

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. The personal injury benefits provision of the automobile insurance Act is a subject of this petition and it reads:

That your humble 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 the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed primarily by people from Regina, the city of Regina, Cupar, and Elfros.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition and this is signed by people from Gainsborough, Fertile areas of Saskatchewan. And it deals with an effort to pry this government loose and to do something on the farm assistance situation, and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of the 1999 property taxes on agricultural lands for one year, whereby providing farm families with a \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions on behalf of the citizens of Qu'Appelle, and the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the Minister of Education to do everything in his power and to maintain the quality of education of students attending school in Qu'Appelle; and to stop this unwarranted closure of classes in Qu'Appelle.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from Qu'Appelle.

I so present.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition this morning from many people in the province of Saskatchewan very concerned about the agricultural crisis and

more so probably the Saskatchewan crisis. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of 1999 property taxes on agricultural lands for one year whereby providing farm families with \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on these petitions come from the communities of Outlook, Glenside, Dilke, and others.

And I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present today on behalf of people very concerned with the automobile insurance Act, and the prayer reads:

That your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to repeal the provisions of the personal injury benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act and adopt a return to the 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 personal . . . from the person responsible for the accident with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

The people that have signed this petition are from Regina, Grenfell, and Naicam.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens concerned about the personal injury benefits in the automobile insurance Act. The prayer reads as follows:

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 the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present a petition, reading 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 the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the communities of Elfros, Wynyard, P.A. (Prince Albert), and Mozart.

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

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 the add-on insurance system that would provide benefits on a no-fault basis to all victims without taking away the innocent victim's right to seek compensation from the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

The petitioners are from Wadena, Elfros, and Wynyard.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise in the Assembly this morning on behalf of petitioners concerned with the personal injury benefits provision of the automobile insurance Act. And the prayer reads:

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 the person responsible for the accident, but with the appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Wolseley, Regina, Grenfell, Kennedy, and Sinaluta.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a petition that deals with the education portion of the property tax paid by farmers. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of the 1999 property taxes on agriculture lands for one year, whereby providing farm families with \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

And the petitioners are from Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, and Weyburn.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present to deal with the disastrous AIDA program. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of the 1999 property taxes on agriculture lands for one year whereby providing farm families with \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

The signatories, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Pense. I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funds to rebate the education portion of the 1999 property taxes on agricultural lands for one year whereby providing farm families with \$133 million in reduction for 1999.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitioners, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities for Birch Hills, Hagen, and St. Louis.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand also to present petitions on behalf of citizens in Saskatchewan regarding another school closure. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the Minister of Education to do everything in his power to maintain the quality of education of students attending school in Qu'Appelle and to stop this unwarranted closure of classes in Qu'Appelle.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures are from Qu'Appelle area. Thank you.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition concerning the loss of a full-time physician for the Blaine Lake Medical Clinic. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to overrule the Parkland Health Board to change its decision and allow the Blaine Lake Medical Clinic to have a

permanent physician with consistent hours and days.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

From the good people from Blaine Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the education tax rebate farm assistance. The petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of the 1999 property taxes on agriculture lands for one year, whereby providing farm families with \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Petitioners are from Chamberlain and Holdfast.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I'm also going to present a petition concerning the education tax rebate farm assistance. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of 1999 property taxes on agricultural land for one year, whereby providing farm families with \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

The petitioners are from Chamberlain and Bethune.

Mr. Wakefield: — I too have a petition signed by concerned citizens regarding the automobile insurance Act. The prayer reads:

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

The petitioners are from Grenfell and Broadview.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition that I would like to present. It has to do with the education tax

rebate. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the educational portion of the 1999 property tax on agricultural lands for one year, whereby providing farm families with a \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

The petition is signed by people from the Chamberlain and Dilke area.

I do so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the failing AIDA program:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to assist Saskatchewan farmers by withdrawing from the failing AIDA program and using the remaining provincial AIDA funding to rebate the education portion of the 1999 property taxes on agricultural lands for one year, whereby providing farm families with a \$133 million tax reduction in 1999.

And the petitioners are from Glidden, from Kindersley.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by Saskatchewan residents concerned about the personal injury benefits provision of the automobile insurance Act. The petition reads as follows:

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 the person responsible for the accident, but with appropriate modifications to reduce overall personal injury costs.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from Wadena and Saskatoon.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition respecting the automobile insurance Act. The prayer reads as follows:

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

overall personal injury costs.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by the good folks of Leslie, Wynyard, Hendon, and Wadena. Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

Petitions regarding the repeal of personal injury benefits contained in the automobile insurance Act;

Petitions regarding the withdrawal from the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) program; and

Petitions regarding the closure of classes in Qu'Appelle.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a number of questions. I have two of them. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

And this is to the Minister of CIC (Crown Investment Corporation of Saskatchewan): what was the total cost for administrating provisions of the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement in 1998-99.

And my second question this morning is, and I read: I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

And this is also to the Minister of CIC: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Provincial Secretary: how much in total has Saskatchewan spent so far on projects marking the turn of the millennium?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a second question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of SPMC: how many vehicles have been purchased by your department in 1999 and at what cost; please detail each purchase.

Thank you.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have two questions that I would like to present:

I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: in the 1999 fall report of the Provincial Auditor, it is noted that the government does not publish overall planning or performance information for the entire government and the Provincial Auditor recommends that the government do so, will the Finance minister be providing to this House and to the people of Saskatchewan a complete fiscal plan of the entire government for the next fiscal year?

I also give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose their salaries.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also have two questions to ask today. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Agriculture: please name all the employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose the salaries.

The second question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: how many Saskatchewan farmers have defaulted on loans to ACS since the beginning of this year?

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: in 1997-98, how many Saskatchewan residents were approved by the Department of Health to seek medical treatment in the United States for procedures unavailable in Saskatchewan; how many of these procedures were performed in '97-98; and please name each procedure performed and the cost of each procedure.

Mr. Speaker, I'll also have questions of the same nature for the calendar year '98-99 and '99-2000. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Social Services: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose their salaries.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of SPMC: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose their salaries.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose their salaries.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999, and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

My question is to the Minister of CIC: how much money has SaskPower given to Ducks Unlimited since 1995.

Ms. Harpauer: — I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: how much money including production costs, salaries, and ad buys has SaskTel spent on advertisements featuring the comedian, Brent Butt.

Mr. Wakefield: — I have a notice of a question. I give notice that I shall on day 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Economic Development: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a notice of a written question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries. Thank you.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Northern Affairs: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Energy and Mines: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Environment and Resource Management: please name all employees of your ministerial staff hired since September 30, 1999; and please disclose their salaries.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, I'd like to introduce a number of students sitting in your gallery. These students are taking English as a Second Language at Balfour, and they're from India and Kosovo, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome them to our province. Also I'd like to also welcome their teacher Wendy Moskowy who is from Milestone where I grew up. We went to school together but she was . . .

An Hon. Member: — Younger.

Mr. McMorris: — That's it, younger. So anyway I'd like to thank . . . welcome them to the legislature today and ask all members to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise to draw to your attention and the attention of the members the group that's seated in your gallery, who are from the English as a Second Language Group at Balfour Collegiate.

Balfour Collegiate has about 25 nationalities represented. In this particular group there are two nationalities, Kosovo and India. And I can assure the members, after my meeting with them this

morning, that these students are very well advanced in their English. They're making very good progress. And we should, though, in the universal language make them feel very welcome, and that is by putting our hands together and extending a warm welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce a group of 47 grade 8 students from the St. Francis School. I want all members to join with me in welcoming them here today. They're with their teachers, Ms. Folk, as well as Mrs. Reese.

And I wonder if all members would join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like all hon. members to join with me in welcoming a good friend of mine and a constituent seated in the west gallery, Mr. Ernest Morin. Welcome you here to the Assembly today, Ernie.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — If I may I'd like also to add my warmest welcomes to the students in both galleries and the Speaker's gallery. And I'd also like to mention another student who is involved in a mentoring program with the Department of Environment and Resource Management that's sitting in my gallery. Please welcome Shari Nichols.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Time Capsule

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a few moments to let you know about a great event that took place here in this legislative building yesterday morning.

A group of grade 4 students from St. Marguerite Bourgeoys School, a school in my constituency of Regina Wascana Plains, along with their partner in education, SPMC, placed a time capsule in the dome of the building.

Items within the time capsule, messages to the future, and reminders of this year were selected by the students to commemorate the last year of this century. What a wonderful way, Mr. Speaker, to both acknowledge the coming millennium as well as a solid partnership between these two groups.

In a sense the students put a message back into the Legislative Building much like the message in a bottle which you will remember was recently found. SPMC and St. Marguerite have been involved in a partnership since my colleague from Meadow Lake established it in 1998. This partnership and many initiatives to arise from it are wonderful learning experiences for the students of St. Marguerite, and the idea of the children sending a message to the future generations of our province is very exciting for them as well.

I commend both groups for their respective activities in putting this educational and interesting event together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cupar Elevator Fire

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I rose in this Assembly to tell you and other members about some good news that was happening in my hometown of Cupar. I mentioned that United Grain Growers had started their \$3.2 million upgrade on their facilities there.

It is with great sadness and concern that I must report to you today that currently that elevator is burning to the ground. Apparently the fire started late yesterday afternoon and volunteer fire departments from both Cupar and Southey were on the scene all night. They called in people from the Regina fire department; they were unable to save the elevator. Early this morning, approximately at 7:30, fire broke through the roof.

I have just talked to some of the people in my hometown. Apparently a second elevator, the roof has started to burn but they are hopeful that they will be able to save that one. This elevator that is currently burning, Mr. Speaker, is about approximately 50 feet away from the hotel in Cupar and also about 100 feet from a service station. So we certainly have a grave situation in my hometown today.

As I mentioned, the fire departments from Southey and Cupar and Regina are presently on the scene, and I hope that they will be able to contain the fire to the one elevator.

It is certainly a dark day in the hometown of Cupar today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opening Ceremony of Sanitec Canada

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to tell the Assembly today about an opening ceremony that I attended in late November.

It was for Sanitec, Canada's new biomedical waste facility that was opened up on Industrial Drive just north of the city. Sanitec will be converting medical waste such as dressings and needles into harmless shredded products. Sanitec's facility is the only one of its kind in Canada and it uses new microwave processing technology to not only make this waste safe, but it also reduces the volume by at least 20 per cent.

More than \$2 million have been invested in this project and it will create 15 full-time jobs. Right now Saskatchewan produces about 1,300 tons of biomedical waste each year. Now that waste will be dealt with in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

Sanitec's facility has been approved by SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), the City of Regina, the RM (rural municipality) of Sherwood, and the Regina Health District. So we can be assured that this facility will be

safe and effective.

I'd like to extend my personal congratulations to the general manager of Sanitec, Dave Wenzel; the controller, Warren Hodder; the president of Sanitec, Peter Klaptchuk, on the official opening of their new biomedical waste disinfection facility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Traffic Safety

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With Christmas closely approaching and the New Year just around the corner, I'd briefly like to talk a little bit about traffic safety. After being involved in traffic safety over the last 20 years, it was great . . . great pride to see the fatal rate drop in half over about the last 20 to 25 years.

I'm concerned though in hearing the latest news reports that our fatal rate has probably increased by 20 per cent in just the month of December here. Things aren't going that well on our highways. December is traditionally the most accident-prone month of the year, but it's not good to see that so many people are dying on our highways as we're getting so close to the new millennium.

So I guess, on my behalf, I'd just like to wish everybody a safe trip to wherever they're going through this Christmas season, but take it serious and drive safe. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Assisted Living Program for Seniors in Meadow Lake

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The town of Meadow Lake is on top of the settled area of Saskatchewan in more ways than one. We have many virtues to . . . we have many virtues too numerous to mention in 90 minutes, much less 90 seconds.

I was proud last month to take part in another Meadow Lake first. I was present at the launch of the Saskatchewan assisted living services program at the Golden West Manor in Meadow Lake. And, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to present a plaque to each of the tenant associations who are part of this program.

This program, Mr. Speaker, will help seniors in social housing remain longer in their own homes. As we all know, the longer we can stay in familiar surroundings caring for ourselves with some assistance, the better off we are. Assisted living helps people remain self-reliant with a bit of assistance here and there. The program offers nutrition and exercise programs as well as providing laundry and housekeeping services.

In addition, the co-ordinator Wendy Roste has seen to it that there have been several planned outings since September when the program began.

Mr. Speaker, the assisted living has four core values by which it operates: independence, dignity, choice, and community. These values are much in evidence at the Golden West Manor because as Mayor Gabe Fournier said, this program is just one way to

thank seniors for the contributions they have made to our community.

I congratulate Wendy Roste, Mayor Gabe Fournier, and the Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing for bringing this program to Meadow Lake.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rose Valley Co-operative Housing

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you about community spirit in rural Saskatchewan. The Rose Valley Community Spirit Manor is a level 1 and 2 co-operative housing project developed by the people of Rose Valley when their hospital closed several years ago.

The project had the capacity for 16 residents but to date only has 12 residents. This fall the board contacted my constituency office for help in developing a strategy to get more funding. Unfortunately this government is unwilling to provide . . . to fund private care homes and this co-operative falls under this category. With the lack of support from this government to rural Saskatchewan these people, who are descendants of hard-working pioneers, did what their forefathers did in adversity. When they were faced with a \$5,000 shortfall, they raised \$9,379 at a silent auction at the Sask Wheat Pool annual supper. The money will cover the shortfall until the manor is filled to capacity.

Congratulations to Rose Valley for your initiative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lake Lenore Teacher Recognized for Volunteerism

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in November Wade Weseen of Lake Lenore was recognized and honoured by the Quill Plains Regional Recreation Association for his spirit of volunteerism.

Wade Weseen has been the physical education teacher in Lake Lenore for more than 25 years, but he has been more than just a teacher. He has been the coach of the Lake Lenore Lancers basketball and soccer teams. Mr. Speaker, he coaches every season of every year and every summer. And he has done so for many years.

He gives generously of his time and his resources to keep school athletics affordable. His team averages about 25 weekends on the road per year and they camp out in classrooms with their sleeping bags and coolers to save on travel costs. He supervises study periods for his students on the road and most years the majority of his team is on the honour roll.

Wade encourages his athletes to compete at many levels and they have been successful at both provincial and national levels. Mr. Weseen believes in fair play and treats opponents, coaches, referees, and his team with respect.

Hard work is rewarded with playing time regardless of the level of talent and skills. His true measure of success is the respect he earns from his students and the support of the parents for his athletic programs.

To Mr. Weseen, coaching is not an extracurricular activity, rather it is a way of life. And his lifelong dedication and commitment to education through sport is extraordinary and his strength of character and leadership steadfast.

For Wade Weseen, there is no off-season. Congratulations, Mr. Weseen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Exhibit at Royal Saskatchewan Museum

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday, December 15, I was honoured to attend the unveiling of a new exhibit on conserving and protecting the environment opened at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum.

The exhibit consists of the artwork of Saskatchewan students and reflects their view that people need to live in harmony with the environment. The exhibit includes 29 three-dimensional panels sculpted and painted by students, and a talking mother earth globe. The students own voices were recorded and their description of each panel can be heard by pushing a tile that corresponds to the panel a student creates.

Four elementary schools and one high school participated in the project. The schools are Souris elementary school in Weyburn, Pense school in Pense, Davin, and Marion McVeety elementary schools in Regina, as well as Sheldon-Williams Collegiate. The Optimist Clubs of Saskatchewan donated \$17,000 to the project. I hope that all members will show their appreciation to the students, teachers, museum, and Optimist Clubs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Financial Support for Farmers

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Minister, yesterday the Saskatchewan Party called on the government to use its liquor and gaming reserves to provide an immediate assistance to farm families. Since that time we have spoken to members of the Farm Coalition and we have found very strong support for our proposal. Groups like SWAN (Saskatchewan Women's Agricultural Network), the ProWest Rally Group, agree it's time for the province to act. The Wheat Pool and the barley growers say a provincial contribution would strengthen our bargaining position. And Sinc Harrison of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) has said that his administrators could put a program like this together and put money in the hands of farmers within a week.

Mr. Minister, your own farm coalition is saying it's time for the province to act. We heard it on the floor of the Assembly last week when the farm groups came to the Assembly and we

heard it again yesterday.

Mr. Minister, will you immediately convene a meeting of the farm coalition to discuss this proposal?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the member opposite that the farm coalition that he has been involved in has made it very, very clear that they believe that the Saskatchewan government and taxpayers have responsibility for a group of issues that include improvements to crop insurance and NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account). They believe that the provincial government has responsibility in dealing with the education portion of land tax, but Mr. Sinclair has also been very clear, and when he talks about the program being administered by the rural municipalities and through SARM, that he's talking about the billion dollars from the federal government.

