 16 vote, I accepted an offer to join the Government of Saskatchewan. In so doing, I became the first Liberal cabinet minister to be sworn into office in more than 30 years.

Why did I do it? To understand that, one has to look at the options faced by my colleagues and myself. Well we could have simply defeated the government and triggered new elections. I don't think the people of Saskatchewan wanted a new election.

Mr. Speaker, we did not choose a minority legislature. The people of Saskatchewan chose a minority government. But it is up to us — now that we have been selected — to make this legislature work in the best way possible for the people of Saskatchewan. In my view, it would have been irresponsible to simply defeat the government and force new elections.

(1600)

We could have supported the government on a case-by-case basis. And I have to tell you in all honesty that this had considerable attraction for me. But I now realize that this would necessarily have resulted in early elections as well.

As we have seen in this House in the past few days, the Liberals would have been inundated by the Saskatchewan Party and by the media with persistent demands that we defeat the government unless it could instantly produce a level of public services previously unknown this side of paradise. And furthermore, and furthermore, that those services all be financed with one-half the taxes and managed by one-quarter the number of civil servants.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — And I think the hon. member who just spoke before me I think did an excellent job of presenting a multi-million dollar shopping list that should be immediately provided to the people of Saskatchewan while cutting taxes in half.

The Liberals, of course, could have supported the Saskatchewan Party and made the member for Rosetown-Biggan the premier. Well I have to, in all honesty, say that some of the people who voted for me would have preferred that. I respect those who would have liked to have seen the members opposite form the government of this province. I respect the view of those who would prefer a Saskatchewan Party government, but I do not share it.

I accept that the reason for the display of the bad temper on the part of Saskatchewan Party MLAs during your election as Speaker last week is because they had hoped we would join with them. I thank the hon. members opposite for their kind invitations for us to join them but I think we all know that's not where I belong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I will always regret that my former colleagues, whose friendship I appreciated when they were Liberals, decided to leave the Liberal Party and form a new party. I disagreed with their decision but I respected it. What is more difficult for me to accept is that after begging me to also leave the Liberal Party, they condemn me for joining the coalition, saying it is a betrayal of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Saskatchewan Party wanted me and you to betray the Liberal Party and sit with them. Now they claim to be upset because, in their view, we betrayed the Liberal Party. I don't understand it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, they accuse us of having no political loyalty. They have even produced The Respect for Constituents Act, a tactic they think will embarrass us. Well, Mr. Speaker, I refuse to be embarrassed over my record of loyalty by a group of men and women who have no more respect for political loyalty than an alley cat has for marriage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, whenever I get discouraged by accusations made against me about loyalty, I remember those noble and inspiring words of the hon. member for Melfort-Tisdale: I was elected as a Liberal; I will serve as a Liberal. Well, Mr. Speaker, I was elected as a Liberal and I am serving as a Liberal in the coalition Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I accept that members opposite are still stinging that they are not the government. However, for those members of the Saskatchewan

Party who still nurture the belief that they will be the government of this province any time soon, I have only this to say: Elvis has left the building.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, may I, at this point, thank hon. members opposite for being so quiet and respectful; it's my new colleagues I'm having a bit of difficulty with.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we could have stayed in opposition and promised to support the NDP, however I was unwilling to commit to support policies and budgets which had not yet been prepared and which I would not have a hand in preparing. There has been a lot of talk the last few days about: did something come from this party's platform or that party's platform. Mr. Speaker, this talk, we all know, is nonsense. Events have a habit of quickly overtaking any party platform. The challenges which face any government are rarely known at election time. All the people can do is to select men and women who can be trusted to make the proper decisions as the issues and challenges arise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — So, Mr. Speaker, I accepted the challenge to become part of this government, to be part of decision making, to bring my perspective to the table. I concede that the challenge of bringing light and reason to the NDP is a daunting task. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is up to the challenge.

