

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased this afternoon to present a petition on behalf of residents of the Kindersley constituency and a number of others surrounding it. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate child maintenance as income from provincial low-income programs.

And in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from most of southwest Saskatchewan, west central Saskatchewan — people from Kindersley, Leader, Alsask, Marengo, Smiley, Piapot, Kerrobert — a number of other communities within the west central part of Saskatchewan. I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signators are from the city of Yorkton and the town of Langenburg, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker. I have a petition and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide high speed Internet service to the community of Lanigan.

And the petitioners, it's signed from Lockwood, Jansen, Lanigan, Guernsey, Colonsay, and Drake.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition and the prayer reads as follows:

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

government to work with SGI to develop a more fair guidelines for deductible on vehicles that are damaged as a result of attempted car theft.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Allan and Watrous. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning the fair guidelines for deductible on vehicles that are damaged as a result of car thefts;

Resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation;

Legislation making it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of tobacco products; and

A petition concerning repairs to Highway 35 in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Thursday next move first reading of The Members Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following question. To the minister responsible for SaskPower:

What was the total cost to SaskPower of the advertising campaign to heighten public awareness regarding the dangers involved in putting cutlery in toasters; (2) have the incidence of toaster tragedies significantly dropped since the public awareness campaign?

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day no. 9 I'll ask the government the following question. To the Minister of Agriculture:

How much in terms of dollars did each of the following parties contribute to the spot loss hail coverage portion of the 2001 Saskatchewan Crop Insurance program — the federal government, the provincial government, and the farmers?

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following question. To the Minister of Health:

Are retail outlets located on First Nations reserves in Saskatchewan required to follow all the provisions of The Tobacco Control Act as passed by the Legislative Assembly and, specifically, are those outlets on First Nations reserves prohibited from displaying tobacco products as outlined in this Act?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to welcome to the House and I'll ask all hon. members and yourself, Mr. Speaker, to welcome to the House today a friend, acquaintance from my constituency, from the Sakimay First Nations, Mr. Richard Kay, who is sitting in the west gallery. Welcome to the Assembly, Mr. Kay.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Mr. Kay. And also we have some special visitors from the north country on the west gallery, and also from Regina. We'll start with Regina, Victoria Gubbels, and we also have Joan Beatty, originally from Deschambault Lake, living in Saskatoon, and also we have Philip Morin, you know, from Southend, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, living in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, these people are working in the field of treaty and Métis issues as well as dealing with health concerns, and have been working in the field of communications. And in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I would say . . .

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

So I would ask all members to say Ta wow and welcome to the special guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party official opposition, would like to welcome the members of the First Nations from Sakimay, as well as Mr. Morin. Welcome to our Assembly and I do hope you enjoy the proceedings today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And these folks are soon going to feel over welcomed, but I'd as well like to welcome Victoria Gubbels, who I know resides in my constituency and is an active member of the community and has in common with both Joan and Philip, who are with her, working hard to establish the kind of working relationships that are going to take us into a very healthy and successful future in Saskatchewan. So I'd just add my greetings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — And it feels so good, Mr. Speaker, that it seems to me I should add my greetings too, and a special greeting to Ms. Joan Beatty, a constituent of mine. And I would like to join with my colleague from Cumberland in saying Ta wow.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, Mayor Les Alm of Allan, who is here. He's also a member of the

Saskatoon District Health Board and the new regional health authority for the Saskatoon area. And I'd like to welcome him here as well as the other health people who are here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join my colleagues in thanking all the people that come to the Assembly today and for visiting this fine place and this hall of democracy.

I will point out a special welcome to Joan. I know Joan travelled to Ile-a-la-Crosse many years ago, Mr. Speaker, to take a shot of me playing hockey. She had to return when she worked with CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) to get a high-speed camera. And also she didn't wait too long for a goal to be made, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to thank her for being a role model for many people involved in communications. And I also welcome of course Victoria and Philip as well. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Elevator on the Move

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you may have seen in the news a few weeks ago that one of the largest building moves in Western Canada was undertaken along Highway 22 which runs through the southern part of my constituency.

A wooden UGG (United Grain Growers) grain annex was purchased by Mr. Robert Keyser of Cupar who operates a pulse processing business. He bought the annex in order to store lentils, chickpeas, and other crops, and calculated that it would be cheaper to buy and move the annex than to build new storage.