There are two parts to this approach. One part is the approach of a billion dollars from Ottawa that we can administer in a number of ways, one as Mr. Harrison has appropriately suggested, being administered through SARM, and I agree with him on that, but they have been very careful to say that the provincial money, if it's ripped away from provincial programs and put over to backstop the federal government, we will never, ever have the money to deal with those provincial issues, and I think the member knows that full well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, as you know full well, when the farm groups came before the Assembly, they said, in lockstep, one after another, that yes, the federal government has responsibility for a \$1 billion trade equalization payment, but they also said, group after group after group, that you have responsibility.

Yesterday we called for an immediate assistance plan by the province of Saskatchewan for \$300 million of money that you already have sitting in your bank account in the liquor and gaming fund to be used to do this. And the farm groups have asked for that. As of yesterday they are calling for those kinds of things to happen. Farm families have been waiting for over a year for you to act. They simply cannot wait any longer.

As the resolution that was passed in unanimous form here in the Assembly said, calling for immediate assistance before the end of this year, will you act on that \$300 million request that we made yesterday and put it in the hands of farm families immediately? And will you also call on the farm coalition to meet as soon as possible to discuss this proposal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite that it's very clear that the farm organizations have been very, very intent on where the billion dollars should come from that you talk about.

As I quote from *Hansard* from the debate on December 7 — the National Farmers Union is one of them — and I quote:

In the area of safety nets, the . . . Farmers Union is

supporting Saskatchewan's request (that's your request and mine and all the producers in the province) for \$1 billion in (cash) assistance . . .

And they refer obviously that it would come from the federal government. And it goes on and on.

That's not to take away from the responsibility that provincial taxpayers have to agriculture. Each individual citizen in this province, Mr. Speaker, pays \$300 per capita towards agriculture, and they can probably do more. But if anyone is saying — as the Leader of the Opposition has suggested — that \$300 million extra of provincial taxpayers' money should go to pay into what has to be a federal program, he is then arguing for a \$1,500 tax increase for a mom and dad and a family of three, and that is . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. Let's be very clear what the NDP (New Democratic Party) is telling farmers here in Saskatchewan. They are telling farmers, you're just going to have to wait. Drain your bank account. Drain your NISA account. Max out on your line of credit. Borrow from wherever you can. Do whatever you can to keep your head above water while the NDP sits on \$350 million in the liquor and gaming fund that's already there for use for an emergency fund and a rainy-day fund as your Finance minister has called it time after time.

Well not only is it raining in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Minister, but farm families are losing their farms here in Saskatchewan. It's time for you to act.

Farmers have been waiting for over a year. They simply cannot wait any longer. Are you going to act on this proposal and are you going to call an immediate meeting of the farm coalition to discuss the idea?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, I want to make this clear. The farm coalition that we've been dealing with has made it extremely clear through communiqués that he has been involved in, that a billion dollars of trade equalization has to come from the federal government and that we are not in that business.

Yesterday, what happened here in this House, when the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Agriculture separated from the coalition and said, we should backstop and backfill the federal government to the tune of \$300 million or to the tune of \$1,500 increase per family in this province in taxes to backfill what has been a federal responsibility.

Now I understand while a member of the Reform Party, the Leader of the Opposition argued that a \$400 million cut to agriculture wasn't enough — and I've got the verbatim from the House where he recommended further cuts where he was moving motions for further cuts. He is now arguing that that be backfilled by Saskatchewan taxpayers and I say he is an

embarrassment to the province and the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the only people, the only people that should be red-faced in Saskatchewan are the people that are sitting on \$350 million in the liquor and gaming fund and won't spend one cent of that slush fund to help farm families in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Yes, yes, Mr. Speaker, we support the call for \$1 billion and we support the farm coalition on it. But they are also supporting the Saskatchewan Party's call for \$300 million of a top-up to immediately help farm families here in Saskatchewan now.

Mr. Minister, you said that you're just a heartbeat away from getting a billion dollars from Ottawa, but there's absolutely no evidence of that whatsoever. The Prime Minister refuses to hold a first ministers' conference. The WTO (World Trade Organization) talks have fallen apart. The Chair of the ag committee says any new program must be cost shared. There's no evidence whatsoever that you are close to doing anything to help farm families.

Mr. Minister, farm families can't wait any longer. On the front page of today's paper, we see the Chair of SWAN losing their farm. We must act now.

Mr. Minister, will you act on our proposal, and will you act on the call for a meeting with the farm coalition to discuss the idea further?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to indicate obviously how this government works, and that is by working with farm groups, and we have a number of meetings. Mr. Speaker, two days ago in this House, that member said that the symposium on agriculture — talking about this very issue — was a waste of time. Today, he comes here and says, let's get together and talk some more.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday the process of negotiation that all the farm groups have been involved in, was severely undermined. Without any consultation — with no consultation with anyone. Not one farm group was consulted before they made the announcement that they were pulling out of the coalition. And I say to those members, they should apologize to the taxpayers and the farmers for jeopardizing the negotiations that are ongoing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, these people are not learning anything. This is exactly the same negotiating strategy of Eric Upshall. Just hang tough, don't put up any money, don't go to the table, just sit there and do nothing. Blame the federal government. And what did we get — AIDA. A program that doesn't work and we still had to cost share 40 per cent.

Mr. Minister, haven't you learned anything yet? Leroy Larsen told us that he thinks the provincial contribution would strengthen our bargaining position. When are you going to listen? Will you help farm families today?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite, that when the AIDA program was being negotiated, when it was being negotiated, we came to a crucial point in the negotiations, we came . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well he may have been in Mexico, but at least he was here for the session. I'll tell you that; I'll tell you that. At least he was here for the session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite, when the chips were down in the negotiations on AIDA, those members opposite insisted and demanded that we put our money into AIDA because they believed it was a good program.

Now they say, pull the money out. And when we get to the same negotiating point on this arrangement, they undermine the process again. They're an embarrassment to the taxpayers of the province and have cost us millions, as Grant Devine did back in the '80s, and you're headed back there following this policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I haven't been here very long and I'm still learning. But I always thought that it was the government that was supposed to come up with the new ideas and the opposition that's supposed to criticize them. So far we've had one ag debate — a Saskatchewan Party idea. We've passed one Bill — a Saskatchewan Party idea.

And now there's a new plan on the table to help families, and where did it come from? The Saskatchewan Party. And what does the government do? It criticizes, condemns, and points their fingers. But you don't have any solutions of your own.

Mr. Minister, if you don't like what the Saskatchewan Party is proposing where's your idea? Where's your idea to help farm families now?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite that we have insisted with the federal government, with the farm coalition, for a payment of a billion dollars. And I want to say to the members opposite that, as Mr. Harrison said coming back from Ottawa last week, that movement has been made. That's what Mr. Harrison said. That's what Mr. Harrison said.

He will be shocked and surprised that these people without consulting anyone have left the coalition, undermined the process and likely cost the taxpayers of this province several hundred million dollars which will add to the tax that members in this society will have to pay, just as Grant Devine in his negotiations back-filled for the federal government.

Now that doesn't surprise me coming from the member from Kindersley who supported Grant Devine over and over again and cost us billions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tax Revolt in Rural Saskatchewan

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, this week another rural municipality in the Humboldt area voted to join the property tax revolt. They join a long and growing list of RMs that are refusing to pay the education portion of their property tax.

Mr. Speaker, you would think an educational . . . education tax revolt might cause some concern for the NDP Minister of Education. But judging from what the minister is doing, which is absolutely nothing, it's hard to believe he even knows there's a problem. Mr. Minister, the problem is the NDP's government has cut K to 12 education spending by almost \$400 million since 1991.

Mr. Minister, back when you were a Liberal candidate you promised to increase education funding by \$32 million immediately. Will you make a commitment to this House today to follow up on your promise, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we talk about the tax revolt situation in rural Saskatchewan, and there has been, I think, close to 20 meetings that have been held in rural Saskatchewan. I have attended some; my officials have attended most. And we are deeply concerned about the farm crisis and the impact.

The talk about education tax on farmland is one that has been brought up at SARM for some 15 years now. And I have made the commitment to look into this issue and to see what we can do.

We have reassessment coming up in 2001; that's when the final solutions will be brought forward. But right now things are on the table for a Made in Saskatchewan solution, we are looking at some type of education tax relief. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Minister, by 2001 half our farm families could be gone. It's too late they need help today, before Christmas.

Mr. Minister, in case you hadn't noticed, farm families in this province are in dire straits. They're in trouble because of your former Liberal colleagues in Ottawa that they don't care. And farmers are in trouble because your new friends in the NDP government obviously don't care either.

Mr. Minister, I'm going to read you something that should sound familiar to you:

Because the NDP government has failed to negotiate and implement the farm income stabilization program they promised, Saskatchewan is now facing a farm crisis.

Remember that, Mr. Minister. You should, because those were

your words less than three months ago.

Mr. Minister, farmers are still struggling and they're refusing to pay their education tax in protest. What are you going to do now? Not two years from now — now — to help those struggling farm families.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned in the first question, we are working on all avenues to deal with the farm crisis in rural Saskatchewan in a Made in Saskatchewan solution. And if a component of that is to provide relief on the education tax side we will look at that.

But I must say, when you talk about education, where was their platform on education? Zippo for education. Not one penny — not one penny. And now we're talking about pulling 300 million and still improving education. Well we can't have it both ways. It doesn't add up . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Mr. Bjørnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, this Premier spent good taxpayers' dollars buying your Liberal Party. Let's see some action out of you. Show us how this coalition's going to work. Back up your promises, Mr. Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjørnerud: — Mr. Speaker, the former Liberal leader reminds me of the lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. He needs someone to help him find some courage, because he can't go on hiding behind this lame-duck Premier forever.

Another snap quiz to the former Liberal leader. I'm going to read you something you said three months ago. Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting from the Liberal leader's election platform, and I quote:

We need long-term solutions but we can't risk losing 20,000 farm families to foreclosure over the next six months because Roy Romanow hasn't stood up to Ottawa.

Mr. Minister, do you still feel that way and will you at least do your part to assist farm families? Will you table your plan and what you propose to do to help farm families and back up your campaign promises?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, we all agree in this Assembly about the farm crisis. We've all agreed that the federal government is responsible for the export enhancement, that it is a trade issue. But we also agree that there needs to be some Made in Saskatchewan solutions.

But we also have to balance a budget. Something that these people cannot do. A balanced budget fiscal responsibility is important to the people of Saskatchewan . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. I certainly was not able to hear the entire response to the question. The Hon. Minister of Education is entitled to continue his reply or . . . Next question.

(1100)

First Nations Fund

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing. Mr. Minister, the Provincial Auditor has been requesting access to review and audit the First Nations fund. Once again he has been denied.

Mr. Minister, millions and millions of dollars of provincial gaming profits have gone into this fund. These are dollars contributed by Saskatchewan taxpayers. The First Nations fund is a Crown agency with trustees appointed by cabinet. You are responsible for this fund. You are responsible to answer to the public.

Mr. Minister, why has the Provincial Auditor being denied access to the records of the First Nations fund by your appointed trustees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say to the member opposite that first and foremost that the funds in the First Nations fund are currently being audited. They're being audited by the private audit and they have been audited by the private audit for the past three years. I want to say to the member opposite that on all of those audits that were performed by the private audit, never has there been any sighting of discrepancy in the expenditure of that fund.

I want to say to the member opposite that today we're negotiating that agreement with the First Nations fund; their five-year agreement period is terminating at the end of April . . . or at the end of March. Within this new round of discussions that we're having with the First Nations folks, we're encouraged that we're going to see in the future a broader audit of that by the Provincial Auditor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Speaker, this is really unacceptable.

Mr. Minister, your department calculates the amount of money required by this fund. You request this allocation from the Assembly. You are ultimately responsible for this fund. Why are the provincial taxpayers not allowed to know how this significant amount of money is being spent?

Mr. Speaker, the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) trustees say that this is a jurisdictional issue. They say under their agreement with your department, they don't have to open their books.

Mr. Minister, it is a jurisdictional issue. It is the jurisdiction of

the Provincial Auditor under the Provincial Auditor's Act to look at the records of this fund. He is responsible to report to the people of this province and this legislature. You are responsible to the people of Saskatchewan.

Will you directly request the First Nations fund trustees to open their books?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to respond to the member by saying that as I've already indicated, that the audit of the First Nations fund in our view has never been cited through the private audit as having any concern about the way in which the expenditures are being made.

I want to say to the member opposite that if you're taking issue, Madam Member, if you're taking issue with who it is, then I have some concern about that. And I'd be interested in knowing why it is that you're pressing this particular group of people whose funds are being audited by the province because Madam Minister, because Madam Minister, today the provincial treasury provides money . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. Order, please. I would ask that you allow the hon. minister to . . . Order, please. Order.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I'm interested in why this question is being directed to this particular group. Because today, Mr. Speaker, there are provincial funds that flow to municipalities. There are provincial funds that flow, Mr. Speaker, to school boards. There is provincial funding that flows, Mr. Speaker, to health boards. And they're all audited by private audit.

And I say to the member opposite: why are you choosing and picking on one particular group in this community of Saskatchewan for a public audit when in fact all of the other jurisdictions today are accepted, are accepted, Madam Member, by an audit of the private, of the private bar?

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Speaker, the First Nations fund trustees now say they are going to run newspaper ads. They're going to explain how the money is being spent in the media. Mr. Minister, is using a newspaper ad appropriate?

If the First Nations trust . . . fund trustees were so concerned about an open and transparent process, why will they not let an auditor review their records?

Mr. Speaker, this is not appropriate at all. Mr. Speaker, why should money be spent on buying newspaper ads to explain their position? Is this taxpayers' money as well? Is money being taken from the First Nations fund for the purchase of these ads?

Mr. Minister, do you condone the purchase of newspaper advertising to explain the expenses of the First Nations fund? And is this money coming out of the First Nations fund?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I want to say that in our view and in my view the auditing firm of PKMG, Mr. Speaker, are very respected and highly, highly

touted accounting firms in this province. And they do, they do accounting for hundreds and hundreds of organizations and agencies and government departments in this province.

And I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, why it is that the member opposite is critical of the firm of PKMG because, because PKM . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . KPMG, because in fact they do, they do the audit for more than one organization in this province.

I want to say to the member opposite that, that in the negotiation of this agreement with First Nations we're encouraged that we're going to see a broader audit of the, of the account. But I say to member the opposite: why are you picking on the First Nations organization today and not municipalities and school boards and hospital boards, Madam Member?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on Bills Relating to Same Subject

The Speaker: — I will recognize the member before orders of the day. I have some business that I would like to attend to, if I may first.

I want to draw, before orders of the day, I want to draw to the attention of members that on December 15 this Assembly had two Bills before it with substantially the same purpose.

Bill No. 209 - The Agricultural Implements Amendment Act, 1999 under the name of the member for Kindersley and Bill No. 12 The Agricultural Equipment Dealerships Act under the name of the Minister of Agriculture. Both Bills have the object of providing protection for Saskatchewan farm equipment dealers, Prairie implement manufacturers, and farmers. These two Bills have essentially the same purpose even though the form of the Bills and the means used are different. According to Erskine May, 22nd Edition, page 499:

There is no (general) rule or custom which restrains the *presentation* of two or more bills relating to the same subject, and containing similar provisions. But if a decision of the House has already been taken on one such bill, for example if the bill has been given or refused a second reading, the other is not proceeded with if it contains substantially the same provisions;

I would also like to direct members to rulings of the Chair of this Assembly of May 27, 1996; May 17, 1990; May 9, 1994; and June 1, 1994 on the same question ruled in respect to Bills. It was ruled that once the Assembly has given or reviewed second reading on one Bill, the Speaker then must prevent any further consideration of the other Bill.

Bill No. 12 passed all stages and received Royal Assent on December 15, on Wednesday, December 15; consequently, and in view of the foregoing, it is necessary that Bill No. 209 be removed from the order paper.

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Trade Equalization Payment

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to move a priority of debate motion under rule 19 which I informed you of earlier this day. I move, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That this Assembly urges the provincial government to use its reserves in the liquor and gaming fund to provide an immediate trade equalization payment of \$300 million to Saskatchewan farm families through a payment mechanism determined through consultation with the Saskatchewan farm coalition and that the provincial government use this payment to assist in negotiating a further \$1 billion trade equalization payment from the federal government.

The Speaker: — This morning the Opposition House Leader provided notice for priority of debate to the Office of the Clerk as is required under rule 19(2). The notice was distributed pursuant to the provisions of that rule.