It is true that by becoming a member of the government, I thus became bound by cabinet solidarity and confidentiality. However, the fundamental question remains: would I, would the Liberal Party have had more influence had we remained as a small third-party caucus? Would my constituents have been better served by my sitting in a tiny caucus in a legislature likely to implode at any moment? I don't think so. Neither does my mechanic, Mr. Speaker. It was my mechanic who said to me recently, Jack, all this talk about youse guys having the balance of power, the way I figure it, you had a gun with one bullet in it.

Another constituent of mine . . . Mr. Speaker, may I continue, please. Another constituent of mine whose views I respect, intervened for me when someone accused me of having placed the interests of my constituency and my province above those of the Liberal Party. We must remember, he said, that all political parties exist only as vehicles through which we attempt to serve the public interest. That statement hit me very hard because I think all of us who are partisans have to admit that we have been guilty of losing sight of that basic truth from time to time, and I was thankful for my friend to again remind me of it.

I would also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I regret cabinet confidentiality and I regret it for this reason — the people of Saskatchewan are not able to see the interaction and the chemistry of our cabinet. And I think that if they did, they would agree with me that there is mutual respect for all of the members of the cabinet, that all have the chance to honestly place their views before their colleagues. And what emerges, Mr. Speaker, is not her view or mine, this party's or that party's, but a new synthesis attempting to bring together the best ideas of all of the group.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well the hon. member for Canora-Pelly says 2 are always outnumbered by 17. And I say that's why I regret, in a sense, that cabinet discussions are confidential. Because he isn't able to see that it is not the math of 2 versus 17, it is the math of 19 individual men and women all bringing their best ideas and their commitment to this province, to the cabinet table, and being shown respect by their colleagues. That's the way the system is working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I believe firmly — I believe firmly that the coalition is good for Saskatchewan and good for the Battlefords. If I did not believe this, I wouldn't be here. If others wish to compare me unfavourably to Judas Iscariot, they can go right ahead. For myself, I haven't lost an hour's sleep over my decision to join the coalition; my conscience is clear.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I hear some discussions about signs up in North Battleford. They're chirping about signs in North Battleford and some people who frankly don't agree with me.

Well there are signs in North Battleford. One says, "For sale — Jack Hillson," and a big sold across it. And another one says, "Stab in the back, Jack." The media sitting in Regina says these signs are proofs that everybody in the Battlefords is mad. For once, they're right. As the people of the Battlefords prepare for Christmas, they are angry at the defacement of our community with signs that are cheap and tasteless.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, those signs demean not me, but the people who put them up. Those signs offend not me, but the people of the Battlefords.

Well what of my personal priorities as a member of this House, and of this government. I said before the election that I wanted to work for a Saskatchewan where our young people will have open access to quality education and training, and where after getting that education, they could stay to live and work, and build their lives.

I was committed to that goal before joining the coalition; I still am. I said that Saskatchewan is a province whose resources and people are second to none in this great country we call Canada. We do not need to feel inferior to our friends in Alberta or anyone else, no matter how many times the Saskatchewan Party tells us we ought to.

We can stand proud for who we are, for what we are, for what we've accomplished, and for what we will accomplish as a province and as a people. I believed that before I became a cabinet minister; I believe that now.

I said prior to the election that I believed it is the work of politics and politicians to try to bring us together as a people — rural and urban, men and women, Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal. Politics is at its best when it reaches out to all individuals and groups, and it is at its worst when those seeking public office do so by attempting to drive a wedge between peoples. I said that before the election; I repeat it now.

I said many times in this province that we cannot afford to have a taxation level far out of step with that of our neighbours if we wish to attract people and investment. Have my views changed since becoming a part of the government? They have not.

(1615)

I said many times in this House that we needed meaningful rate review for our Crown utilities. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're getting it.

As an MLA I promised the people of the Battlefords that I would work for improved health care. I said I wanted the Battlefords Union Hospital to become a regional hospital with renal dialysis and CAT scan services. That is what I promised the people of North Battleford I would work for if they re-elected me. The promise stands.

I said if I was re-elected I would redouble my efforts to improve the highway eastern entrance to North Battleford and to move quickly on the twinning of the Yellowhead highway. I said that the twinning of the Yellowhead must proceed along the existing route.