This elevator is 10 metres wide, 30 metres long, and 30 metres high and is estimated it weighs nearly 1 million pounds. Moving this structure was certainly no easy task.

In order to perform this tremendous feat, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Keyser hired Minty's Moving from Manitoba to undertake the project. Minty had to design a new 142-wheel transportation system to stabilize and level the elevator as it moved down the highway.

This move certainly created a lot of interest in the moving industry. As a matter of fact, there were people up from Nebraska to observe and learn about moving such a huge structure.

The elevator travelled 40 kilometres from Lipton through Dysart, Cupar, and on to Markinch where it was set in its place. It travelled approximately 5 kilometres an hour and gathered a lot of spectators and onlookers as it moved.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Keyser undertook this sizable project in spite of the fact that just recently this government gave taxpayers'

dollars to a competitor of his. I would . . . He finds himself in the uncomfortable position of having to compete with his own tax dollars, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Keyser on undertaking such a feat. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Places Rated Almanac

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to refer members to a recent publication called the *Places Rated Almanac*, which describes itself, and I quote:

Your guide to finding the best places to live in the United States and Canada.

This special millennium edition of the almanac looks at and ranks 354 metropolitan areas according to a number of criteria including living costs, job outlook, education, climate, health care, the arts, and recreation. It's a good read, Mr. Speaker. I recommend it to all hon. members.

Here are just a couple of findings from the publication, which I'd like to share with you. First, in the category of education opportunities which includes school support, libraries, and university options, no. 10 on the North American list, and no. 1 in all of Canada, is not Calgary or Edmonton or Toronto, Mr. Speaker — no. No. 1 in Canada, Mr. Speaker, is my home city of Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Here's an even better one, Mr. Speaker. An even better one. In a list of North America's 20 best small metro areas with a population of under 250,000 based on quality of life, once again first in Canada is Saskatoon, second in Canada is Regina. Just one publication's opinion, you might say. It could be, Mr. Speaker, but I say it's a very wise opinion.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

2002-2003 Imperial Oil Mixed Curling Championships

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from March 13 to 17 the Estevan Curling Club hosted the 2002-2003 Imperial Oil Mixed Curling Championships. It was evident that a lot of hard work, skill, and sportsmanship went into this event. But also evident was the fact that new friendships were made, old friendships renewed — friendships that will last long after the last rock was thrown.

Mr. Speaker, last Sunday the Yorkton team of Bryan Derbowka, Kathy Trowell, Gerry Adams, and Karen Cottenie were crowned provincial mixed champions. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Bryan and his team as well as extending our best wishes as they compete for the national title in Abbotsford, BC (British Columbia) in January 2003.

I would also like to recognize Kent Rodgers and all the

volunteers of the Estevan Curling Club who made this event a success. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Catholic Schools for Tomorrow Award

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the first time a Canadian school division has won the Catholic Schools for Tomorrow Award. Mr. Speaker, the award is sponsored by the journal, *Today's Catholic Teacher*, and was recently awarded to the Catholic school divisions in Saskatchewan. This award is given based on the recognition of integration of technology into the teaching and learning of students, faculty, and staff.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan submission began in May 2000 and has resulted in the development of a Web site. The Web site is Catholic Curriculum Online and can be accessed from the Catholic section link on the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) Web site — www.ssta.sk.ca.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Helen Horsman, the chairperson of the project's advisory committee and the director of education for the Moose Jaw Roman Catholic Separate School Division, will receive the award on behalf of all the province's Catholic educators on April 4, 2002.

To quote Dr. Horsman:

This initiative goes well beyond the expectations of the founding partners. The idea emerged during a simple discussion among the provincial colleagues and has developed into something that is having a profound impact on Catholic education worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all members extend their congratulations to all of the Catholic school divisions in the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care in Hafford Community

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday evening there was a public meeting concerning the lack of adequate health care in the Hafford community. The Parkland board and staff gave an update on the district's situation.

Today Hafford Hospital has acute care beds, emergency equipment, health care, and a health centre, and an attached special care home but lack one important part of health care — the Hafford Hospital does not have a doctor. The citizens of Hafford want a doctor who lives in the community supplying health care services, like they've had for decades.