Having reviewed the case made by the member, I'm now prepared to rule on the matter. It is the Speaker's responsibility to determine whether the matter should receive urgent consideration. The question is whether the matter is sufficiently urgent for the Assembly to set aside all other business to discuss this matter now.

On this question, the Assembly itself has provided some guidance. To date, this session has focused mainly on agricultural crisis facing this province. The extreme importance of this issue has been cited as the reason for the convening of the twenty-fourth legislature on December 6. Since that date, the Assembly has underscored the importance of this matter by the extraordinary lengths it has gone to allow opportunity to debate various aspects of the issue and to find solutions to the crisis.

The Assembly has already set aside its business to debate emergency resolutions. For the first time since 1953, the Standing Committee on Agriculture was appointed specifically to deal with this crisis. The Assembly took the unprecedented step of allowing the committee to have its hearings in the Legislative Chamber in order to demonstrate the serious importance of this issue and the urgency to debate this issue. And on Wednesday of this week, the Assembly passed a farm Bill on agricultural equipment through all stages in one day.

The question is: in the face of this evidence that the Assembly itself feels this issue is of urgent public importance, should the Speaker deny the request? Rule 19(6)(e) states that "the motion must not revive discussion on a matter which has been debated in the same session."

The motion of the member proposes to move involves the use of liquor and gaming funds as a source for an immediate payment to farm families. This question is distinct from the other resolutions that have come before this Assembly on this matter.

Rule 19(5) states in part that the Speaker should pay "regard to the probability of the matter being brought before the House within reasonable time by other means." In past instances when

requests of this nature have been made, the order paper did contain numerous other opportunities to debate the issue at hand. In this instance, those opportunities do not exist.

On the other hand, unless this session is adjourned sooner, there will be a private members' day on Tuesday, December 21. I find at this time, however, that there is not sufficient probability that the member's motion will take precedence on the Tuesday order paper.

And for those reasons, I find that pursuant to rule 19(7) this matter is proper to be discussed and the member may proceed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we can't say how much we are pleased to see that this debate is proceeding, and the importance of the debate I think cannot be underscored.

The farm families of Saskatchewan indeed are calling on this provincial government to act. And in an absolutely unprecedented fashion, this session has been called to bring this issue to the floor of the Assembly and before the people of Saskatchewan.

(1115)

And if you look back, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier to certainly pay some attention to the fact that this has been something that the Saskatchewan Party has been calling on right from the outset of the election campaign. We have been saying to the people of Saskatchewan that it is extremely important that this issue be debated.

And it even goes back further than that, if you want to look back through the record of . . . the public record, through the newspaper and media accounts. We've been calling right since last spring approximately — approximately March or earlier of last year — saying that there is a need here in Saskatchewan to address this very, very important issue. And we have been saying that that was something that was of a critical nature.

And what we saw at that time was the Minister of Agriculture . . . the former minister of Agriculture, I should say, Mr. Upshall, saying that there was no farm crisis in Saskatchewan; there was no need to debate this further.

And in fact he went so far I recall on one occasion to say that after the Canadian Wheat Board had announced an interim payment, which is in effect advancing farmers a little bit further on the amount of money that is owed to them prior to a final payment, it came out to about 19 cents, if I recall, a bushel. And he was saying that that ended the farm crisis here in Saskatchewan.

And I can't imagine any farmer at that time looking at their books and thinking to themselves that 19 cents a bushel was going to make a whole lot of difference. On many farm operations it wouldn't have amounted to much more than a few thousand dollars. In essence, what it amounted to was helping them pay the grocery bill for the next month.

And the minister of Agriculture at the time stood before this Assembly and stood before the people of Saskatchewan and said the farm crisis is over. And we continued at that time in opposition and said that this was a crisis and had to be moved on as quickly as possible. At the time we were saying that there needed to be help for some cattle operations. The leases of operations were coming up at that time and we are saying that this is the last time in the world that we should be increasing costs to farmers and ranchers here in Saskatchewan, yet this government proceeded with those increases in costs.

Since that time we've been calling continually for this government to move in an effort to try and provide some relief for farm families. During the election campaign our leader spoke numerous times to farm groups, to farm delegations, to people all over this province, and each and every one of the people that campaigned on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party when they knocked on the doors of farm families, it was clearly an issue for those farm families. They said this is the most important issue facing Saskatchewan today. There needs to be a move to try and address this problem.

And the Saskatchewan Party did. We said that there needed to be a convening of the legislature as soon as possible. There should be an all-party delegation move together as soon as possible to go to Ottawa and make the case, to go to Ottawa and say to them that we cannot as a province sustain this kind of problem ourselves; that there needed to be an immediate cash payment to Saskatchewan farmers, and indeed all of western Canadian farmers.

And we were met at that time by the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier saying that no, we didn't need that. It simply wasn't the case. There was no need for an emergency session of the legislature, a fall session of the legislature. No need whatsoever.

And at that time you will recall, Mr. Speaker, we were saying to the farm groups and the farm leadership here in this province that we thought that there should be, and in a very unprecedented fashion, the farm leaders coming before the bar of this Assembly and speak their mind, lay before the province of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan, indeed the people of Canada, what the problem was.

And again the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier rejected that call. Rejected that call saying to the farmers of Saskatchewan that it wasn't a problem, was not necessary. There was all kinds of issues that the people of Saskatchewan are faced with, but this one simply wasn't high enough on the radar screen to register for the Executive Council of this government.

And then we take the trip down to Ottawa. And yes, we took part in that. We believe that the farm coalition was right. We support the farm coalition. We continue to support the farm coalition. We continue to try and put forward ideas to try and address the problem. Yes, Mr. Minister, maybe they aren't perfect, but at least it's a step in the right direction.

If you have any ideas at all in this area, I think it's time that you said something on the issue. Try and, try and at least give us some direction of where your government is headed with

respect to this. The silence is absolutely deafening from this government. No plan, no ideas, no direction, absolutely nothing except pointing their finger at everybody else.

Yes, we agree, yes, we agree with the call for \$1 billion of trade equalization payments and don't anyone ever mistake the fact that we are onside with that call. But here in Saskatchewan, here in Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Here in Saskatchewan we have an obligation to try and do what we can ourselves. This is the pioneer spirit that built this province. Just as that kind of spirit pervades this province as it did years and years ago, it is there still today. The pioneers of this province built this province because they believed that they could do something themselves, take charge of the issue, do what they could collectively and individually to try and build the province that we are so proud of here today.

Just as they said yes, we have to do what we can, they always believed in their heart of hearts in the government and responsibility, and the role of government is to do what they can as well. And if you look back through the history of this province — and a great deal of that history was made up of governments from that side of the House — they at least tried, they at least tried. And we'll give them credit, we'll give them credit for at least trying to build the province of Saskatchewan.

But yet what do we see in the last number of years from this administration? Nothing. Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. Right after . . .

An Hon. Member: — Tommy Douglas at least tried.

Mr. Boyd: — At least Tommy Douglas tried, yes, with respect to agriculture and a number of issues. Most of the time he was off base but nevertheless he tried, nevertheless he tried to help Saskatchewan build.

The fact of the matter is since 1991 when this government was elected, we have seen the systematic stripping of agriculture support here in this province. 1992 — you will recall this, Mr. Speaker, — 1992, this government brought in the most draconian legislation we have ever seen, absolutely the most draconian legislation we've ever seen to strip the rights of farm families here in Saskatchewan. Every single farmer . . . and I was a farmer at that time and many, if not all, of the members on this side of the House held permit books at that time and they said to the . . . they held contracts, legitimate, they thought legitimate contracts with this government. And those contracts laid out an insurance program — the gross revenue insurance program.

Yes, it wasn't perfect and no one has ever said it was. But what it did for the first time in Saskatchewan's history, it provided Saskatchewan farm families with an insurance program, an income program that allowed them to have a guarantee of return on their investment here in Saskatchewan.

And yes, I said, and I continue to say, it wasn't perfect and no one ever said it was perfect. And this government systematically, deliberately, and in a very, very, determined

fashion and very immediately after taking office came before this Assembly with a piece of legislation to strip that contract from farm families.

In Saskatchewan, in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, you will know that many people do business on a handshake. Many people believe in accepting the word of the person you're conducting a business deal with. And I've done many of them, and all members of this House probably has as well.

You go in and negotiate the purchase of something and you shake hands with the dealer opposite you and you say to them, I agree to that price and they agree to the delivery of that product. And that's the way a lot of business is conducted, always has been conducted, continues to be conducted here in Saskatchewan today. And we accept people at their word with respect to things like that.

But what happened, what happened? The most blatant and most obvious and the most draconian type of legislation you could ever imagine was presented by this administration at that time. They came in and rather than being an example to the people of Saskatchewan and saying you can trust us, you can accept our word, and most certainly, you can accept us because you have a contract with us, they came in and said to the farm families of this province, no, you don't any longer.

In fact the legislation said that they deemed that the contract never even existed. Never even existed, and they extinguished the rights of people to take it to court. They extinguished the rights of the people of this province, the farm families that thought they had a contract with this government. They extinguished their rights to go to the courts to try and hold this government accountable to a contract that was signed on behalf of the government with every farm family in this province that took up that contract and entered into that program.

And what happened ever since then, what happened ever since then? We've seen a continual decline in net farm income to the people of Saskatchewan. We've seen our problems just get worse and worse and worse in terms of agriculture. And absolutely no plan.

And I recall the minister of Agriculture of the day, a minister from Rosetown-Elrose constituency, it was known at that time, standing before this Assembly and saying this was the right thing to do. This was the best thing that they could do to help farm families in Saskatchewan, get them out of this terrible program that they were involved in that provided them for the first time in anybody's memory in Saskatchewan with at least some stability in agriculture.

That's what they did. At least it was bankable. At least it was predictable. At least it was something that gave farmers some degree of hope in Saskatchewan and they stripped it from the farm families and have never once — have never once — acknowledged that it was a mistake or never once have admitted or apologized to the farm families of this province that it was wrong to do that.

In fact if you look back, Mr. Speaker, you will recall the legislation — it was so draconian. In fact they made sure that you couldn't even take them to court to challenge them on it.

You couldn't even do that. You couldn't bring suit against any minister, any member of Executive Council, or any member of the legislature with respect to that.

I think that was probably, at least in my memory, the first time in Saskatchewan that we've had that type of a clause in any kind of legislation because it was so draconian that you had to be sure that people couldn't sue you on it. You had to be sure that that couldn't happen.

And I think it made people in Saskatchewan and made the business community in Saskatchewan absolutely recoil at the idea that somehow or another after you've signed a legitimate contract with a government, a duly-elected government, trusted by the people of Saskatchewan to the point that they elected you into office and stripped them of that kind of contract. It was wrong then, it is wrong today, and it will be wrong long into the future. And I tell you people opposite, that is the reason why you have not a single member in your legislative caucus that represents any significant portion of agriculture.

It is clear that the farm families of this province completely distrust you. And it starts way back then and it continues right through to today. They absolutely distrust you because you've taken every time you have opportunity, you stifle any opportunity in agriculture. You rip up contracts with farmers. You continue to say that you support agriculture here in this province when it flies in the face of all evidence — absolutely flies in the face of all evidence here in Saskatchewan.

The Premier and the Minister of Agriculture continue to say that we support agriculture at a higher level than anybody else in this per capita stuff that they always want to talk about. And yet when you read from the Provincial Auditor's report, the 1999 fall edition report, volume no. 1, page 29, Mr. Speaker, and you talk about what is happening here in Saskatchewan today and the importance of our motion that's before the Assembly, you look at the government's contributions to agriculture. It amounts to \$323 million.

If you use that raw figure and divide it by approximately a million people here in Saskatchewan, you come up with a figure that the Premier always likes to talk about of level of support per capita being higher than anyone else.

But what is that funding in agriculture made up of? And I think we need to spend a little bit of time talking about that funding in agriculture and what it's made up of. Because I think it is wrong for the Premier, it's wrong for the Minister of Agriculture, and it's certainly wrong for the Minister of Finance to continue to use that line when he knows full well that the province of Saskatchewan does not fully contribute \$323 million.

And the Provincial Auditor in his report to the Assembly this . . . in the fall of 1991 said that the federal government . . . or pardon me, the contributions to the budget for the Department of Agriculture are made up of federal government and producer transfers towards cost-shared programs and are recorded as revenue by the provincial government.

Funding provided by the federal government in millions amounted to 99 . . . pardon me, \$91 million for 1999, and it amounted to . . . the funding by producers amounted to \$76

million.

So when you add those two amounts together, \$91 million that is contributed to the budget of Saskatchewan for agriculture, 91 by the federal government, and \$76 million by producers, which would be by farmers, by the farmers of this province, which would be largely through payments to Crop Insurance for insurance premiums, it comes to \$167 million.

So when you take away \$167 million, when you subtract \$167 million from the \$323 million budget that you people opposite like to talk about as your funding for agriculture, you come up with a net figure of 160 . . . or \$156 million, or approximately, or approximately half of what, a half of what you people say you contribute to agriculture.

(1130)

And you continue to stand in this Assembly, day after day after day, and say you fund \$323 million when exactly about half is what you put into it.

And that's about what the farmers of this province have got used to accepting from this government in terms of anything. About half of what you say you're going to do, you do. And in fact in the recent months and since the election campaign, they have come to expect the sum total is zero from you. Because that's what you've done to this point.

Yes, you've convened all kinds of meetings. And the member from Regina and others will know, because I've attended many of them. Yes, they've scheduled all kinds of meetings, they've booked all kinds of halls, and we've had all kinds of lunches, and we've had all kinds of trips, and we've done all of those kinds of things. And we're not for a moment suggesting that they shouldn't be doing them to bring forward new ideas from the farm community, but have you once yet, in this Assembly or in any one of those meetings, have you once . . . And I've asked a new member from Regina — what's your seat, sir? Regina . . .

An Hon. Member: — Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Boyd: — Qu'Appelle. I would ask you, have you once detailed . . . once detailed in any way, shape, or form, any new initiative, any new plan, any new idea whatsoever? No you have not. And that's why the farm families of this province simply don't trust you on the issue any longer.

And that's why when we come forward with new ideas, your minister gets up and stands. When we came forward with the new idea at the SARM convention earlier this fall of trying to help farm families in some fashion with the education tax reform, but did the minister stand up? Did he stand up and say, it's something that we think we can do? No, he stands up and he makes light of it; he makes fun of the proposal. He says that it's written on the back of a cigarette package, that kind of rhetoric that we continue to hear from the Minister of Agriculture.

Does anyone in this Assembly or anyone in Saskatchewan believe that that elevates the debate? Does anyone in Saskatchewan believe that somehow or another that is helpful? Does anyone in Saskatchewan believe that somehow or another that's the kind of conduct that we should be looking at here and

expecting from the parliamentarians of this legislature — the legislature here? No.

I would say to the farm families of Saskatchewan, they were looking for something. They're saying to you day after day after day, and they're saying to us in opposition day after day after day, we have to do something. And if a new idea comes forward the least you can do — member from Regina . . .

An Hon. Member: — Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Boyd: — Qu'Appelle. The least you can do for the farm families of this province is say to them: we're going to look at it; we're going to discuss it; we'll take it before the farm coalition; we'll take it back to caucus; we'll take it to cabinet; we'll take it to the farm leaders of this province; and we'll take it to the entire province to discuss it. And we'll look at it, and we'll try and refine it, and we'll try and come forward with some new initiative in this area.

But no, we get the minister standing up and saying it's a hackneyed type of knee-jerk reaction written on the back of a cigarette package; tries to make light of it, make fun of it, do everything he can in his power to somehow or another seize the agenda back. When he knows full well that the Saskatchewan Party and the opposition — the loyal opposition, the official opposition — has been the only ones in Saskatchewan at all that have brought forward any kind of new initiatives. And we continue to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We continue to do that. We will continue to do that. We are the ones in Saskatchewan that clearly are driving the agenda with respect to agriculture, and we will continue to do that. And the reason is really simple — each and every member of this Assembly was elected to do that. We were told by the people of Saskatchewan in a very unprecedented fashion something that you should take a great deal, a lesson from, that we have the right to speak on this issue and we'll continue to do that.

And everyday that the Minister of Agriculture gets up and says we're breaking ranks with the coalition, it demonstrates to the farm community and the farm leadership here in Saskatchewan that they have no new ideas and no plan, and all he can resort to is ridiculing somebody else's plan rather than coming forward with one of his own.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And it simply isn't good enough. It simply isn't good enough.

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

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to members

of the Assembly, I just noticed, and had a moment just a few moments ago to chat with, a gentleman from the Fleming area, Mr. Les Freeman. And I know Mr. Freeman has grown up in the farming situation. He knows a lot of what we're talking about, just on his way back from a visit to his family. And we'd like to welcome him to the Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Trade Equalization Payment (continued)

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the farm families of this province continue to despair. They continue to be frustrated. They continue to be worried.