My constituents, you see, Mr. Speaker, were very concerned because they knew the Saskatchewan Party wants the Yellowhead to bypass the Battlefords. In fact the mayor of Spiritwood, who is now a member of that caucus, got a council 150 kilometres away from the Battlefords to pass a motion saying that the Yellowhead should bypass North Battleford.

Well I promised, I promised the people of the Battlefords that the only way the Yellowhead would bypass North Battleford was if the bulldozers ran over my dead body. Well, tempting as that is for hon. members opposite, I say that was my commitment before the election; that is my commitment now. Fortunately, the twinning of the Yellowhead through North Battleford will have been long since finished before the next election, so I don't think I'm going to have to worry about making good on my promise to allow Tory bulldozers to run over my dead body.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — The Saskatchewan Party, bent on its agenda of bypassing Saskatchewan's most scenic community, will not get the chance they want to destroy our viability.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I was quoted in the North Battleford *News-Optimist* recently . . . I was quoted in the North Battleford paper as saying that I knew a community which would be an excellent place for business to locate. The opposition got all upset. I was accused of pork-barrelling because I said the Battlefords was a good place for business to locate.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not apologize. I was right. I do know a community with history, with natural beauty, with transportation links, and with hard-working, intelligent people.

Why the Saskatchewan Party wants to bypass the Battlefords is to me unfathomable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I can only assume none of them have ever visited there. If they had, it would be the last community in the province they would want to bypass. It would be the last community they would object to having businesses locate in.

Well, they may accuse me of working too hard for the Battlefords and being too interested in the Battlefords, but let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that is unlikely to be a charge that will ever be levelled against the MLA for Battleford-Cut Knife.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, finally, Mr. Speaker, in the last election I said that Saskatchewan farmers are among the most efficient and productive in the world. On a level playing field, they can compete with producers from any country in the world, but they cannot be left to compete with the combined treasuries of the United States and the European Community all on their own.

I said it was unfortunate that for the first time in Saskatchewan history, an election was being held during harvest. I said the election call sent the wrong message. The NDP agrees with me.

I was proud, Mr. Speaker, to be part of the farm trek to Ottawa last month. I was also proud to be part of our province's delegation to the recent World Trade talks in Seattle. The importance of fair world trade is not diminished by the unfortunate incidents which took place there. Trade is vital to this province and its producers.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers are so productive that if we were not able to export, then every man, woman, and child in this province would have to consume, every single day of the year, 68 loaves of bread spread with 21 litres of canola margarine and washed down with 60 bottles of beer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, last time, for the first time in our history, farm leaders addressed us from the floor of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, allowing citizen delegations to come and address their elected leaders from the floor of the Assembly is common in the United States. It was something our new Lieutenant Governor advocated when she was a member of this House. I think the idea has merit.

Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few remarks about my new department. My career has been made easy by the support of those who have worked with me in my constituency office in North Battleford and now in my department.

The Leader of the Opposition has referred to the public servants of this province as scums. I do not share his views. He and his colleagues wonder why I haven't fired half my department. Let them wonder. Like so much of what they think and say, the wheel is turning but the hamster is dead.

Mr. Speaker, it's long been a passion of mine that we as a province must end the marginalization of our Aboriginal

peoples, both First Nations and Metis, if we are to have a prosperous and harmonious future. Assimilation is not the goal. However, we share a common land, we share a common destiny, and I am proud to be associated with one of the departments most engaged in the evolving new partnerships with Aboriginal people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Also as Intergovernmental minister, I am pleased with the initiatives by our federal government over the issue of clear question, clear majority. We must not allow this country to be lost in chaos, muddy confusion, and doublespeak. If there is ever to be another referendum in Quebec or elsewhere, the people must know they are voting on nothing less than whether or not they wish to remain Canadian. Those who say we should not be interested in matters such as national unity would do well to consider whether the breakup of this country would help them or hurt them.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan will be delivering a more formal statement on the clarity legislation posted in Ottawa last week within the next few days.