The government action plan has basically closed the hospital, leaving Hafford and area residents without a doctor on a full-time basis. The action plan and Speech from the Throne spoke of the government's high priority it gave for publicly administrated health care system that is accessible to all. Hafford does not have adequate health care that is accessible to

the citizens of Hafford. When asked by the chairperson who felt they had adequate health care in Hafford, not one person in the hall put their hand up, Mr. Speaker — not one person.

This government and its action plan has failed the citizens of Hafford. Is this any way to treat the pioneers who built this area of the province? People at this meeting overwhelmingly said no. They expect better from their government and their health care system. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moose Jaw Farm Family of the Year

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, along with the Deputy Premier and the member from Moose Jaw North, I had the opportunity to attend the Moose Jaw Farm Family of the Year dinner, at which a Moose Jaw-area family was honoured.

I don't think we could have found a more deserving family than that of Doug and Melody Machmer who farm in the Baildon area. Doug and Melody began their farming life growing traditional Saskatchewan crops, and still do, Mr. Speaker. But in the past 12 years they have diversified their operation into the production and processing of organic herbs. Along the way they are providing jobs for others as well as their family.

A few years ago we could not have used the word nutraceutical and Saskatchewan in the same sentence. Thanks to pioneers like the Machmers medicinal herbs like echinacea, yellow nightshade, and sea buckthorn are now part of a progressive farm entrepreneur's vocabulary.

I am delighted the Machmer family has been recognized, Mr. Speaker, because they have taken the buzzwords of modern farming and turned them into a reality: diversification, processing, and value-added. And jobs. All these words define their operation. The Minister of Agriculture was happy to speak to their award and I'm pleased to bring their success to the attention of the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Arcola Community Raises Funds For New Rink

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the headline says, "Auction and supper pay off big-time for new rink." The Arcola community last Saturday night put on an auction and supper of over 100 items donated by the community. Arcola is a community with pride in itself and a belief in its future.

The rink burned down last September, Mr. Speaker, destroying both the skating rink and the curling rink. So the community has decided to rebuild on their own and not wait for any government money that might come — or might never come as most likely the case, Mr. Speaker. They raised \$85,000, Mr. Speaker, last Saturday night on items as varied as a weekend of farm labour by . . . with . . . donated by Darcy Singleton, was sold for \$600; pies, Mr. Speaker, which sold for \$250 each; a Michael Lonechild painting, Mr. Speaker, a well-known Native artist in the area, sold for over . . . sold for \$4,000.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, this community is carrying on in its belief of itself and will do all the hard work necessary to make their community a success and a place that welcomes people to come and visit and to live in their communities. I would ask the Assembly to congratulate the community of Arcola in raising \$85,000 from the community in one night.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Former Agriculture Minister's Contract With Government

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has now released his report on former NDP (New Democratic Party) Agriculture minister Eric Upshall. This report clearly indicates that Mr. Upshall misled the deputy minister of Agriculture in order to obtain a government contract. The report says, only after Deputy Minister Terrance Scott felt satisfied that Upshall had no direct involvement in the proposal did he agree to receive and consider the proposal. Upshall did in fact have a business interest in this survey proposal, and gave Scott incorrect information in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, Eric Upshall obtained a government contract under false pretense in direct violation of the conflict of interest Act. What steps is the Premier taking to recover the \$59,000 of taxpayers' money that was paid out under this improper contract?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that this contract has been completed, and it's been completed for some months. The contract was completed under the workmanship and penmanship of Mr. Durst. That report has been tabled to the ministry. That information from that report, Mr. Speaker, has been used in some of the work that the Department of Agriculture has been using in terms of typifying the kinds of families that we have in Saskatchewan today — rural farm families.

That report, Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated was completed in advance of any of the information that's come to us through the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's report, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Eric Upshall has now resigned, but he must be held accountable. And the fact remains that him and his partner improperly obtained \$59,000 from a contract from Sask Ag and Food — \$59,000 of taxpayers' money. And Mr. Upshall misled government officials to obtain this contract.

Will the government launch civil action against Mr. Upshall and his partner in order to recover this money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member one more time that the department, along with the federal government, commissioned the report. When we

commissioned the report, Mr. Speaker, we commissioned the report under the work of Mr. Durst. Mr. Durst completed his work for us; we have the document. We have used the document to provide us with some of the work, Mr. Speaker, that we're doing, as I've mentioned earlier, on the typifying farm families in the province.