I would ask any member of your caucus over there: have you ever laid awake at night when the thunderstorm is rolling over and the hailstorms stop . . . start dropping, and you're thinking to yourself how am I going to manage now? How am I going to put together the financing that's necessary to get this farm through another year?

Have you ever looked at a storm cloud and wondered what this is going to do to your operation? Have you ever looked in the . . . got up at 5:30 in the morning on a cool, cool day in about the latter days of August, the 27th or something like that, and think to yourself, if this temperature drops another degree or two there goes my crop? Have you ever done anything like that? I don't think for a moment you even understand the kind of concerns that farmers have in this area.

Well I'll tell you that each and every member of this Assembly, on this side of the Assembly, knows exactly what that feeling is like. Knows exactly what it is not to be awoken by an alarm clock at 5:30 in the morning but to be awoken in a cold sweat because they know very well that it's going to be close. It's going to be razor-thin close to whether or not the temperature has dropped down to the point that their crops freeze.

And I can remember so many times in my life getting up at that time of the day and then going to the kitchen table and sitting down at the kitchen table and pulling out the calculator and thinking to myself, how much did our farm lose today? How much did our farm lose today?

And I look at other members of this Assembly and I know very well they have spent a lot of time thinking about those very kinds of things. Wondering to themselves, what are we going to do now? And there isn't a single member on that side of the House, I would venture to say, that has spent a moment thinking about those kinds of thoughts — not a moment thinking about those kinds of thoughts, with the possible exception of the one member from Yorkton, with the possible exception of him.

The fact of the matter is farm families spend a great deal of time despairing about the kinds of concerns that they have. What are we going to do about transportation? What are we going to do about highways and roads here in Saskatchewan? What are we going to do about grain prices? What are we going to do about that field down the road that I haven't had a chance to spray yet

or haven't had a chance to cultivate that field? How am I possibly going to get to that job when we've got a million other jobs that have to be done.

Waking up and thinking to themselves, what am I going to do to try and patch that combine together to get it through another season? What am I going to do to try and fix that tractor to get it through another season? How am I possibly going to go in and say to my dealer, you got to help me on this one because I don't have the money to buy that new fuel injection pump, don't have the money to put that new water pump on the combine. I can't afford that \$500 small belt that has turned from a \$500 belt to a \$1,500 belt in the course of a couple of years. That's the kinds of things that farm families are faced with.

Our paycheque doesn't fall out of an envelope. Our paycheque in rural Saskatchewan in agriculture doesn't fall out of an envelope and it's not signed by somebody else. In fact the fact of the matter is in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and you will know this, that the farm families, they go to an elevator and they sell their crop or they sell their specialty crop or they go to an auction mart and sell their cattle. And then they get a cheque for the kind of labour that they have done to bring together some degree of hope for their farm family. And that's what happens in Saskatchewan on a daily basis.

Are any of you on that side of the House even aware of the kinds of things that happen on a daily basis in agriculture? Auction marts all over this province buying and selling cattle and hogs and all of those kind of things — commodity exchanges in Winnipeg, trading commodities on behalf of farmers, speciality crop dealers buying and selling product every single day, farmers delivering grain every single day to an elevator.

Have you ever experienced, have you ever experienced the joy of cutting into a new crop? Have you ever experienced that? Have you ever experienced cutting into a new crop, seeing the grain drop into the hopper of your combine, and saying to yourself, this is good? If you have experienced those kinds of things, if you have experienced those kinds of things, why then are you not speaking out for farm families here in Saskatchewan? Why are you not doing that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — If you've done any of those kind of things — and there's members on the opposite side of the House, Mr. Speaker, nodding in agreement that they've done that — if they've done any of those circumstances, how then can you support a party that has systematically stripped support for agriculture here in this province? How can you do that?

Have you looked back, have you taken for one moment, Mr. Member from Regina Qu'Appelle, have you taken a look back through the budgets, successive budgets going back over the last number of years and seen the erosion of support for agriculture here in this province? It used to be \$1.2 billion when you took over here in Saskatchewan. That's what the budget was here in Saskatchewan. That's what it was here in Saskatchewan.

And now the budget of Saskatchewan is \$323 million of which

one-half of it is made up by producer premiums for crop insurance and other programs and for the federal government contribution. One half of that made up by other people, and they stand before this Assembly and they stand before the farm families of this province day after day after day and say, we contribute the most on a per capita basis of any province in Saskatchewan. When they know full well, they know full well, it is not true.

They know full well it's not true. And now we've seen the auditors expose them in this area just as they've been exposed in so many areas before with respect to agriculture. Every time we get up and see the Minister of Agriculture speak on these kinds of things, they want to use those terms. They want to talk about \$323 million.

And I would ask some of you new members like the one sitting at the back from Saskatoon, I would ask you, look through the auditor's report. Try and understand it. Read it or have someone read it to you. — *1999 Fall Report, Volume 1*. And that's a line that I didn't make up myself. That's the kind of line that we used to expect, and we continue to get from the Minister of Agriculture.

I don't know how many times in this Assembly he has said that to me. And you think it is insulting when I say it to you. Well we think it is insulting when he says it to us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — But that's the kind of rhetoric and I would ask you, Madam Member, to go back through the *Hansard* of this Assembly, and find the many, many occasions when he's got up and said those kinds of things to members of this Assembly. Exactly that. Read it or have someone read it to you.

That's the kind of degrading kind of speeches that this . . . and comment that this minister makes when he knows full well, his department knows full well, the Premier knows full well, the Minister of Agriculture and Finance, and the entire executive branch of government — the cabinet — knows full well, that their contribution to agriculture amounts to exactly half of what they continue to tell the people of Saskatchewan that it does.

So when you take out the federal government's contributions and you take out producer contributions, I wonder how you stack up in terms of per capita spending compared to the rest of Canada.

And we will be doing some analysis on that. You can be sure we'll be doing some analysis on that because we believe what you are saying is not true, not right, and simply is unacceptable to the farm community.

And indeed it should not be acceptable to anyone here in Saskatchewan. And I have said, and many members, all of our members of this side of the Assembly . . . And I look at the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. She continues to bring forward those issues of concern. And I look at the member from Humboldt bringing forward issues of concern about agriculture in our caucus on a daily basis. And members from every region in this province that represent agriculture, they continue to bring forward those kinds of new ideas and say, we cannot, we

cannot just simply allow this province to dwindle and continue to go down the drain because this is a government that doesn't care or understand agriculture. Because it's not just . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1145)

Mr. Boyd: — Because, Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is not just a farm problem. It's quickly becoming . . . it's quickly becoming a Saskatchewan problem. And all you have to do is talk to the retailers of this province as we draw closer to Christmastime . . . as we draw closer to Christmastime and they are saying to us, all over Saskatchewan, including Regina and Saskatoon, sales are down; they're worried. Farmers aren't coming in and spending any money. And I'll tell you the reason why. Because they don't have any.

And the member — my seatmate, the member from Kelvington-Wadena — said to me the other day. You know what one of her farmers called and told her what their Christmas present to their family was going to be? What they were going to do to try and provide something for their family on Christmas Day? They were going to pool their money and buy one single Christmas present. And that single Christmas present was to pay the power bill — was to pay the power bill — so that the lights would be on, and the heat would be on, on Christmas Day for their family. That was the extent of the Christmas that this farm family was going to be having at their home. That's the kind of problem that farmers are faced with.

Now I look through farm families all over Saskatchewan. The minister continues to like to stand before people here in Saskatchewan and say there's all kinds of farmers that are doing pretty darn well here in Saskatchewan and we have to recognize that. Well I would say, I would say to the member from Albert south that's nodding his head, if you really knew the true story about what's happening out there you wouldn't be thinking that was the case.

Yes, there are lots of farm families out there, here in Saskatchewan, that are saying to themselves we'll get through this because we're good managers and because we have been able to over the last number of years of decent grain prices, been able to put some savings away in registered retirement plans, been able to put some money into NISA plans, and been able to put some money into other savings types of plans for themselves.

But I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, each and every single one of them, they know very well that they're pulling it out day after day after day after day. And they're looking at next year, and they're looking at next year and they're saying to themselves, now that my NISA account is empty, now that my RRSPs (Registered Retirement Savings Plan) have all been cashed in, now that all my savings have been cashed in, and how am I possibly going to put in next year's crop without one single cent after I've disposed of all of my savings. And that's what they're saying to him. They're saying to the people of Saskatchewan, that's what's happening.

But yet there's still one account that the farmers of Saskatchewan, and indeed all of Saskatchewan, have

contributed to over the last number of months and the last years here in Saskatchewan, that isn't empty. The only problem is, is that they don't have access to it because this government holds that dearly to their heart — and that's the liquor and gaming fund. The fund — the emergency, rainy-day fund as the Minister of Finance likes to talk about all the time in this Assembly. And saying how prudent they are at managing that fund and how important it is that we have that for emergencies here in Saskatchewan and that it's a rainy-day fund.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, that it's raining out there right now. The rain has turned to pouring and it's turned to cold, cold winter days for farm families here in Saskatchewan. Just step out of the legislature and hop in a car or a truck and go out to a farm family just right out here west of Regina, or take a trip even more likely to talk about despair a little bit south of Regina where they didn't get a crop in. And talk to the farm families of this province and see what they say to you.

Yes, our family farm may survive because we'll do everything we can to cut and cut and cut right to the point where we won't even buy Christmas presents for our kids because we're going to survive. We're going to do what it takes to survive, in spite of — in spite of — the fact that this government won't move one inch to try and support them.

Every single one of you on that side of the House should be ashamed of the fact that you have money in that account and won't do anything with it.

And we look at the headlines in today's newspaper, "Farm activist now a casualty." And, Mr. Speaker, *The Leader-Post* of today talks about a farm family here in this province that has lost their farm in the last few days, a representative of the Saskatchewan Women's Agricultural Network here in this province that is now one of the casualties.

And I quote from the article. The lady's saying, Carolyn McDonald saying: "I am (now) one of their casualties . . ." And I think when she says "their casualties," she's not referring to herself, she's referring to the provincial government and the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — This couple, this couple, who started in . . . this farming couple who are in their early 40s, 40 years of age, have farmed 1,500 acres near Richard, which is in the Battleford area, for approximately 15 years. And I dare say if we contacted those people, that farm probably was in the hands of their parents and in the hands of their grandparents before them, and perhaps even their great-grandparents before them.

Has anybody on your side of the House actually owned anything in their entire lives for more than a few years? Well these farm families have owned these kinds of operations for generations — generations.

And I can't help but think the number of farmers in Saskatchewan, the husbands and wives that are out there right today in Saskatchewan that are bawling their eyes out at the thought that they're going to lose the family farm that their grandfather and their great-grandfather and their father and their

mother and their grandmother and their great-grandmother built up over the years to try and provide them with some sort of economic stability.

And I can't tell you the amount of despair that farmers feel when they think to themselves that they might be the one that loses that operation that's been built up perhaps over a hundred years. And there's many farm families here in Saskatchewan that have that little sign out in front of their door that they operate a heritage farm — one that's been in existence here in this province of Saskatchewan for 100 years.

And we look back about this province with a great deal of pride as we should, the formation of this province dating back to when we came into Confederation, and yet these farmers have been in existence in many cases since before that, since before that. Would we allow that kind of an attack on our province? I would say, no we would not. But yet we allow it on our farm families.

We allow the farm families of this province to be subjected to this type of government initiatives, this type of stripping of farm programs, and we just stand by idly and say somehow or another it's acceptable. And I can't help but think back to when the farm families of this province . . . and there were numerous ones of them that took this government to court to try and bring back some sanity into contracts, try and fight this government on stripping them of their GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contract. And what did this government do? Or what happened in the courts, I should say, Mr. Speaker? We had a judge — and I cannot believe that that happened — that said that this was in the public good. That this was somehow or another in the public good.

Well I'll tell you a little bit about public good. I think the public good is having farmers on the land. I think it's having small family farm operations. I think it's having larger operations. I think it's having young kids getting on a bus in the morning and going to school at a community that's viable here in Saskatchewan. I think it's having a hospital in your community. I think it's having a church or churches in your community. I think it's having a rink in your community. I think it's having a school in your community. I think it's having a thriving business sector in your community. I think it's having all of those kinds of things, and each and every one of the members on this side of the Assembly know exactly what I'm talking about.

They know and they remember going to town on a Saturday afternoon and you couldn't even get a parking spot in front of the local store because everybody . . . that was a part of being in small town Saskatchewan. You came to Saskatchewan to support your community. That's the kind of things that I remember as a child in Saskatchewan, going uptown on a Saturday afternoon . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Going uptown on a Saturday afternoon with my father and my mother and my brother . . . my sisters, I don't have any brothers. I remember going uptown with them on a Saturday afternoon and talking to our friends and our colleagues and our neighbours because they were all there. They were all

there. And I like to think of them all as brothers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Because they were all there. They were all there because there was a sense of community that people had at that time. And I look back at those communities all over the district out there where I come from, and every single member on this side of the House will know what I speak of when I say many of those communities don't even exist today.

I remember as a kid, Mr. Speaker, and I think you probably will as well, I remember going to communities and playing baseball, and playing hockey, and going to dances, and going to fowl suppers in communities that don't even exist today. I remember going to places like Madison — not even on the map. Going to Snipe Lake — not even on the map. Going to places like Tyner, where I met my wife. Going to places like Lacadena and playing hockey. Going to places all over my area. Those communities don't even exist today, don't even exist, and they were vibrant little communities. Yes they were small, but they had heart.

They had heart. They had people in them that believed in the sense of community. They believed in things like shopping at home. They believed in buying your groceries right from the person that is a friend and neighbour of yours. They believed in going to church. They believed in getting up every day, a hard day's work. They believed in all of those kinds of things because that's what made up the fabric of rural Saskatchewan in this province; and it continues to, in spite of the attacks that we see from governments, successive governments, mostly this government and the federal government currently.

And the good news in all of this is we will survive in rural Saskatchewan. The unfortunate thing is many farmers won't. And I just look around on my community and I look around other communities here in Saskatchewan and I think to myself, how many have to lose their operations? How many people have to lose their entire livelihood, lose that heritage farm that their grandparents and their great-grandparents and their parents have built up over the years to satisfy somehow this need that seems to have developed in Saskatchewan to say to people, well it's just too bad. It's just too bad. Nothing we can do.

That's the attitude of this government that we see in this Assembly in the last number of days — nothing we can do; it's just too bad; I'm sorry, you're going to have to do something else; you're going to have to pick up whatever little you have left, move to the city, move to somewhere else.

Most often it's move, and the first thing they see when they enter Alberta — at least the first thing they hope they see when they enter Alberta — is the Calgary tower, because at least they know that in Alberta there'll be opportunity for them. And I can't help but think of the number of farm families here in Saskatchewan in the last number of years that have picked up what little they have left and have gone to places like Alberta and Calgary and other places, to try and find a job and provide some hope, some stability, some plan, for their family.

In the Kindersley constituency we have a highway, Highway No. 7, leading through it. And I looked at the member from

Cypress Hills that has a major highway leading into Alberta as well, Highway No 1. If you sit at that highway, Mr. Speaker, for not more than an hour you will see, as we have seen for years and years and years, the first thing you might see go by is a load of cattle. And do you know where they're heading? They're heading to feedlot alley in Alberta because we can't somehow or another get together on agriculture strategy here in this province, to feed them in this province. They're heading down there.

And the next thing you might see going by, the next thing you might see going by is a young family heading out to Alberta, often to the same place, following that load of cattle to feedlot alley — to Lethbridge, to Taber, to Medicine Hat, to all of those kinds of places — and getting a job in that very feedlot.

And the next thing you might see going by is a semi-load of grain heading for . . . a semi-load of feed grains heading for that exact same feedlot to feed the cattle that we just finished sending to them, that we backgrounded here in this province, and to support the kids that we just finished shipping out there to feed those cattle, to go to the university in Calgary, to go to SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology), to go to all kinds of job opportunities.

And all of those kinds of things we see on a daily basis, heading out through Highway No. 1, heading out through Highway No. 7, heading out through the Yellowhead, through Lloydminster. All of those kinds of things we see on a daily basis and this government wants to bury its head in the sand and say, we can't help that, can't do anything to address this. All we can do is point our finger eastward, as you always do whenever there's a problem here in Saskatchewan, and say it's not our fault, nothing we can do, blame it on somebody else, don't care about the problem, aren't concerned about the problem, don't understand the problem, and aren't worried about the problem.