Finally, and I do mean it this time, I am pleased that my department is the one which liaises with the office of Lieutenant Governor. Last Monday was the last Speech from the Throne by His Honour Jack Wiebe. The next Speech from the Throne will be delivered by Her Honour Lynda Haverstock. I am proud to count both among my personal friends. This province is grateful for the work of both of these gracious and dedicated individuals.

Mr. Speaker, do I support the Speech from the Throne? You bet I do. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, and fellow members of the Legislative Assembly, I am very proud and honoured to rise in the House today and speak on behalf of the great people of Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency whom I consider it a privilege to serve. Today I'd especially like to thank the dedicated people in Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency who believed in the Saskatchewan Party and who worked tirelessly to make the win on September 16 possible.

Mr. Speaker, there have been many events and many people throughout my life that have played a significant part in making it possible for me to be here today. The person most responsible is a very special person in my life — my father, Darwin Lackey, who more than any one else gave me the background and drive to become involved in the political process.

Mr. Speaker, in our home, politics was not an option — it was a way of life. My dad taught me the value of a strong work ethic and he taught me that next to faith in God the most important thing in life is to be free, and that to keep that freedom we must be willing to do our part.

Mr. Speaker, the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency has vast acres of farmland and ranchland. It encompasses the city of Weyburn and many small towns. There is a sense of community

where people depend on one another and have a spirit of volunteerism and of working together for the common good.

The people of Weyburn-Big Muddy are proud, hard-working, salt of the earth, prairie folk who believe in doing an honest day's work and who ask only in return, to be able to keep a fair share of what they earn.

Mr. Speaker, our constituency has many natural wonders. Weyburn is situated in the heart of the Williston oil basin and the Weyburn oil field has more than 1,000 wells capable of production. The oil industry and the spinoff jobs it provides are vital to the progress of Weyburn and district. We have fertile farmlands and rolling grazing lands of the Big Muddy badlands, truly one of the great wonders of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, a new committee called the Deep South Economic Development, has been struck representing the towns and RMs in and around the Big Muddy with the purpose of enhancing the economy and promoting tourism in this area. I'd like to commend those enterprising people and wish them every success.

Mr. Speaker, we have the historic Saskatchewan hospital in its own picturesque grounds in the city of Weyburn. This facility has served our community well for many decades, often being used for various purposes, but its primary focus has always been health care. There is a concern that this structurally sound landmark will be closed and possibly demolished. My commitment to the people of Weyburn is that I will work with any and all groups, associations, or individuals that have ideas of how we can utilize the Saskatchewan hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great need in southern Saskatchewan for an in-patient drug and alcohol treatment centre. The Saskatchewan hospital would be a perfect location for such a centre. The Weyburn Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse has been working and lobbying for some time because they recognize the value and need for in-patient care. I believe in their cause, and hopefully, by working together with the community, we can bring this valuable service to the city of Weyburn.

Mr. Speaker, the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency also proudly claims the first inland terminal built in 1976 by entrepreneurs who had foresight, determination, and who dared to make their dreams a reality.

We are also the home of the Weyburn Red Wings, and one of our colleagues, Don McMorris, was once a proud member of this team.

Mr. Speaker, we now have another group of entrepreneurs in our constituency who too have a vision and a plan. But to date they have been denied the right to go ahead with their dream because the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan choose to support the Canadian Wheat Board, who have a monopoly in this province, instead of the farmers of Saskatchewan who want to start value-added businesses.

The proponents of the prairie pasta plant are only asking for what a great many other farmers are asking for — the opportunity to sell their grain where they want, when they want,

and to whom they want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — We have the most efficient, productive farmers in the world. Farmers who want the freedom to grow their crops, sell them for the best price, and ask nothing of government. Yet our proud farmers have been forced to beg on bended knee, not for a handout, but just for a fair price for their grain.

Mr. Speaker, this crisis has crept into every community and is rapidly spreading across Saskatchewan. As Christmas draws near, we think particularly of the families and of the children. No one seems to be left untouched by the devastation.

But our farmers have had enough. And when you take enough away from people so that they feel they have nothing left to give, they will decide to get involved and to fight for their values, their principles, and their very way of life.