I want to say to the member as well, that this matter, I understand, is in front of the courts. The courts are currently dealing with Mr. Upshall and Mr. Durst in having their own . . . their own event in terms of trying to sort out with whom the payment needs to rest. As far as the government is concerned, Mr. Speaker, we've received our report, Mr. Speaker, and we're using the documentation today to help us with our work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — So the question remains: will the government hold Mr. Upshall accountable?

Mr. Speaker, it is now clear that Eric Upshall misled officials and violated the conflict of interest Act. However nothing can be done about it because of two gaping loopholes in the Act. First, Mr. Upshall cannot be prosecuted because more than six months have passed. And secondly, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner cannot take any action against him because he is not a current member.

Mr. Speaker, this section of the Act specifically deals with former members, yet the Conflict of Interest Commissioner has no power to investigate former members. It does not make any sense.

Will the government take immediate action to close loopholes that allowed Eric Upshall to violate the conflict of interest Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member, and I'm sure she's full aware of this because yesterday the Premier had indicated when he was asked by the media — what will you do with this piece of legislation? — what the Premier had clearly said, and I say to the House today, that this legislation will come back; there are amendments that we will be making to the legislation to close the kind of concerns that the member has raised and we have raised.

But I want to say to the member opposite and to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is the legislation that this government brought forward.

This isn't something that the opposition had one day woke up and said, we should have conflict of interest legislation in this province.

We brought the legislation forward and we put the legislation before the people of Saskatchewan, and now we realize that that legislation should be strengthened. And this government is going to strengthen this legislation and the way in which we work on behalf of Saskatchewan people and the province's people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ownership of Great West Brewing Company

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). Yesterday we learned that the NDP government through the Crown Investment Corporation has converted its \$2 million debenture in Great Western Brewery into equity shares.

Reportedly this was very, very unexpected by the board of directors and other shareholders of Great Western. There was no discussion, no indication that CIC was about to make this move. It was a pure and simple — in one fell swoop — takeover, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister: when did this minister get such an uncontrollable craving to own a beer company? Why did CIC convert its debenture so suddenly and without any indication of its intentions to the board or shareholders of this company?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that back in 1995 the employees came to Crown Investments Corporation looking for assistance.

Mr. Speaker, back in 1995 Crown Investments Corporation, through its investment, essentially had 80 per cent ownership. What has just occurred in the last day is the conversion of a debenture, Mr. Speaker. It clarifies the ownership of the corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I think the employees of Great Western Brewing have been very appreciative of Crown Investment's investment, and I'm sure that we look forward to a relationship into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a big difference between being . . . having a debt or owning equity in the company, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we think it would be a good idea if CIC would now offer its equity shares for sale. It would remove the government from a majority controller of the brewing company, into the private sector, by offering the shares up for sale.

Members of the Great Western board believe that CIC is positioning itself to sell the shares and would become . . . that option. Yet, Mr. Minister . . . the minister told *The StarPhoenix* that selling the shares is not the intention at all.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister, if it is not CIC's intention to reduce taxpayers' exposure by selling shares, why so sudden a move of a 80 per cent equity in this company?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what the Chair of Great Western board, Vaughn Wyant said. Vaughn said that Great Western would not have

survived, Mr. Speaker, without CIC's financial help in the mid-1990s, and CIC has been patient, and I quote:

. . . has been patient waiting for . . . (revenues) . They have been the beneficial owner, (he says), of 80 per cent of the brewery anyway.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the member's question about sale of the company. It is no secret, Mr. Speaker, that Crown Investments Corporation, in its investment strategy and investment policy, given the right scenario, is prepared to divest itself of the investment. No big secret; we've said that all the time, Mr. Speaker.

In this particular . . . with respect to this particular investment, there is not any apparent sale right now, Mr. Speaker. But as a policy-maker, as a member of cabinet, Mr. Speaker, given the right scenario, absolutely we would consider selling it. But the business needs to stay in Saskatchewan, and needs to employ Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, a few years ago Great Western needed support from CIC, and CIC came through. Now the company . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — . . . but now the company is on solid ground, thanks to the efforts of the management, staff, and employee owned of this successful company.

CIC has an opportunity to recoup their investment, reduce the risk to taxpayers, and let the company continue to grow and prosper in the private sector, Mr. Speaker. Yet the minister seems intent to retain control of the brewing company.