And that's the kind of thing that we have come to expect here in Saskatchewan and that's precisely the reason why there isn't a single member of that side of the House that represents in large measure an agriculture community. And the member from Yorkton shakes his head. Yes, he represents some degree of farm community and we understand that; but in large measure there isn't a member over there that represents much of agriculture here in Saskatchewan.

(1200)

We look at these kinds of headlines in *The Leader-Post* here today and it makes our hearts grieve for the kind of problem this farm family has been faced with and now is going through and working through. Can you imagine the amount of despair that this family must be going through? Can you imagine the kind of heartache that they must be going through? Can you imagine for a moment the sleepless nights that this family has gone through wondering whether or not they might be able to survive this crisis; waking up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat because they know very well that they can't make it, can't manage.

This lady has spoken on behalf of the farm crisis here in Saskatchewan all over this province and, indeed, I would suggest, all over Canada trying to somehow or another convince

governments — and your government is no exception — that this problem has to be addressed.

She says that she's going to look for a job while her husband turns his full attention to a side business, a hunting camp.

This business will keep us afloat right now, but the farm is eating up a lot of (the) profits and there's (very little) left for us (meaning their family). It makes you wonder why you're doing it.

And that's exactly what farm families are saying to us and I hope they're saying to the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier and all you people that represent constituencies other than rural constituencies, I hope they're saying to you, those exact kinds of things. What is the use?

We look at the farming community in my constituency, as an example, Mr. Speaker, the RM of Chesterfield, and after this story, you'll understand why it was probably named the RM of Chesterfield. The fact of the matter is in that RM, that municipality in my constituency, which is in the Eatonia area of this province on the west side of Saskatchewan, that community when they did a survey to find out the average age of the farmer in that constituency, it was 67 years of age last year — 67 years of age.

At a time, at a time when those people should be enjoying their retirement, they're still trying to eke out a living on those farming operations, still trying to pass that farm on to a son or a daughter or someone within their family or a brother or a sister, still trying to do that, still wondering to themselves: how can we possibly make this thing work. And the average age is 67.

Those people should be enjoying their retirement, and yet these are the same people that we put through the agony day after day after day of wondering how they're going to pay their fuel bill, wondering how they're going to pay their fertilizer bill, wondering how they're going to pay the chemical bill, wondering whether or not they're going to be able to make the . . . wondering whether or not they're going to be able to make the land payments and, most importantly, wondering whether or not they're going to be able to pay their grocery bill. That's the kind of thing that farm families are being faced with here in Saskatchewan.

And we have a government opposite that has \$350 million in a bank account, slush fund, set aside for emergencies and is unwilling or uncaring, unable to, whatever the reason seems to be, to try and do anything to help the farm families.

And this is a larger problem than in just agriculture. Communities all over this province — whether you're a grocery store owner, whether you operate a drugstore, whether you operate any kind of operation whatsoever, a little restaurant; whether you operate a dress shop, whether you op a farm implement dealership, whether you operate a hardware store, whether you operate anything in rural Saskatchewan right now — they're all looking at agriculture and they're all saying to themselves: how possibly, if the farm community doesn't survive, am I going to survive?

I talked to a business owner in my constituency here a little

while ago, a fertilizer chemical dealer in my constituency here a little while ago, Mr. Speaker, and he said to me I had last spring \$1 million — I topped it for the first time — \$1 million of sales. That sounds I'm sure to the people on the other side like a tremendous amount of money, and it is. And he was very, very proud of the fact that over the last number of years — he had started out this fertilizer and chemical dealership about 10 years go — that he had achieved \$1 million in sales.

But he said to me you know what the startling fact is? Do you know what the cruel reality is? That while he achieved a million dollars in sales, \$900,000 of it is on the books. He's not being able to be paid. The farm families in that constituency, in that area that he deals with, simply do not have the resources to meet those kind of obligations that they are faced with. They haven't been able to come in and make their payments — not through any fault of their own. They just simply don't have the money, simply don't have the money to do it.

And the fact of the matter is, is that we're facing unprecedented low commodity prices here in Saskatchewan, all over Western Canada, and it has nothing to do with anything that any farmer is doing. It has everything to do with international trade. It has everything to do with things that are completely out of their control. And we have a federal government and now a provincial government that says you're just going to have to suffer through it. You're just going to have to manage on your own.

And that's why we've been saying to the farm families and to the government and to the federal government and the provincial government that something has to happen. It's supposedly a brand new day here in Saskatchewan and yet there hasn't been a single plan put forward.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, at least the Saskatchewan Party has some thoughts in a number of areas. At least somebody is driving this issue. We have some thoughts in terms of a short-term package for agriculture. We have said, and we have supported the call, and we'll continue to support the call for a \$1 billion trade equalization payment because it is, it is right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We'll continue to support that because it is right. It is the right thing to do.

And we've spoke numerous occasions. We went with the trek to Ottawa to try and convince them down there. All of our members have spoke time and time and time again in the Throne Speech and in this debate in the Assembly to try and bring this to the floor, to try and convince the government here in Saskatchewan and in Ottawa that something needs to happen.

Put forward some thoughts in terms of the education. We put forward some thoughts in terms of, you didn't like that one, you could go with the NISA option; if you don't like that one, pull some money out of liquor and gaming. At least try and do something. Try and do something.

The long term in the Throne Speech . . . you look at the government's plans in terms of the Throne Speech. What did they say about long term? What did they say about a long-term

solution for agriculture, Mr. Speaker? I know this isn't a Throne Speech but it speaks a lot to what this government's plans are for agriculture. What they said in terms of that was:

In addition to negotiating with the federal government for enhanced safety net programs in the short term, my government will pursue a long term safety net program . . .

That's all we can expect. We're going to pursue it, we're going to pursue it. Since 1992 here in this province, since 1992 we've had absolutely nothing in terms of a safety net for Saskatchewan farm families. And now this government has given the commitment to pursue it.

And I would dare say, if you look back through all of the Throne Speeches, that this government has made since they came into this Assembly, if they even mentioned agriculture, which is doubtful, but if they did they would say something similar to that — that we're going to continue to pursue a long-term safety net program.

Absolutely no thoughts whatsoever in this area. No plan. No thoughts whatsoever.

Just the other day in the Assembly here, Mr. Speaker, after the Assembly adjourned for the afternoon, we had a group come and speak to us about an income assurance program. It may not be perfect. It may not be the right plan for Saskatchewan farm families, but at least it's an idea. At least it's a step in the right direction. At least there's some farmers out there trying to figure out what we're going to do to address the problem.

Do you people on the opposite side, in caucus, ever talk about long-term safety net? Do you have an ag caucus any longer? You used to at one time have an ag caucus. My guess is it would be made up of people that have no interest in agriculture whatsoever. No interest whatsoever.

And the member waves from the back. Do you know what a quota book is, sir? Have you got a quota book? Have you got one of those things? Do you understand what that is? Do you know what a Canadian Wheat Board quota book is? Have you had one signed up?

The fact of the matter is they don't. And it's little wonder that they've come forward with no plans. And I guess it should be understandable. If you don't understand agriculture, why would you care about it, why would you try to address the problems? Well at least these farmers are coming forward with some ideas, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to quote from the presentation . . . the literature that they left with us because I think it's very important. "This program was developed with these kinds of thoughts in mind," it leads off by saying. "This program was brought forward to keep the family farm a way of life, not a dream."

Not a dream. A lot of farmers out there right now are thinking to themselves, it's a dream if I get through this — it's a dream if I get through this because they got a nightmare out there, right there, that they have no idea how they're going to manage and make their way through this. When a producer has a disaster whether it's production or commodity prices, he can recover his

cost of production. In other areas of the economy that's something that you expect.

When you put a . . . when you open a retail store the last thing that you expect to do is sell a product below your cost of production, below your cost of acquisition because you can't stay in business if you do. And everybody understands that that has any degree of business activity in their entire life. You can't sell a product for less than what it costs you produce it or acquire it, or it won't be long and your operation will be done.

And the fact of the matter is that's what happening to many farm families here in this province they're buying a product which they have no control over — inputs that they have no control over the cost of them whatsoever — and then they're selling a product into to marketplace that they have absolutely no control over, and at the end of the day they see a negative return.

An Hon. Member: — And they pay the cost.

Mr. Boyd: — And they pay the freight both ways as a colleague says from behind.

Promote better farming practices, that's another initiative that they want to try and address because the farm families in this province they all know that they have to be stewards of the land. Look after the land and the land will look after you. How many times did your grandparents say that to you or your father or mother say that to you? Look after the farm and the farm will look after you. I can't count the number of times that I had that, at the knee of my father or grandfather, told to me.

They're looking for income assurance versus bushel coverage. They're looking for a plan that's more bankable. They're looking for a plan that they can take to the bank and say, I think this might be something that'll get me through the next year. And it won't surprise me for a moment, it won't surprise me for a moment if the banks of this province and the credit unions look upon that bankable guarantee as skeptical coming for a government that has ripped up contracts in the past. And it would be, it'd be a logical conclusion to come up with that we simply won't have a bankable plan because this government has ripped up contracts in the past and who would trust them about a bankable program now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — In claim years, coverage stays the same and premiums will change and that's part of their plan.

They understand the important part that they have to . . . that farm families recognize is they have to take responsibility for part of their operation in terms of these plans as well. And that's why tripartite plans have been developed over the years in things like crop insurance, and in things like NISA and other programs that at least have been working for farm families. That's why they've been developed that way because producers say, yes, we have an obligation to pay a premium for these programs. And they understand that and they have no argument with that, no quarrel with that whatsoever, because they believe in protecting themselves doing what they can in terms of risk management — risk management.

When you get up in the morning on the opposite side of the House, does that term ever enter your conscious? Risk management. Well I'll tell you it certainly does in the farm community. They wake up each and every single day and the first thing they think about is: what bills do we have to pay today? What income do we have to meet those obligations today? What kind of risk management do we have to address today?

And I looked at . . . I was told a little story in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, about a fellow, a farmer who won a lottery in my constituency. Won a hundred thousand dollars, a lot of money, obviously a lot of money. And a reporter came to him and said, what are you going to do with the hundred thousand dollars? And he said, I'm going to pay some bills. And he asked him, what are you going to do with the rest? And he said, well they're just going to have to wait.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1215)

Mr. Boyd: — That's true. That's true. Farm families, while they're exposed to these kind of things, at least have a sense of humour. At least they're trying to do something.

You go to the curling rink today, you go to the rink today, you go to the fowl supper tonight, and you'll see farm families. At least they have a spirit of trying somehow or another to pull themselves out of this quagmire that they're in, trying with hope, trying with some measure of understanding to figure out why governments simply don't want to move in this area.

I can't understand for a moment — and I'm hoping that a member on the opposite side of the House will tell us sometime through this legislative session that we're involved in today in the next number of days and perhaps weeks — why are you not willing to help? Why are you not willing to help? Why is it that within your power you have the resources to help and you are unwilling to do that. What is possibly the reason why?

And I would ask members of this side of the House to try and give me some reasons why they don't want to help. I don't understand it. I don't understand it. They have no plan and they don't care whatsoever.

The income assurance program that the farmers presented to us the other day felt that they had to have some protection in terms of things like cost that they face every single day. Things like a fuel bill, things like a fertilizer bill, things like a chemical bill. Has any of you members on the opposite side ever had a fuel truck pull into your yard and drop off 2,500 gallons, or whatever that is in litres — 10,000 approximately — litres of diesel fuel and wonder to yourselves, how am I going to pay for that? How am I going to pay for that?

But yet on the other hand you know full well that that's what it's going to take to put that crop in. That's what it's going to take tomorrow when they pull the tractor up in front of those fuel tanks and fill it up. That it has to have that in order to go out and put that crop in.

The fact of the matter is, is those are the kinds of things that

farmers are faced with every day and that's the reason why they're coming forward with plans like this and saying that there has to be some help in agriculture.

They've come forward with a plan that says we've got to have a basic premium that's manageable. They're talking about a premium level of about \$5 an acre for 50 per cent coverage; \$7 an acre for 70 per cent coverage; \$8 an acre for 80 per cent coverage; and they've worked in a program . . . they worked into this program that they have developed a surcharge premium for when they have lost years because they recognize that yes, the plan has to be sustainable and, yes, you have to stop people from farming the farm plan.

That's always been a criticism of farm plans over the years. How do you stop those very, very few farmers out there — and they are very few and far between — that will want to try and take advantage of these types of programs. And they've brought together a plan that has those kinds of things in it.

They presented this plan, incidentally, to the Premier of Saskatchewan. Are any of your members opposite aware of the fact that this plan was presented to the Premier of Saskatchewan? My guess is that it's no.

They brought in a plan where they said that there should be a surcharge premium on collected amounts on this plan. They said that there should be a surcharge on wheat of 10 per cent on a 50 per cent plan; 14 per cent on a 70 per cent plan, and 21 per cent on a 80 per cent plan. Because as I said, we don't want to have farmers farming the farm program — can't have that. We want a responsible plan, we want a responsible program, and we most certainly want a responsible agriculture here in Saskatchewan.

And they have developed a plan in a number of areas, Mr. Speaker. They talk about developing an IPI, an income protection insurance program. They're talking about developing risk areas. They want to narrow it down so it's not large crop districts but narrower risk areas, municipal yield averages that all farmers know are available and crop insurance has all of that kind of information.

And farmers have taken great pride in trying to increase their levels of production because that's what they feel is the only thing that's going to keep them and try and help them survive this income crisis.

An Hon. Member: — The best in the world in doing it.

Mr. Boyd: — The best in the world, indeed, in doing it. And that's why the farm families have been able to provide here in Saskatchewan because they've employed absolutely the best technology.

And I think back to the dealer purity issue that came before this legislature and the importance of that piece of legislation. And that's why all you have to do is look back to the election again; that's why we brought it up in the election campaign; that's why we talked about it in terms of first piece of legislation, one of the first pieces that were introduced by the official opposition because it was a critical issue.

Are you aware of where all the innovations in agriculture lately in Saskatchewan and indeed dryland farming have come from? They have come from, mostly from the farm community directed up through manufacturing operations, the prairie implement manufacturers here in Saskatchewan, and then it goes to the farm level after that, after it's sold by dealers.

And the fact is, is all of the new innovations, and I think about air seeder technology, is one of those types of innovations that came forward from Saskatchewan. A Saskatchewan farmer developed that and he developed it from there into a major farm manufacturing opportunity in the Kelvington-Wadena area.

And all of agriculture now entirely, all of the new seeding technology — and in the world itself — started right here in Saskatchewan because it was an innovation that was right. It made it cheaper to put in a profit, made it more convenient, it made it less difficult, rather than fighting with old darn diskers that they used to fight with on the farm, and old drills. And all my colleagues would know all about those kinds of things — wondering how you're going to transport this piece of old equipment down the . . . transport this piece of equipment down the road to get to the next field. And anyways you looked back out of the tractor window and this old disker is tied together, with another one dancing along behind, you wondered how long it was going to be before that thing hit the ditch in a heck of a wreck. You would know all about that, members on this side of the Assembly, because those kinds of things happen.

I remember one time, Mr. Speaker, I was 15 years old . . . and farmers on this side of the House know all about that. Fifteen years old and skipping school, or not really skipping school. Your dad, your parents, said to you . . . your father said to you, we need some help on the farm today. You are going to have to miss school today. You are going to have to go out and get that old 830 Case and that 18-foot Massey disker going to try and put . . . to try and help out . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well you guys go back a lot further than I do . . . to try and help to put the crop in.

An Hon. Member: — That's why it's called a family farm.

Mr. Boyd: — That's why, exactly. That's why it's called a family farm. It employed all of the family. You employed them all. I remember my sister, at 16 years old, driving out to the farm . . . driving out to the field with meals — sandwiches and a fresh-cooked meal — to try and help you out at seeding time and at harvest time because it was their responsibility to do whatever they could. And then they took their turn on that old 830, going around the field, while you sat and ate a few cold sandwiches.

We know all about that on this side of the House, I'll tell you. And I remember, 15 years old, moving from the northwest of 5-24-20 up to the home place and watching that old disker as the pin broke, skid off the road and hit a telephone pole and wrecking it. And then my father coming up to me and saying, what did you do now? Don't you understand how important this was to keep this thing together?

And me pleading with him for forgiveness for something that I had no control over whatsoever. And then he finally recognized it and said the same dang thing happened to him 20 years ago

himself.

And I remember going by the old Pearson farm and watching a neighbour of mine. The old boy was out on the harrows trying to help out at seeding time because it was important in a family farm to do those kinds of things, and Dad and I driving by the old Pearson farm and seeing old man Pearson swinging the harrows out — and he was about 85 years old at the time — hitting a granary and cutting that granary wide open, and grain pouring out onto the ground because he was trying to do what he could to help. I can just imagine the conversation that went on when his son drove up and seen 500 bushels of wheat out on the ground because he hit the darn granary with the harrow as he was swinging by.