And that is why we have seen farm rallies across the province and a growing number of tax revolt meetings. And that is why the Saskatchewan Party swept rural Saskatchewan on September 16.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

Ms. Bakken: — The people in rural Saskatchewan wanted to send men and women to this legislature who believed in farming and who were determined to find a way to keep farm families on their farms.

Mr. Speaker, the last blow to our farming community came when the NDP called the election at harvest time, thinking that the farmers would stay in the field and not vote. The farmers in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy and across this province said: if the NDP think I am not going to vote they are dead wrong. And the farmers kept their word and on election day they were lined up bright and early waiting to cast their ballots.

On September 16, the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy spoke clearly of their frustration with this government and they were determined to be heard. The Radville rural poll, Saskatchewan Party 145 votes, the NDP 23; the Bengough poll, the Saskatchewan Party 105 votes, the NDP 9; the Big Beaver poll, the Saskatchewan Party 108 votes, the NDP 6.

Mr. Speaker, this is how the people of rural Saskatchewan felt about this government and they have every reason to because this government has systematically destroyed rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province voted on September 16 for a chance. They voted for a chance to turn their province around because it is the people of this province who have the ideas, the energy, and the vision and it is this government that is standing in their way.

This government has broken the will of people of Saskatchewan

with ever-increasing taxation. They are driving our young people from the province because of high taxes and no jobs. This government is forcing seniors to leave their homes in smaller communities to move to the cities so they can have access to a doctor and a hospital. This government has allowed our highways to deteriorate to hazardous levels. They have off-loaded on municipal governments, and they refuse to address crime. This government has failed our farmers many times over, and now we have a situation where we have more people on welfare in Saskatchewan than we have farmers.

The NDP has brought our health care system to a crisis level. Very few, if any, have been left untouched by the injustices, the lack of compassion, the waiting lists, the loss of doctors, the unacceptable levels of service. And let's not forget about our nurses who are overworked, short-staffed, and stressed to the breaking point. Last spring this government vilified our nurses, and then used them and the sick and the elderly for their own political gain.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to walk with the nurses on the picket line in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy because most nurses were out there not because of union issues, but because they believe in the people of this province and they care about their patients and about the level of service they can give them.

The people of this province have become mere numbers in a game of budgets and beds. And in southern Saskatchewan, the closing of the Plains hospital tells more about this government's mismanagement and how they have deceived the people than any other single issue.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are tired of an out-of-touch government who doesn't know nor care what the peoples' priorities are. This government has its own agenda and has refused to listen to the people. The people of Saskatchewan sent this message to the NDP on September 16 when more people voted for the Saskatchewan Party than either of the other two parties. But the NDP showed once again their disregard for the voice of the people and overturned the election with an underhanded, manipulative move.

I've told you some things about the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, but there is one more thing they are known for and that is their long memories. And believe me, they will remember this the next time they have the opportunity to vote.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the constituency that I represent is the birthplace of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation). The majority of people in my constituency now realize that socialism does not work. It is a false philosophy that sounds good but leads only to failure and dependence.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy are way ahead of this government and that is why they voted for the Saskatchewan Party. The people believe in the Saskatchewan Party because it is giving a voice to the majority of Saskatchewan voters who for years have been drowned out by a ruling minority. They are just ordinary people like you and I who for far too long have been ignored.

The people believe in the Saskatchewan Party because it is about common sense, good management, listening to the grassroots, and keeping your word.

The people believe in the Saskatchewan Party because it is committed to quality health care system for all people, no matter where they live in this province. The Saskatchewan Party believes health care dollars should be put back into front-line service so that patients and their needs become the first priority.

I believe in the Saskatchewan Party because it is committed to respecting our tax dollars. Most of us have been wisely told by a father or grandfather, look after the pennies and the dollars will look after themselves. The people of Saskatchewan deserve nothing less.