We want to know why. If they're not going to sell, Mr. Speaker, will the minister please explain why they were in such a risk . . . in such a hurry to take an equity position in this company?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, here's what Ron Waldman this morning, also a shareholder in the company, said on the John Gormley show live this morning. He said that had CIC not acted as a venture capitalist and had not been available to the company in 1995, it is most likely — it is very highly likely — that Great Western Brewing Company would have not been an operating entity today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, CIC invested in this company because we saw the value in keeping that company here in Saskatchewan, employing Saskatchewan people, and working with and partnering with the private sector, Mr. Speaker; not selling it off like those members would have done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is our intent, as is with all of the investments in Crown Investments Corporation, Mr. Speaker, we would be prepared to sell them when the right scenario exists. That

scenario does not exist with this company right now, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this now creates a very interesting situation. This is the same NDP government that regulates sales of beer, wholesales beer, retails beer, and now the government is a major owner of one of the biggest beer companies in this company, Mr. Speaker. Does this not open the doors for conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker?

There are many other brewing companies in this country and also in Saskatchewan that are wondering how this will affect their market share — competing against the provincial government which they pay taxes to, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that this is the same minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'd like to be able to hear the member's question in its entirety.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that this is the same minister that last year was out on the Fishing Lakes with a bottle of Captain Morgan. Now he's become the provincial brewmeister — or should I say minister — of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister outline today what steps the government is taking to ensure that there is no conflict of interest now that the NDP is not only the brewer, the wholesaler, the retailer, and the regulator of beer sales in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I remind members in this Assembly and I remind the people of Saskatchewan that that's the same party, the same members over there that told us to sell our interests in the Bi-Provincial Upgrader, Mr. Speaker, when we would have lost hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker — hundreds of millions of dollars. We will not take advice from them about when we should sell, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I want to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to what their leader said and so the people of Saskatchewan understand that everything is up for sale with that party — everything in its power. I refer members to a speech to the Saskatoon business community by the leader of their party, Mr. Speaker. He said, and I quote:

Premier Campbell expects to save millions of taxpayers' dollars through his review, money that will be used to finance his aggressive agenda of personal and business tax cuts and balance the budget.

A Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker, will launch a similar, core services review in this province within 30 days of taking office, Mr. Speaker. They want to sell everything, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Investment in Retx

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to talk about jobs in Saskatchewan. I have another question for the minister. His government, the NDP government, has now invested, spent \$20 million on a company called Retx, which is an Atlanta, Georgia based dot-com.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could tell the House how many jobs in the province of Saskatchewan has this 20-million-dollar taxpayer investment resulted in?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's Retx. But last Friday, Mr. Speaker, I stood in my very spot right here and announced the expansion of digital cellular service . . . Internet service, I should say, into 191 additional communities in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — 191 more, into many of the communities that they represent, Mr. Speaker.

SaskTel in its investments like with Retx, Mr. Speaker, has earned some \$157 million above and beyond its expenses. Now, Mr. Speaker, if that member cannot connect the dots between revenue earned, Mr. Speaker — \$157 million — and service delivered in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how he will ever understand.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we fully intend to connect all of the dots today, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't answer the question. We asked how many jobs has this \$20 million investment in Atlanta, Georgia created in Saskatchewan? He didn't answer the question, Mr. Speaker, because the answer is zero.

According to Mr. Ching, the CEO of SaskTel, Don Ching, he has indicated that there has been one job created for a Saskatchewan person but that's in Atlanta, Georgia.

So the question to the minister is fairly simple, Mr. Speaker. How is a \$20 million investment in an Atlanta, Georgia based dot-com company, how does that benefit Saskatchewan? How does that grow the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, Mr. Speaker, if that member can't connect the dots as I describe it, then there is a problem over there, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, jobs are important. I acknowledge that point — jobs are important; of course they are. But \$157 million revenue brought back into here into Saskatchewan is also important, Mr. Speaker. Does that keep jobs in Saskatchewan? Of course it keeps jobs in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that member said that it's important and they get up here day after day talking about increased service in rural