Trying to help out — 85 years old. My guess, he couldn't see the end of the harrow drawbar, let alone operate the harrow drawbar. But he was doing what he could because it was the right thing to do. He was trying to help out, trying to help out, trying to do something to help out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And we'll all remember the kinds of things you did at harvest time on family farms here in Saskatchewan. Waking up in the middle of the night, raining like heck outside, looking at yourself and your father screaming down the stairs and saying, we've got to go put a tarp on that combine because we left grain in the tank. And somehow we're not going to allow that grain to spoil just because we're too lazy to go and put a tarp on. And slipping around on the old . . . I remember plain as day on our farm, my dad getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and doing exactly that, going out and putting a tarp over the 914 International because we'd left the grain tank full because we wanted to harvest as late as we could.

And I remember slipping off that combine and darn near breaking my neck, catching my arm on the way down — and I still have the scar to prove it — on the sheet metal as I go down, ripping myself wide open and dad saying . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no I'm not going to show you. And I remember my dad saying to me, just put a rag around it, we haven't got the tarp tightened down yet; we're going to get up there and get that job done and then we'll go get you stitched up.

And I remember being 12 miles from home one time and locking myself out of the grain truck as my father left with the combine going up the field and thinking to myself, now what am I going to do? Twelve miles from home, the combine's headed the other direction, what's dad going to say now? And I remember thinking to myself, the only thing that I had between a certain spanking, a certain lecture from my father, was this ball-peen hammer I have in my hand and knowing full well that the only thing that's going to save me and keep me from walking 12 miles home is smashing out that little side window. And that's exactly what I did. Because at 3 o'clock in the morning when the frost is nipping at your heels and your dad's moving the combine home and the storm clouds are coming up in the West and your dad's saying to you that we're going to harvest that last 50 acres tonight, you're saying to yourself I'm going to be there to help. I'm going to be there to help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — I'm going to do my part. I'm going to do my part. I'm going to be there to help. I'm going to do what I can to help this operation take off that last little bit of crop so that it doesn't stay out all winter.

On our farm, on our farm, we take great pride in the fact that we have never once lost a crop and left a crop out over harvest. And I count that as a serious blessing. And I know other areas of the province that don't have that same fortunate record because they're a little further north than I am or those kind of things. And thinking to themselves as the swathes lay out all winter long — all winter long — wondering how the heck we're going to survive the winter. Can't get at the crop because the snow is two-feet deep on top of those swathes. And thinking to themselves, how are we going to feed those cattle that we got out there right now, because we have no feed because we didn't get the crop off. Those are the kinds of things that farm families wake up to every single day.

And every single time that that happens, what happens in your community? I'll tell you what happens in your community — when you're finished combining, you hop on that combine, you fill it up with fuel, and you drive down to the next field, and you just pull in and start. You just pull in and start. You don't even own the field but you pull in and start, and as you go by the other guy in the combine you wave to him and you say, we're here to help. We're here to help. We're here to do our part. We're here and try and help you out and get your crop off so that you won't have to wake up in the middle of December when there's two feet of snow on the ground and you haven't got the crop in. Haven't got the crop harvested. And that happens time after time after time in Saskatchewan.

And it's that spirit, it's that spirit, it's that kind of commitment to agriculture that the farm community has. And I think the farm community deserves better than a government saying we can't do something to help as well. This is a government that is uncaring, unwilling, or simply does not want to accept the responsibility in this area to help out.

And I can just imagine how many farm families out there in Saskatchewan today that didn't get the crop in this spring because they were flooded out; I can't even imagine that as a farmer, Mr. Speaker. It's never happened on my farm, thank God, and I have pity — absolute pity — for the people in Saskatchewan that had that happen to them this past year.

I was in southern Manitoba this summer and had opportunity to talk to a number of farmers about the flooding that they experienced. We had opportunity in the last number of days in this Assembly to talk to farmers from that southeast part of the province, that came in and talked to us about the flooding that they were experience . . . had experienced in their area. And talked to farmers and said to themselves, you know what I got for a farm right now? I've got 1,500 acres of three-foot-high cattails on their farm. That's the kind of thing that they are faced with right now.

And they're going out right now throughout Saskatchewan and renting tandem discs and ploughing down them, trying to make a decent seed bed for next year, trying to do something so they can put in next year's crop, and they have a government, and they're employing all of their neighbours to help with the effort

in those areas.

And yet they have a government that says, no, we can't help. No, we can't help. No, we have no plan. No, we have no direction. No, I'm sorry, even though we have \$350 million sitting in a slush fund account that you guys are always famous for building up, trying to hide them so no one knows that they exist so that whatever hare-brained scheme you come up with lately in terms of things like SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) and whatever else that you want to spend money on, you have money to do it with. And yet at the same time there's farmers at home that are despairing because they don't have any money to deal with these problems.

(1230)

And what is your solution to these problems? Call another meeting. Yes, we have no problem with going to the meetings. Yes, we believe there's value in the farmers talking to the government. Yes, we believe there's value in the farm groups coming together and trying to develop a plan.

And you come out with a program and you say to the farmers, if you were the government what would you do? That was the latest initiative by the Minister of Agriculture. And we supported that initiative because we think it's important that we talk about the problem but we also think it's important that we do something about the problem.

When you look down the agenda, you look down the agenda, the world's eye view of Saskatchewan agriculture, global trends, trade padding, emerging markets. Absolutely important, yes. You got to look down the road; got to look down the road and try and figure out where we're going to market our crops in the future. What crops we should be growing, all of those kinds of things. But at a time when you're thinking about survival, what's going to happen 10 years from now isn't a lot — isn't the kind of thing that's on your mind right at the moment.

It's how am I going to make the payment January 1 that so many farmers have right now to make. Wondering whether or not they're going to be able to pay their taxes. Wondering whether or not they're going to be able to pay the fuel dealership that's been calling them every other day and saying to them you've got to try and bring your account into line. Wondering about the grocery bill and all those kinds of thing, and this government wants to talk about trade patterns and emerging markets well into the future.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, they bring forward a gentleman that had an excellent presentation at the luncheon that the government hosted. A gentleman that we had occasion the last number of years, the last number of days I should say, to speak with. He's the chief executive officer of Poundmaker Ag Ventures.

We had a good discussion with him that day and he made an excellent presentation talking about the need for a plan, the need for direction, the need to develop a solution right here at home, a made-in-Saskatchewan solution because that was so critically important. And we had from there leading throughout the day all kinds of discussions about what needed to happen.

And this government's plan with respect to how we develop that plan.

I don't know anything about this, you know, this psycho babble that they bring forward, but they have someone come in and they say that the important thing that they wanted to do that day was have the farm leaders tip their head back, close their eyes, and visualize how they'd like the future of agriculture to emerge.

I understand that kind of thing works in terms of sports. I understand that that's a critical component of winning when it comes to developing a strategy in a basketball game or in a hockey game or an Olympic sprinter — all of those kinds of things — seeing themselves dash down the line and cross the hundred yards with their arms outstretched, winning the race, feeling the tape go across. But the fact of the matter is while that may be important in some of those other areas — it may be even important in agriculture — I'm sorry but I don't think it's going to develop the plan that we need. I don't think it's going to pay the bills.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — I don't think it's going to pay the bills. I don't think it's going to do what's necessary in terms of agriculture here in Saskatchewan. What should have been discussed are things like a long-term strategy — yes. A short-term strategy — yes. How can we help in agriculture today? How can we help in terms of marketing? How can we help in terms of keeping the input costs in line? How can we help farmers that are faced with, with drought or faced with loss of production as a result of not being able to get a crop in?

How can we address those kinds of concerns is what we should have been talking about rather than saying, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Saskatchewan that this isn't somehow or another important, and that we have to look to other solutions, look to the areas of Ottawa for a solution to our problems.

Well I say to the people of Saskatchewan, it's time in this Assembly that we . . . It's time in this Assembly that we develop our own solutions.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Leave to introduce guests, please.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce in the west gallery my wife Linda, who's been my wife now for 25 years. We celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary this year. I really thank her for all the years of support that she's given me.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we have . . . visiting us is my daughter who has come in from Amsterdam to come back to this great province, my daughter, Koonu, who has been there for some time, as well as in London. And I'd like to also introduce the youngest of the family, Danis, who is working in the film industry in the province, and her partner also works in the film industry, Tony Elliott. Please.

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Trade Equalization Payment (continued)

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the things that they talked about at the ag symposium, they developed some thoughts in terms of a mission statement and it was very important and we understand the importance of that. I'm trying to direct some attention to the area.

They talked about things like social sustainability, farm family, producer, rural, potential, visions, choice. That's an interesting . . . That's an interesting word coming from an NDP administration — choice — it's an interesting word coming from an NDP administration. What choice did you have as a farmer not to have your GRIP contract ripped up? What choice do you have in terms of marketing your products today? What choice do you have when it comes to this government helping you out? What choice do you have in a whole number of areas from this administration? Absolutely none.

Environmental sustainability, and yes we believe in environmental sustainability on this side of the House. And I look at a number of members on this side of the House, in fact virtually all of them, that know all about sustainability when it comes to things like zero tillage, trying to sustain the viability of land here in Saskatchewan. And trying to promote a good product and good husbandry in terms of land management and animal good husbandry. We know all about that on this side of the House.

We all know about a unified lobby effort and that's why we supported a unified lobby effort and we continue to do that. We all know about labour supply and I talked a little bit about that where you got the answer to a labour supply in rural Saskatchewan was: get that young kid to work. That was always the labour supply and that's how you addressed it. Have you got a brother or sister out there that can run a tractor? If you got a brother or sister that can run that combine, well get them on it and teach them how. Because that's the labour supply that we've always dealt with in rural Saskatchewan.

We look to the future for things like value added. Absolutely. That's a critical thing and it's been built by the farm producers. When you look at the value-added industries here in Saskatchewan, when you look at the value-added industries and the specialty crop marketing areas, when you look at the value added in terms of hog initiatives, when you look at value added in terms of cattle feeding operations here in Saskatchewan, it's all been driven at the farm gate level.

Why every single time that there's any diversification by government it ends in almost . . . almost in every occasion it ends in absolutely spectacular bankruptcy. When you look at things like SPUDCO as a classic example of that. My in-laws have a home over on Hitchcock Bay not far from those big potato storage facilities over there. And you walk into those potato storage facilities today and it looks like you could play football in them. You could put Taylor Field right in the middle of those places and have an indoor stadium here in Saskatchewan.

Can you imagine how many fans we'd get to a game at Taylor Field if we had it enclosed. We could have it out . . . the only problem is, is how would we possibly organize the number of buses to go to Beechy, Saskatchewan, because that's where those facilities are located. You look into them and you yell and you hear nothing but an echo in those facilities because there isn't a thing in them, except bankruptcies — 36 million, I believe it was, somewhere in that neighbourhood.

I can think of a number of graphic ways of describing that, that your parents talked about wasting money and how there were kinds of ways of wasting money and how they described those kinds of things, that when you wasted money how they'd put it in terms, very, very graphic terms that we can't say in the legislature. But the fact is, is those are the kinds of the things that farmers are faced with here in Saskatchewan today.

And I want to close, I want to close, Mr. Speaker, and allow my colleague to second the motion here coming up. But I want to close with something that the minister said that struck me as part of the problem here in Saskatchewan. The minister when he wrapped up the symposium, the farm symposium that was held here in Regina, he closed by reciting a quote from Will Rogers:

Even if you're on the right track, if you sit still you're going to get run over.

Well what's happening in Saskatchewan today? Are we moving forward? Are we in danger of seeing the light of that big train coming down the track and running over us if we don't do something. Yes, we are. Are we in the middle of having the biggest wreck in agriculture that we ever had? Yes, we are.

Are we prepared to do something on this side of the House to address that. Yes, we are.

Are we prepared to put forward a plan to try and address the agriculture community and the concerns that they have. Yes, we are.

Have we put forward a plan dating back to the spring of last year? Yes, we have.

Have we put forward a plan in the election campaign that resulted in member after member on this side of the House being elected? Yes, we did.

Have we come up with a plan since then to try and help farm families? Yes, we did.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that on this side of the House we'll continue to do that. That is our responsibility. That's the reason why we bring forward the initiatives that we have brought forward, that's why we'll continue to do that. That's why the farm community looks at us for leadership here in Saskatchewan.

That's why they do not look at the Premier or the Minister of Agriculture for leadership here in Saskatchewan because they are prepared to sit and do nothing. Sit on the tracks and wait and hope that that inevitable train is not coming down that's going to crush agriculture.

And I say to the farm families of this province, we will, in opposition, we will not allow that track to be occupied by the NDP government and allow that train to come down with at least not speaking on their behalf. We will not allow it to happen.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we move . . . I move the following motion, seconded by the member from Cannington and the motion reads as follows:

That this Assembly urges the provincial government to use its reserves in liquor and gaming fund to provide an immediate trade equalization payment of \$300 million to Saskatchewan farm families through a payment mechanism determined through consultation with the Saskatchewan farm coalition, and that the provincial government use this payment to assist in negotiating a \$1 billion trade equalization payment from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I move this, seconded by the member from Cannington.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today to second this motion because it is an extremely important motion not just to agriculture in Saskatchewan but to all the people in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it's very important that this money, the \$300 million that we have asked for in this motion be distributed as soon as possible to farmers across rural Saskatchewan because, as my colleague said, it's the right thing to do — the right thing to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, clearly this debate is being done in a very timely manner. This whole session has been about the need to address the emergency situation in rural Saskatchewan. This whole issue . . . this whole session has dealt with that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

(1245)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to members of the legislature, I note we have a very timely visit here from someone I recognize because I've sat on his knee — I don't know if others of you have had that privilege — and one of his elves as well.

And I understand that these are representatives as well in the shared parenting association. So I just ask the members to welcome them today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleague, the Minister of Labour, to introduce a very special person in the House today. Santa Claus is in the House. And I think that I would like him and his friends to know that there are no grinchies on this side of the House.

And that Santa Claus has got with him a least one gentleman that I recognize, Mr. Blaine Collins. He's with the National Shared Parenting Association. And they're here with a message for the Premier — make sure that the children all get gifts this year from Santa Claus, the ones that Santa Claus can't give himself, and he's talking to the Premier about children who are of divorced parents.

So welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Trade Equalization Payments (continued)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, this is an extremely important measure, not just for farmers in rural Saskatchewan but for everyone across rural Saskatchewan.

I'm sure that each and every one of us have been contacted by someone in the business community — a farmer, a farm wife — someone in agriculture, someone related to agriculture across this province has bought it to their attention that there is indeed a crisis and an emergency.

It's not just a crisis of the farm; it's a crisis of the hardware store in town. It's a crisis of the grocery store in town, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join my colleague, the member from Cumberland, in welcoming his two daughters here today.

I understand he hasn't done justice to his daughters as any proud parent will. He'll simply sit back and say here are my daughters and sit down. But I want to point out that one of his daughters is involved with acting and the other lives in Amsterdam. And it's hard to believe but the they're certainly a great credit and probably more exciting people than their father is, and it's certainly a credit, it's a credit to him.

In particular, I am really quite pleased to see that they have a wide variety of interests, and of course acting is one of them. And that's what the Sask Party is doing here today, so they can

take a lesson from what they're doing.

And to also point out, to also point out, Mr. Speaker, that at one time I was supposed to be part of the cast of *Dances With Wolves*, but at the last minute I was cut because I was so homely even the wolves wouldn't dance with me. So, Mr. Speaker, my acting career was cut short.

And thank you so much for being a contribution to the Aboriginal people, especially the Metis. And welcome once again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Trade Equalization Payments (continued)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we hear the Deputy Premier and the Premier on the opposite side saying that this is going to cost taxpayers money if they were to take the money out of the liquor and gaming fund to provide this assistance for farmers.

Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely wrong. In fact I have, Mr. Speaker, with me the *Province of Saskatchewan 1999-00 Mid-Year Financial Report* that outlines what's happening with the budgets of the Government of Saskatchewan. And it says on page no. 7 that the government's own source revenues are currently projected to be 340 . . .

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask leave of the Assembly to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Yates: — I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, Mr. Bob Lee who is in the government gallery. Mr. Lee has been a long-time New Democrat and a friend of this party. And I'd just like to wish him the very best and a Merry Christmas. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Trade Equalization Payments (continued)

Mr. D'Autremont: — The government has this money, Mr. Speaker, in their funds. In fact, they have \$343.9 million more in revenue than expected. They got in \$270 million of additional money through the oil and gas revenues, and they left, Mr. Speaker, an additional \$150 million in the liquor and gaming fund because they had those additional revenues.