Several years ago I heard Senator Gramm from Texas speaking on TV and he told the story of Dicky Flatt. I never forgot that story because it was so simple but so true and it tells what the Saskatchewan Party is really all about. I phoned Senator Gramm's office and asked if he would give me permission to use his story. A short time later I received a copy of his story and permission to use it and so I'd like to tell you the story of Dicky Flatt in Senator Gramm's words:

The day I offered the Reagan Budget in the U.S. House, I was walking down the steps of the Capitol and a reporter came running up to me and said, "Congressman Gramm, in a 1,300-page budget how did you decide what programs ought to be cut and what programs ought to grow?" I thought for a minute and said, "I'd use the Dicky Flatt test." And not being from Mexia, Texas, she didn't know Dicky Flatt or the test, so I explained it to her. I said, "I looked at every program in the Federal budget, and then I tried to think of some real, honest-to-God, flesh-and-blood person who lives in my district, and that brought to mind a printer from Mexia named Dicky Flatt. And I thought about him because he works hard for a living."

Dicky Flatt and his wife were in business then with his . . . (mother and his father), his brother and brother's wife. They were open 'til 6 o'clock every week-night, and 'til 5 o'clock on Saturday. And whether you saw Dicky Flatt at the PTA or the Boy Scouts or the Presbyterian church, try as he did he never quite got that blue ink off the end of his fingers.

And I said, I looked at every program, thought of Dicky Flatt, and asked a simple question: "Will the benefits to be derived by spending money on this program be worth taking the money away from Dicky Flatt to pay for it?" And let me tell you something: There are not a lot of programs that will stand up to that test. When we apply the Dicky Flatt test, there won't be a deficit in the federal budget. In fact, when we apply the Dicky Flatt test, we're going to be able to cut taxes for working families, rebuild our economy and the American dream in the process. We are going to let families spend their money instead of government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Like Senator Gramm, the Saskatchewan Party believes people should have ownership over their lives, that they should have a reason to get up in the morning and press on to their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud sixth generation Canadian. My great, great, great, great grandfather came from Ireland to fight in the War of 1812. At the end of the war, they were given a choice of passage back to Ireland or 100 acres of land in Ontario. He chose to stay and, in later years, his grandson made the trek west with many other pioneers and through hard work, determination, and unwavering will, they made a better way of life and built strong, vibrant communities. Mr. Speaker, we need to renew that spirit of enterprise in the province of Saskatchewan.

A book that has inspired me to never give up and has shown me that one person can make a difference is a book by Cal Thomas entitled, *The Things That Matter Most* and I'd like to quote from that book now:

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The redemption of a great nation can begin with a single and powerful decision by one 'ordinary' person that influences others to make similar decisions because they perceive how right and good that decision is.

The hour may be late, but the choices remain for each of us, and the benefits to those who choose wisely will affect not only they themselves, but generations to come.

The promises for the future, rooted in a new birth of spiritual, political, and economic freedom, can and must be kept.

We owe it to those who have gone before.

If we fail, we will be held accountable by those who are yet to come.

Mr. Speaker, it took the courage of eight MLAs to take the first step. Many thousands quickly followed. And on September 16, over 160,000 people from all across the province joined in the march. The next time the people of Saskatchewan have the opportunity to vote, there will be a stampede.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislative Assembly, I want you to listen closely and I think you will hear in the distance the sound of thundering hooves. And they are getting louder and they are getting closer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the people of this province have come in out of the rain. They have caught a glimpse of a brighter future, a better tomorrow, and for a fleeting moment they have felt the sunshine on their face. And, Mr. Speaker, they are not going back — not now, not tomorrow, not ever.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment. And, Mr. Speaker, I would now make a superseding motion. I move, seconded by Glen Hart:

That the Assembly do now proceed to item 1 under the private members' public Bills and orders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:43 p.m. until 4:51 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas —24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
McMorris	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

Nays —29

Romanow	Trew	Hagel
Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Melenchuk	Cline	Atkinson
Goulet	Lautermilch	Thomson
Kasperski	Serby	Belanger
Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Jones	Yates	Higgins
Harper	Axworthy	Junor
Wartman	Addley	

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege to give my first address to the House seeing that I have such a full House to hear my address, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — And I thank the members opposite for coming forward to hear the words that I have to say this afternoon. It is . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. I would very much like to hear the member's maiden speech, as I'm sure other members of the Assembly would, and it is a courtesy to the member. So I'd ask, please, order.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to represent the good people of Last Mountain-Touchwood, arriving with a long political awareness, and to have the people place their trust and confidence in me as their elected member of this Assembly. And for that, I thank them.