Saskatchewan; we need cellular service in rural Saskatchewan. Of course we need cellular service in rural Saskatchewan. But we can only do it and we need to pay for it somehow — it's by getting and earning revenues from investments that we make and SaskTel has done a very good job of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister said that it's not important how many jobs this company has created in Saskatchewan; what's important is how much profit it's generated for SaskTel. That's what the minister said. So the question to the minister is this: how much profit has Retx generated for SaskTel?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, as I have said, SaskTel has a number of investments. Their record will show that they have done very well with their investments, Mr. Speaker. They have \$157 million in the last several years that they have brought back to our province to provide service in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I say those members over there daily get up and they ask for cellular service in rural Saskatchewan. They ask for cell service, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to say to the people of Saskatchewan, I'll tell you what cell service you'll get from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is to sell every Crown we own. That's the sell service you'll get from them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to announce the opposition policy on Crown corporations. I'll tell you what that policy doesn't include. It doesn't include hare-brained schemes like this, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't include putting the interests of a dot-com in Georgia ahead of the interests of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't answer the question. How much profits has Retx brought in to SaskTel? He didn't answer it, Mr. Speaker, because the answer is zero. The answer is that in the first year of this Crown corporation's investment in this company, SaskTel on behalf of the taxpayers lost \$265,000. How does investing \$20 million in Georgia, creating no jobs in the province, and losing money so SaskTel has less money for cellular coverage, how does that benefit the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that member's criticisms are ridiculous. Today we have the member, Mr. Speaker, from Watrous petitioning us to provide high-speed Internet into her area, Mr. Speaker — petitioning us to do it. How do we do that, Mr. Speaker? You need money to do that — you need money to do it.

SaskTel has a very good record as I have indicated. They have over . . . earned over a \$150 million by way of their investments. Every year they . . . in the last number of years, every year they put money into rural Saskatchewan. In the last number of years, SaskTel has invested over a billion dollars into rural Saskatchewan by way . . . (inaudible) . . . one billion

dollars. But you need to pay for it somehow, Mr. Speaker. Part of that is through the investments that we've made abroad and in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SaskTel has just pumped another \$2.6 million into Retx. Why? Well, Don Ching, tells us why — the hand-picked NDP CEO of SaskTel. He says, and I quote:

The market has really tightened up with regard to this sort of company. You look around at any company that has a requirement for funds and doesn't have an investor like ourselves (meaning SaskTel) those companies have gone bankrupt.

In other words if Retx didn't have the NDP pumping millions of dollars into it down there in Atlanta, Georgia, they might go bankrupt.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP risking millions of taxpayers' dollars to potentially protect an Atlanta company from bankruptcy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again we have the expert from Swift Current getting up advising us about our investment strategy, Mr. Speaker — the expert. And I'll remind you — and I'll remind you, and I'll remind the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, what that expert advice would have cost us last year had we listened to him about the investment in SaskEnergy, Mr. Speaker. It would have cost us in the hundreds . . . not in the hundreds but the tens and twenties of million dollars, Mr. Speaker, it would have cost us.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel has a very good record as it pertains to investments, Mr. Speaker. A very good record as it pertains to investments. They need to earn this revenue so that they can provide the services right across this great province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP has already pumped \$20 million into this Atlanta-based dot-com company. But it doesn't end there. Don Ching says the company will likely need more money by the end of summer. In fact, one industry expert, the managing director of Kinetic Ventures says Retx, quote . . . here's a quote, Mr. Speaker:

Will need some big names and deep pockets to create a presence.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, they need a pigeon and, here, the clucking is coming from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, because they found their pigeon in the NDP and SaskTel. And it doesn't stop at \$20 million.

Don Ching says he's prepared to give this company more. Mr. Speaker, how many more taxpayers' dollars will the NDP risk on this Atlanta-based dot-com company before they put the

interests of Saskatchewan ahead of the interests of a dot-com in Georgia?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — They don't like when we invest outside of Saskatchewan and when we invest inside Saskatchewan, they say we're competing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker, unless you want to sell the Crowns and that's exactly what they want to do. They want to sell every one of them, Mr. Speaker.

I want to refer you to a poll, a CTV (Canadian Television Network Limited) poll that was done just last week, Mr. Speaker. It says:

We asked you whether you thought the government should sell off Crown corporations to raise money.

And you responded overwhelmingly and decisively. Only one in three said yes: 32 per cent of the respondents favour the sale of Crowns; 68 per cent said no. You, Mr. Member, are on the wrong side of the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would ask the Minister of CIC never to speak directly to somebody opposite, but speak to the Speaker. Stick with it.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Don Ching is quoted in the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* saying:

SaskTel will keep pumping money into Retx no matter what.