Those revenues, Mr. Speaker, are available. They're in the liquor and gaming fund today. Those taxes have already been

paid, Mr. Speaker, so why doesn't the government want to access them?

We wonder why they're trying to keep them from getting them to farmers? Are they saving it — like they do every time, Mr. Speaker, for their election campaign promises? The money that they were talking about pulling out of liquor and gaming was presented prior to the last election. It was their election budget, Mr. Speaker, and that's the reason why they don't want to pull that money out now. They're saving it for their election slush fund, Mr. Speaker. And that's why they don't want that money going out to farmers.

They won't be able to make their fancy promises. They won't be able to run around like they were doing prior to the August election, Mr. Speaker, putting out a little bit of money in this community, and a little bit of money to that group, and a little bit of money . . . you know, Mr. Speaker, the members across this province . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order please. Members of the Assembly, in accordance with the Assembly rules, rule no. 19(8), it is required of me to interrupt proceedings and forthwith put the question that's before the Assembly.

The division bells rang from 12:51 p.m. until 12:53 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 22

| | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Elhard | Heppner | Julé |
| Krawetz | Draude | Boyd |
| Gantfoer | Toth | Eagles |
| Wall | Bakken | Bjornerud |
| D'Autremont | McMorris | Weekes |
| Brkich | Harpauer | Wakefield |
| Hart | Allchurch | Stewart |
| Kwiatkowski | | |

Nays - 27

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I was wondering if it would be possible to, and it's a little unusual, but ask for leave to stop the clock. We have several second reading speeches that I need to get off today, and I just ask leave to do that.

Leave granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, from an open, accountable, and responsible government, I submit the answer to question 26 . . . 36.

The Speaker: — Question no. 36 is answered and tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 9 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to move the second reading of The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, anyone who has raised children knows that they do not just wake up on the morning of their 18th birthday to find that they have somehow been transformed from dependent young people to mature independent adults.

As parents and adults we know that the transition from youth to adulthood is a gradual process. It is a time of life when the young person may be very independent in one situation and then rely heavily on the advice, opinions, and quite often the financial assistance of his or her parents in the next. It is a time of choices, decision making, and often confusion and frustration. It is a time when young people, although they want to be on their own, still like to know they have somewhere to turn for assistance and support when the need arises.

For most young people that assistance and support comes from parents and extended family. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, not all young people are so fortunate. For those who are permanent or long-term wards of my department, it is the government who plays the role of parent. And for these young people, with the exception of a very small number who are continuing their formal education, the transition from youth to adulthood happens the day they celebrate their 18th birthday. And because they have grown up in foster care, they are less likely to have the support of immediate or extended family enjoyed by other young people.

The Child and Family Services Act currently allows the department to continue to provide a range of supports to these young people until they reach the age of 21 but only if they are completing their education. For many youth this provision is too restrictive. As members of this House are aware, Mr. Speaker, not all young people have the capability to pursue what we would consider to be a formal education. At 18, others may simply not feel ready.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, youth may need support or assistance to prepare them for further education at a later date. Others may need help while they look for employment or attend a training course. Still others need some help learning to live on their own. Given the current legislation, the only option for many of these youth is to turn to income support programs — a choice I don't believe any of us would view as positive.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will amend The Child and Family Services Act to expand the range of services which may be

provided to youth between the ages of 18 and 21 years, who are in the care of the minister.

(1300)

The amendments would extend support to those who are continuing their education; do not plan to continue their education immediately but who require interim support to help them prepare for further education; are intellectually challenged and require constant care or day programming such as sheltered workshops, that does not fall within the usual definition of education; or, plan to enter the workforce but require additional support to find and keep a job.

As is currently the case, the minister may provide shelter, care, counselling, treatment, and family services, or any combination of these, based on individual need. For example, a young person may want to go back to complete high school but first needs to get counselling and treatment for his substance-abuse problem. Or perhaps for a variety of reasons, the young person may not have had the opportunity to learn to do some of the things we tend to take for granted, like how to do laundry, care for a home, cook, pay bills, and apply for a job.

Mr. Speaker, we believe the government, through my office, has a responsibility to provide support and assistance to young people who have been in long-term care, in the same manner as a parent would do for their children. Mr. Speaker, this amendment should not be viewed as providing for an alternative form of income support. It is not that. It is simply a plan to assist fewer than 60 additional young people each year who have grown up as wards of the province. They, like thousands of other young people, may need some help as they make the transition to adulthood and independence.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, because of their childhood experiences, many of these young people have suffered developmental delays and a profound sense of loss. Combined with the fact that they've spent a large part of their childhood living away from their homes and families, their need may well be greater than that of the average 18-to 21-year old, and they may require additional support for a period of time. And for some the tragedy of fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effect adds to the problems they face.

As is presently the case, services will not automatically be provided to every child in care who turns 18. A young person would need to apply to have the department services extended for a specified period of time and be able to provide details describing his or her immediate and longer-term plans. If the plan is realistic and falls within the parameters outlined, he or she would then enter into an agreement with the department.

The agreement sets out the services, including financial, that would be provided by the department and the objectives of the plan, along with the responsibilities of the young person in meeting those objectives. Should the young person fail to abide by the conditions of the agreement, the agreement could be terminated.

Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate is currently conducting a review of the foster care system. As part of that review she has raised concerns around the issue of providing adequate support

to children who have grown up in long-term care and has suggested increasing the range of services and flexibility provided in section 56.

As well the National Youth and Care Network strongly supports providing extended benefits for permanent and long-term wards. Mr. Speaker, we believe there's no better investment than an investment in our province's young people. We further believe that the amendments through section 56 of The Child and Family Services Act allows us to make that investment in young people who have grown up in foster care.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having had just a short period of time to review the legislation before us, I have taken some time, and I've been listening to the minister as he has been giving his reasons and presenting to us the arguments for this piece of legislation. And I would have to suggest that from what I've heard and what I see in the legislation on the surface, there are certainly some . . . there's some sincerity and a need out there in the community in regards to the legislation in front of us.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that individuals who have grown up in foster care . . . and sometimes young people move maybe four or five times in that period of time. It makes it a difficult environment for them to really become that whole person that other people may have the privilege of as a result of a stable home environment. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to commend the minister for recognizing the fact that there may be a period of time where the department has to give some guidance and direction and even some monetary control, rather than saying that you're out on your own and apply to Social Services now for assistance if you can't find a job.

I think that's what I'm hearing here. The department is in a way trying to recognize that there's a need beyond that they haven't recognized before and see if they can establish an avenue and an opportunity for young people to indeed develop that character and develop the work habits or the education that's needed to really move forward in society.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss though if I allowed this particular piece of legislation just to move directly to committee. I think it should be reviewed a little more carefully and we would look forward to discussing it further at a later date. Therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999 and I will so move at the end of my remarks.

This Bill, I think, is one that we can all support. We can all support it because it'll help achieve something positive in our province — labour relations stability in the health sector.

What the amendment does is extend the moratorium prohibiting Labour Relations Board from changing what are referred to as the Dorsey regulations. This moratorium was brought in to provide stability in health care labour relations while health care restructuring was underway. The moratorium will expire on January 17, 2000, and the legislation before us has the effect of extending that moratorium until January 17, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by sharing the background on this legislation with the Assembly. Spending a moment on the circumstances leading up to this Bill will be helpful in understanding what it does, why it does it, and how it will benefit the health care system.

The roots of the legislation before us go back to the early '90s. Health reform brought together a variety of local health services under single, local health districts rather than each being administered separately. As a result, the members of different unions found themselves working side by side under a variety of collective agreements. They asked the government to develop a process to aid in the transition to the new system.

Acting on their request, Commissioner James Dorsey was appointed to develop a process to reorganize health labour relations. The unions requesting the Dorsey Commission included the Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE; the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union, SGEU; and the Service Employees' International Union, the SEIU.

The commission was given the task of developing a new structure for collective bargaining in the health sector. At the time, Mr. Speaker, there were 538 bargaining units in the health sectors and it was clear that something had to be done. From the outset, it was vital that both employers and employees be involved in the process and we believed then and we believe now that the people who would have to live with the outcome, would make it work on a day-to-day basis, were the people to work with Commissioner Dorsey on the restructuring. As well involving the stakeholders from both sides of the bargaining table meant each would have a significant degree of ownership on the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, it was clear from the outset arising from this kind of reorganization that this would take some time to resolve. It was that reason that section 8 of The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act, 1999 prohibited the Labour Relations Board from making any order that changed the Dorsey regulations for a period of three years. Now that three-year period will expire in January 17 of 2000.

Mr. Speaker, in considering the amendment before us we should be mindful of what the Dorsey Commission and The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act and the regulations flowing from it have accomplished. I think it's fair to say that the commission, the Act, and regulations, have brought significant benefits to the health care sector.

The health unions requested the legislation establishing the

Dorsey Commission and private meetings with all the stakeholders were held on an ongoing basis during the process. Public hearings were also held in Regina and Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, the Dorsey regulations reduced the number of bargaining units from 538 to less than 45 today, and that was no small accomplishment. The process was also accomplished with a minimum of disruption for the men and women who provide the health care services that we depend on.

The Dorsey regulations maintain all the existing collective agreements until the new ones were negotiated. The seniority of employees moving into new bargaining units was preserved, and non-union employees moving into bargaining units had their years of service recognized for seniority purposes.

Over all, Mr. Speaker, the rationalization of labour relations in the health care sector through The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act and the Regulations is consistent with the health reform process. The new structure addresses the new employment relationships that have been created in the health care sector, and it promotes integration and delivery of health services.

And that's not to say the whole process has been easy or that there haven't been bumps along the road. Nor has the health care sector been free from labour disruptions, but today all the major unions in the health care sector representing over 33,000 employees have negotiated new collective agreements. Mr. Speaker, viewed in that context, the system has worked very well.

So we arrive at the situation we have today — the three-year moratorium on changes to Dorsey regulations is about to expire. However, new employment relationships are still being defined. Within the new system, collaborative initiatives between union and management are also underway. The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations — SAHO — the health unions, and the province are working together to implement a new classification plan. The plan will address things like pay equity, the intermingling of diverse groups of employees with inconsistent classifications, and the framework for the creation of new positions.

The amendment before us therefore supports the original intent of the legislation — the rationalization and stabilization of labour relations in the health sector. Mr. Speaker, the legislation we are proposing maintains the status quo by extending the Dorsey moratorium. Extending the moratorium will ensure continued stability while health care labour relations are more fully established.

For example, a number of affected unions are working with the government and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations on long-term employment issues in the health sector, such as the new classification and compensation plan I just mentioned.

In addition, all health unions have signed new contracts in the past year. Extending the moratorium gives them an opportunity to implement the agreements and establish their relationships with their new members. This will all maintain stability in the health sector and help us to continue to build a strong health

system.

Mr. Speaker, with this legislation we're attempting to accommodate the stakeholders in this issue. The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, SAHO, supports extending the moratorium as does the Department of Health. The Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Service Employees International Union, and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses all support extending the moratorium. In fact, unions representing about 86 per cent of the affected workers support the moratorium and they have good reasons for wanting to see it extended.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are putting this legislation forward because we want to continue working with both the employer and the employees as new health sector agreements and employment issues are addressed. This amendment therefore extends our support of the original policy intent of The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act. The intent was and remains to foster stability and harmony in the health sector.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is something that all hon. members can support.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of points I would ask members to keep in mind as we consider this Bill.

First, there is broad support among the unions for extending the moratorium. The employers, SAHO, and the Department of Health also support an extension.

Second, the original moratorium expires on January 17, 2000. Extending it will insure stability as the reorganization of the health sector continues.

And Mr. Speaker, I have also talked about how within the new streamlined structure that has been created for the health sector there are new and developing employment relationships and joint union management initiatives that we want to see the outcome.

The amendment therefore will give all these things some extra time to develop and will allow the new labour relations structure to become fully established. Labour stability in the health care sector is something we all want and need to see.

I hereby move second reading of Bill No. 3, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker in response to Bill No. 3, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 1999 and listening to the debate that's been presented by the minister, we certainly want to acknowledge the fact that there was some merit in the piece of legislation that we have before us.

Mr. Speaker, I must also reiterate the fact that when the Dorsey report was commissioned. Dorsey was commissioned to review the numbers of unions and come up with some recommendations. We had, or at the time the party I was part of, became involved in the debate and certainly suggested that this might be a positive move and that was a feeling I was

getting from many of the people who were working in the health field at the time. Even before health restructuring, there was a feeling that they just didn't know exactly who they were always dealing with. It just seemed that there was . . . you were one . . . the member of one union or another union and you were wondering if your voice was really being heard.

And I appreciate the fact that the government would like to give a little more time before it's thrown open for, I believe it's a review, but an opportunity for the unions to really establish where they are, or not the unions but the members, the membership, to establish the union bargaining groups that they are part of, Mr. Speaker. And with that I don't have a problem. I think it's imperative that we do that.

I think if there is a situation that has been brought to our attention, and this is something that we would certainly want to know from the government, is the fact that as a result of the agreements that were arrived at last spring a number of union members are still wondering where the contracts are, where everything is sitting in regards to the contracts and the fulfillments of those contracts?

And that, I think, is going to have to be dealt with and established and finalized as far as payment out there so that union members feel that the union executive are certainly working for them.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think this piece of legislation is certainly good. We just want an indication . . . there's a feeling that that voice really hasn't been heard. We've been waiting for our . . . I believe the contract has been finalized in agreements, but I'm not exactly sure the total . . . the suggestions that have been coming out and why there has been a delay in implementing and moving forward those agreements.

But it is a . . . while that is separate from this debate, I think it is something that will take part . . . will take place as unions certainly look at this piece of legislation and say, well, we're waiting for the government to move on some of the contracts we've already signed.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation, I think, needs some more research. The minister has indicated that unions and SAHO are certainly in favour of it.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate for my colleagues and I, as well, to not only talk to union membership . . . and I know my colleague the member from Melfort, our health critic, has already been talking to organizations like SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) and like SAHO and some of the other health groups and has been getting some . . . asking them for some feedback and for some input. And it would be appropriate for us to take the time to indeed do a little more in-depth research in regards to this piece of legislation and how it will significantly impact those groups, especially the members of the different unions involved.

And I believe that the minister would certainly want us to do our homework so we know where we're coming from as well in addressing some . . . if there are concerns out there or just making sure that we have followed the legislation carefully, and if there's something brought to our attention that people feel

may have been missed that we can bring to the minister's attention when we get to Committee of the Whole.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 3.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 11 — The Electronic Information and Documents Act

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Electronic Information and Documents Act.

We're all familiar with the speed at which new methods of communication are becoming part of our society and it's evident that these developments are having a significant and growing impact on business and on our economy.

Mr. Speaker, commercial activity on the Internet is expanding at a phenomenal rate. Industry Canada estimates that Canadian Internet commerce will grow to \$70 billion US (United States) by 2003 up from \$5.5 billion US in 1998.

The advent of new communication media, however, threatens to outstrip the legal rules that have traditionally supported commercial relationships. The law supporting legal relationships and associated communications was developed with a paper-based medium in mind.

As new forms of communication such as the Internet and e-mail evolve, paper is giving way, as we know, to newer forms of electronic-based communications. It's clear that the rapid trend toward electronic communication will continue.

What's not clear, Mr. Speaker, is whether electronic communications will satisfy traditional, paper-based statutory rules requiring writing, signature, or original documents, for example. Nor is it clear the extent to which the intention to contract is evidenced by symbolic actions such as clicking an icon on a computer screen.

To address many of these uncertainties, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations model law on electronic commerce in November 1996. The UN (United Nations) model law then formed the basis for the Uniform Law Conference of Canada work in this area. The Conference approved a uniform Act in August, 1999, entitled the uniform electronic commerce Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the legislature today is a further refinement on the work of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. And it has several important features, which I'll briefly mention.

Mr. Speaker, it applies to commercial relationships and all other legal relationships requiring documentation. It adopts an approach whereby rules of capacity — can I do this? — are transformed into rules of proof — have I met the standard? It doesn't mandate the use of electronic communications but it allows for their use, provided parties consent. It's media neutral, applying to paper-based and electronic

communications, and, Mr. Speaker, it's technologically neutral in that certain technologies or software are not favoured over others.

The Act, Mr. Speaker, has five parts. Part I provides for basic rules that ensure equivalent treatment of electronic and paper-based documents and information.

Part II contains general principles or concepts that will apply to electronic communications.