Last Mountain-Touchwood is a rural constituency that lies in east central Saskatchewan, bounded on the south by the Qu'Appelle Valley, on the west by Last Mountain Lake, on the north by the Quill Lakes, and on the east by No. 35 Highway. Towns such as Cupar, Lipton, Southey, Strasbourg, Raymore,

Kelliher, and Wynyard lie within the riding boundaries, with Wynyard being the largest with a population of approximately 2,200 people.

Agriculture is our major industry, Mr. Speaker. Most of our people are directly or indirectly affected by the devastation that is currently wreaking havoc on rural Saskatchewan. Is it any wonder then that of the witnesses that appeared before the Standing Committee of Agriculture last Tuesday, three of them came from Last Mountain-Touchwood constituency.

There are a number of areas of concern that I would like to address today, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, agriculture is the most important industry in our constituency. We have a diverse mix of agricultural production in the constituency and it is a testament to the talents of our producers. Our unique location gives our producers the opportunity and the challenge to grow a wide variety of crops, and our producers have answered the challenge.

Crops such as chickpeas, lentils, field peas, beans, herbs, and spices; specialty oil seeds such as soybeans and sunflower, are grown throughout the constituency. Our livestock production is a diverse mix of traditional enterprises, along with specialty production units of white-tail deer, bison, elk, and fallow deer. We also have a thriving poultry industry centred around the town of Wynyard which is home to the province's only eviscerating plant.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that our farm managers have diversified and adopted the latest technology in order to be as efficient as possible. It is particularly irritating when I hear people say that farmers have to diversify and become more efficient. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there is no industry in this country that could be profitable if forced to operate under current economic conditions that agriculture, particularly the grain and oil seed sector, operate under today.

Answers must be found to solve both the long- and short-term problems. All possibilities and alternatives must be examined and nothing should be considered untouchable in our search to find these answers.

All levels of government along with industry players must be part of the solution. We can no longer have the provincial government blame the federal government for inaction. As we heard last Tuesday from the farm groups, there are a number of things that this government can do to bring down production costs and improve the bottom line.

It is time for this government to act. In spite of the doom and gloom, there are communities and individuals who are moving forward in making a better life in rural Saskatchewan. One such community is Kelliher who has worked for eight long years to raise money for a curling rink. Through tireless efforts by countless volunteers, they will be curling in Kelliher in the new year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — All of this money was raised by the local community with no outside help. The money spent in the local VLTs (video lottery terminal) in Kelliher is shipped to the

provincial coffers and none of it is returned. This has to be changed, whereby some of the VLT profits are returned for community projects such as rinks, halls, and other facilities, instead of merely swelling the government slush fund.

Last Mountain-Touchwood, as all constituencies in this province, has a number of specially talented people and one of those people that I would like to mention this afternoon is a lady that works in . . . an artist, Ms. Jacquie Berting who practised the art of lamp work glass. Her best known creation is Glass Wheat Field, a salute to Canadian farmers, is made up of 14,000 waist high glass wheat stocks, each individually hand cut and lamp worked. Her work has been shown across Canada and is the symbol of the hope dedicated to the farmers of Canada.

It is people like Ms. Berting and her work that are often the only . . .

The Speaker: — Order, Order. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: — Please state your point of order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, on the previous vote that was conducted, on the voice vote, clearly it was the opposition side that had the majority of the members in the House and the yeas clearly had the vote. I would ask that you review the circumstances and make a ruling to determine the exact procedures and rules on making the determination on a voice-count vote.

The Speaker: — I'll take that under consideration and come back with a ruling, if that would be okay, later on. It now being 5 p.m., this House will recess until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