Part III sets out the rules for particular electronic transactions including the formulation and operation of contracts, the use of automated transactions, correction of errors, and presumed time and place of the receipt of messages.

Part IV contains special provisions related to the carriage of goods permitting electronic documents in a field that depends on paper and the use of unique documentation, and part V contains the provisions respecting the making of regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that Saskatchewan is the first province in Canada to introduce legislation that will provide a basic legal framework for electronic-based commercial relationships. By introducing this Bill, it's the government's intention to widen public awareness and seek further comments and input into its further development.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I move second reading of An Act respecting Electronic Information and Documents.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to Bill No. 11, The Electronics Information and Documents Act, certainly it's an issue, I think, that is going to become very important, and it is already important.

We are aware of the fact that with the advent of the computers and now the Internet that significant actions can be taken, and certainly we're seeing now trade taking place in regards to the Net. Mr. Speaker, if a person really wanted you could do all the shopping you wanted. You can even buy and sell a vehicle by the Net.

And I think what the minister is attempting to here is to set some guidelines in place. I guess the question will be at the end of the day whether or not you'll be able to police the Net or access to some of the trade and commerce that will be taking place as a result of the advent of computers and access to the Internet.

But it's certainly an area that I think needs to be looked at — governments need to take the precautionary measures of moving ahead and trying to address some of the concerns that are already being brought to their attention.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt a lot we could get into on the debate of this at this time. However, Mr. Speaker, I'm more than prepared to move adjournment of debate and allow for debate at a further date once we've received and reviewed the Bill a little closer in order to make sure that the Bill meets the requirements of the need that is out there.

Debate adjourned.

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

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Mentally Disordered Persons Amendment Act, 1999. Under the Act, Mr. Speaker, certificates of incompetence are issued for persons who are unable to manage their financial affairs. When this happens the Public Trustee or another person is appointed as property guardian. This ensures that the person's financial affairs are administered and, in some cases, provides protection for people who are vulnerable to financial abuse.

The intention of these amendments, Mr. Speaker, is to address two specific areas of concern. If a certificate of incompetence is issued under The Mentally Disordered Persons Act, the individual who is subject of the certificate, or a family member on his or her behalf, may appeal to a review panel. The decision of the review panel may be appealed to the Court of Queen's Bench.

It's important that a ruling respecting competency is made when an appeal is made to the Court of Queen's Bench, and if there is no ruling, family members or professionals concerned about a person's competence must try to restart the certificate of incompetence process.

Mr. Speaker, it's often difficult to get the individual in question to submit to a new examination as part of the reapplication process, especially when he or she is under the control of a person who may be taking advantage of them financially. Unfortunately, the result can be further depletion of the person's financial resources. Two aspects of this Bill will address this issue.

First, the Bill will provide that when a decision of a review panel regarding a person's competence is appealed to the Court of Queen's Bench, the court may require the person to submit to a psychiatric examination. It will require that the court make a finding as to the person's competence.

Second, Mr. Speaker, the Bill will allow for an appeal of a decision of the Court of Queen's Bench to the Court of Appeal on a question of law or jurisdiction, with leave of a judge of the Court of Appeal. This means that a Court of Appeal judge must be convinced that there's merit in proceeding with the appeal before it may go forward.

Mr. Speaker, the second area of concern is the immunity of review panel members. Under The Mental Health Services Act, review panels are appointed to hear appeals with respect to persons who have been certified to receive involuntary treatment as in-patients, persons who are the subject of a community treatment order, or individuals who are subject of transfer orders.

Under The Mentally Disordered Persons Act, however, Mr. Speaker, the same review panels hear appeals with respect to individuals who are seeking . . . subjects of certificates of incompetence respecting financial matters. But people performing duties under this, under the . . . a lot of people performing duties under The Mental Health Services Act, including the members of review panels, have immunity from

liability with respect to actions carried out in good faith under that Act. The Mentally Disordered Persons Act does not provide the same immunity.

Review panel members are concerned that, given the sensitivity of the matters on which they rule, actions may be brought against them with respect to the decisions taken by them in exercise . . . in the exercise in good faith of their duties.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment will ensure that persons acting in good faith under both The Mental Health Services Act and The Mentally Disordered Persons Act will be treated in the same way. It will protect people performing duties, exercising powers, or carrying out responsibilities in good faith under the Act or regulations from civil action.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Mentally Disordered Persons Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation, I think, has some significant impact on our society in some . . . a number of ways.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to be long because I'm not exactly sure I want to put my colleagues in the position at this time of the day of maybe falling into that category we're talking of here, but we will pass that by. And, Mr. Speaker, suggest that it might be appropriate for us to debate this legislation somewhat further at a later date. And therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(1330)

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to move second reading of a Bill to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act.

The Saskatchewan Pension Plan has almost 30,000 members and \$173 million under trusteeship. This plan is an integral part of the retirement savings plans of the people of Saskatchewan and in particular the 30,000 members. The plan is the only tax deferred plan available to people who don't qualify for an RRSP.

Member funds are professionally managed and the plan has generated a competitive rate of return averaging 11.2 per cent over the past 10 years. So it's doing quite well, Mr. Speaker.

There are no minimum contributions or fixed-payment schedules. The money is protected from seizure, claim, or garnishee by creditors. The plan is administered by a board of trustees appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and presently consists of five members, three of whom are plan members themselves.

The changes announced in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, are designed

to clarify the duties and powers of the board of trustees and are administrative and housekeeping in nature.

So I move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here again we have a piece of legislation that would certainly take some time to debate.

We want to acknowledge however, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Pension Plan has been working very well for the people who have become part of that pension plan. And I think at the end of the day, maybe the Minister of Finance, and certainly the federal Minister of Finance, will be pleased to see that there are individuals who decide to plan ahead for their future.

It was just unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the government moved away from supporting people in that plan.

But I think it's imperative for us to, and certainly important for us to acknowledge, that the plan is working very well and for that I give the government credit. After a lot of lobbying by the people involved in the plan the government decided at least let the plan function. And it's just showing how well a pension plan can work and how well it can work for itself and its members if given that opportunity. And in that regard, Mr. Speaker, we certainly are very supportive of this plan.

However it would be important that we review the legislation in front of us as well to make sure that it doesn't infringe on members of the plan, that it certainly continues to offer, as the minister indicated, support, and protect the members of the plan.

And here again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's imperative that we take the time for the debate. And so at this time, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 7 — The Student Assistance And Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to outline to all members of the legislature the key provisions of the proposed amendments to The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Act, 1985.

Student financial assistance is an important element in providing access to post-secondary education. This access is important for the economic and social development of Saskatchewan as well as for the personal fulfillment of Saskatchewan people.

Members will know that we are conducting a province-wide consultation in January focused on improving student financial access. As well, the commitment of the government to greater public accountability, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, underlines the importance of having clear, effective

legislation in this area.

The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training has a strategic plan which identifies student financial assistance as an important priority. Most of the amendments I am introducing in this Bill are of a housekeeping nature. This includes eliminating gender-biased language through the Act. These amendments include updating terminology, for example, the phrase "consolidated fund" is changed to "general revenue fund".

Mr. Speaker, we will also be repealing sections that are made redundant by the amendments and restating other sections to clarify the provisions.

We will be adding two new definitions — financial assistance and borrower — and incorporating those definitions throughout the Act. These terms are widely used in the Saskatchewan lender finance student . . . the Saskatchewan lender finance Saskatchewan student loans regulations. These are regulations for the lender financing agreement that became effective August 1, 1996. This is our first opportunity since then to amend the Act.

Three of the amendments are more substantive. They are all relating to having the appropriate legislation in place to accept, hold, and pay money, such as the Canada Study Grant. Given that the new authority to hold trust money and conditional grant money and the amendments extends . . . excuse me, Mr. Speaker, let me state that again. Given that new authority to hold trust money and conditional grant money, an amendment extends the authority of the trustees of the fund to invest this money in the same manner as they would any other money in the fund. In practice, the investment of these funds is handled by Saskatchewan Finance.

One other amendment gives all regulation-making authority to the Minister.

There is also a new immunity section that restricts an action being taken against the Crown, the minister, trustees, committee, or minister's designate for any loss or damage suffered by reason of anything being done in good faith. This immunity provision is considered necessary because the trustees have the authority to invest money held in the fund.

These amendments will help provide better service to Saskatchewan students through more streamlined administration.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for support of the legislature for amendments to The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Act, 1985. I move that Bill No. 7 be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to the student assistance and student aid fund, certainly there are . . . over a period of time, all members of the Assembly have received requests or calls in regards to this fund. And I think it's an issue that crops up in every MLA's office on an on-going basis. It's an issue that has to be looked at very carefully.

I've been listening to the speech by the minister and certainly there's some areas that we would agree with the minister. I

think it's an issue that we need to look at very carefully. We need to certainly take the time to review the piece of legislation and address it appropriately. And with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would now move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 10 — The Department of Health
Amendment Act, 1999**

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Department of Health Amendment Act. These amendments are largely housekeeping in nature but they speak to some of the defining values of our publicly administered universal health care system.

As members of this House know, the Canada Health Act provides the foundation for a seamless health care system across the country, a system that's comprehensive, accessible, and portable for all citizens. We know as Canadians we can count on receiving the health services we need no matter where we travel in Canada.

If someone from Alberta or Manitoba wants to come to our province and needs immediate medical care we provide it. To support this principle, provinces and territories agree to pay for insured hospital or physician services received by their citizens wherever they may be.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan these measures are currently outlined in two Acts, The Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act and The Saskatchewan Hospitalization Act. These Acts allow Saskatchewan to recover from other governments reimbursements for services or benefits provided to the residents.

The Act also contains an important bookkeeping measure. They allow us to simply report these payments as a refund to the health budget, not as new revenue. This process called "refund to vote" also applies when insurance companies repay health costs as part of a liability claim.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments before the House today will consolidate those measures into one Bill, The Department of Health Act. These amendments have no financial impact. They simply clarify the authority that is in the current legislation and they consolidate these related measures into one updated Act.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Department of Health Amendment Act, 1999.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the amendment or the legislation that's before us today, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think we all acknowledge the importance of reciprocal agreements between provinces and the recovery of those funds. I represent a constituency that borders the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Anyone along either the east side or the west side acknowledges that we certainly have a lot of residents who do receive care in Manitoba, vice versa, and it's important that we have the opportunity not only to receive that care but for the funds to the province to recoup for the funds for the cost of that care or when they provide care for somebody else. And, Mr. Speaker, it certainly is important that we have

these agreements.

Mr. Speaker, I think this piece of legislation is certainly quite simple and straightforward but it also begs for us to take the time to review it in a little more depth and therefore, I move at this time adjournment of debate on Bill No. 10, The Department of Health Amendment Act, 1999.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 5 — The Parks Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be moving second reading of The Parks Amendment Act, 1999.

The SERM's park amendment Act considerations will create a new protected area in Christopher Lake nature area. It will also correct minor errors in legal descriptions for Clearwater River, Buffalo Pound, and Good Spirit Lake provincial parks. New protected areas, which are approximately 97 hectares, will be better protected and represent important ecosystems within the province.

The surrounding areas have seen a lot of developments by forestry industry and cottage and residential construction. It's very important, Mr. Speaker, to protect the area's natural attributes and to provide compatible recreation and outdoor opportunities.

Protected area designation will allow this area to be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. There's a strong local community and RM support for the designation. As well, Mr. Speaker, there are minor amendments to parkland descriptions. It will correct errors and allow for more efficient management and administration of the parks' lands affected.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, there will be in these amendments . . . will ensure Saskatchewan's provincial parks provide a better representation of our natural ecosystem and they support the government's commitment to an enhanced park systems.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Parks Amendment Act, 1999.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to The Parks Amendment Act, 1999, there's no doubt that in this province we're truly blessed with some real resources and terrific parks across the province that people enjoy and have the privilege of enjoying.

We just listened to the minister's second reading speech and I think there's a few areas that we need to address and give my colleague, the critic responsible, an opportunity to review the legislation a little more in depth.

I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

Special Committee on Rules and Procedures

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave, I move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld:

That a special committee composed of you, Mr. Speaker, as Chair, and members D'Autremont, Higgins, Hillson, Kowalsky, Krawetz, McMorris, and Thomson be appointed to examine such matters as it deems advisable with respect to the rules, procedures, practices, and powers of the Legislative Assembly, its operations, organization, and the facilities and service provided to the Assembly, its committees, and its members.

And, Mr. Speaker:

That this special committee be instructed to include in its report, drafts of proposed rules to give effect, if adopted by the Assembly, to any change or changes that may be proposed by that committee.

That the committee have the power to sit during intersessional periods, during session except when the Assembly is sitting; and that the committee would have the power to send for persons, papers, records, and to examine, under oath, witnesses, to receive representations from interested parties and individuals, and to hold meetings away from the seat of government in order that the provisions in other legislatures can be studied;

That this committee be instructed to report to the Assembly with all convenient speed.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

(1345)

House Adjournment

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Riversdale, the Premier, by leave:

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

I so move.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, if you would endure a few moments of words that I would just like to say before we vote that would basically thank all the members of the Legislative Assembly for what has to be described as a lively and exciting session. And I just hope that for the many new members that they agree with me when I say it was lively and productive. I thought the debate was good and that the co-operation was excellent most of the time.

But I want to say that most of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your first session in the elected position as Speaker. Thank you very, very much for the work that you have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I also want to thank the Opposition House Leader and the Leader of the Opposition and the member . . . also the member from Cannington for his excellent work in helping to put the House together each day.

I thank the Clerk of the Assembly and the staff — Gwenn Ronyk and her staff, Greg and Meta; also Monique and Kathy. I want to say a special thanks to you, Patrick, for keeping us on the straight and narrow. You do an excellent job, and I just wish you and your family the very best at Christmas.

To our pages, thank you for all the work that you have done, and if you could relay on our behalf to the other member of the page group, our thanks. Also to the *Hansard* staff who kept record of everything that went on in the Chamber. Thanks to the *Journals* staff, the visitors staff, the Law Clerk, Ken Ring, And a special thanks to the SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) staff for keeping us and keeping this place running.

I would be remiss, and I'm sure other members would agree, in not thanking the library staff, the cafeteria, the financial services, and Mr. Ward and his crew who keep the cameras running and the broadcasts going out. And I think that was of particular interest this session because of the live broadcast that was carried of the emergency debate and for the first time when farm leaders and farmers were allowed to come on the floor of the Assembly.

I want to thank the staff in ministers' office as well as staff in opposition, caucus, the constituency office who serve us now in session and between sessions, as well as the commissionaires in the building.

And finally and most of all, again, I want to thank all the Members of the Legislative Assembly and wish you a very, very heartfelt Merry Christmas, and I really hope that we all get a chance to relax a little bit, take some time off. But be ready for the next session because if this one was lively, I think the next one may be even more so. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — With leave also to make comments.

Leave granted.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to respond on behalf of the official opposition on this side of the House to indeed a very important time in our lives — the coming of Christmas.

As the Deputy Premier has indicated, it indeed has been a great learning experience — I'm sure not only for the new members here in the House, but also for some of us who have had the pleasure for being here for one term or many more than one term.

And I think we've had the . . . we had the ability, Mr. Speaker, to raise issues on behalf of Saskatchewan people in a short session. We've had the opportunity to have new members experience not only question period and the workings of the House, but in fact the carrying of a Bill right from its initial first reading through to . . . through Royal Assent, and dealing with a very important issue for people in Saskatchewan. And I think it's been an experience that many of the newly elected members I'm sure are grateful for to be able to see that the House can do a number of things.

As the Deputy Premier has indicated, and I will not repeat all of the people that we want to thank, that we want to express indeed our Christmas wishes to, to all of the staff here in the Legislative Assembly right from the people that are working right within this Chamber to those that are working within the building and ensuring that the function of the Legislative Assembly continues on from day to day.

On behalf of the official opposition, I want to extend to the Premier and to all members on the government side of the House and to everyone in the province of Saskatchewan a very Merry Christmas, an opportunity to enjoy some time with your families.

And we look forward to the next session. And as one of my colleagues said, if you would like to start January 5, we're more than willing to go. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Thank you. Hon. colleagues, before I put the question, I wonder if I might beg your indulgence for a couple of moments to add my sincere best wishes. I believe you all did very well. And I want to also extend sincere best wishes and remind us all of what the spirit of Christmas brings, and so we put aside our differences and remember the purpose of the season.

And I so hope sincerely that you're able to spend time with your friends, with your loved ones, with your families and that the spirit of hope will continue taking us into not only the new century, but into the new millennium.

The very best to everybody that's behind the scenes that makes our lives easier, and in that respect to all the people that we serve in this great province of ours — the people of Saskatchewan — a very, very, Merry Christmas to everybody. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