He says, and I quote:

If the venture market remains tight and Retx cannot secure funding from other sources, SaskTel is committed to seeing the company succeed.

He says:

In the end, if there was no other capital available to Retx, we would not allow the company to starve.

That's incredible, Mr. Speaker. This comes from a government that has been pleading poverty. This comes from a government that doesn't have enough money for crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. They don't have enough money for municipalities. They don't have enough money for the North Battleford water supply, but they have \$20 million and more for an Atlanta-based dot-com company. Mr. Speaker, where is this government's priorities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — And, Mr. Speaker, those investments —

those \$20 million investments — have brought \$157 million back to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask that member, the member for the party that belongs to a free enterprise . . . supposedly believes in free enterprise, Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with profit all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker? What's wrong with profit? They bring \$157 million back to Saskatchewan to provide the services that I stood up and announced here last Friday, Mr. Speaker, and somehow there's something wrong with that, Mr. Speaker. I do not understand what the criticism is about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 3 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 4 — The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 4, The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2002, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 5 — The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 5, The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Amendment Act, 2002, be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 6 — The Horned Cattle Purchases Amendment Act, 2002

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, The Horned Cattle Purchases Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, before orders of the day, I would like to table a report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library for the period ending March 31, 2001.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Prebble, seconded by Mr. Forbes, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Toth.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand in proud support of the Throne Speech today and to focus and certainly bring some of the issues to the front here in terms of what the Throne Speech is trying to bring about in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I really commend the Government of Saskatchewan and our government for having the courage to make some of the of changes, Mr. Speaker, over the number of years that they have served in government.

And one of the key components, Mr. Speaker, of the Throne Speech is the whole thing about families — the theme of families.

And before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how proud I am to be here on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca and to espouse the values of Saskatchewan as a whole and certainly to talk about families.

But before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, I want to, if the Assembly will indulge for a few minutes, to pay, to pay a special tribute to my colleague and to my friend and to somebody that has blazed a trail many years before me. And of course that is the member from Cumberland.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Cumberland served this Assembly for many, many years and a very proud career he did have. And as I mentioned, he blazed a trail for many people.

And I think a lot of people throughout the North and throughout the province can certainly thank him as well for being a role model and for certainly for being a person that has held his position in esteem, and something that he has prided himself over the years of holding for the time that he did hold office.

I want to point out that when he talks about family, he appreciates, in some of his comments, Mr. Speaker, of the value that he received from his siblings and from his mother and from his father and from his community of Cumberland House and of course, the constituents of Athabasca.

And it's always important that we pay tribute, not that he is going to leave very soon, Mr. Speaker; I'm hoping he's here for at least another two years if not three years. And the person that's going to replace him, if it's a male or a female, has got some very big shoes to fill, Mr. Speaker.

And I just want to quote from a *Northern Focus* article, one of the papers that he certainly implemented as minister of Northern Affairs. He talked about being involved in politics for 16 years, Mr. Speaker. And he actually came from the bush.

And many of his discussions and conversations in the interview, Mr. Speaker, centred on family. And I think it's important that we pick up on that because he talks about his mother; he talks about his father; he talks about his trapper's cabin and the trapping life that he led as a young man. But he also talks about his brothers and sisters.

And I want to point out that Cumberland House has given us one of the most impressive families that ever graced this earth, and I want to just very quickly quote some of his comments in recognizing his fellow brothers and sisters, themselves an impressive people.

And first of all, and I quote from the article, Mr. Speaker:

Josie runs an Aboriginal languages unit at Northern Lights School Division. Brenda is with Justice in The Pas. Millie's in public relations at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre. Arlene is with INAC and Monica is a program coordinator at Joe Duquette. My brother Dean is a Northlands College director in Creighton. And Arthur, who died when he was 23, was a founding member of *New Breed*.

So it really goes to show you that we have one of the many successful Goulet family members here in the Assembly. And I can tell you that as a member of northern Saskatchewan community and as a member of the Aboriginal community, that certainly the Goulet name is one name that we will respect, admire, and certainly hold in high esteem for some of the accomplishments they have had as a whole family, but more so through my friend and colleague, Mr. Goulet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, again I am quoting from the article and I mentioned the member's name, Mr. Speaker. And I want to point out that 16 years of this Assembly — a number of years in opposition and of course a number of years in government — there's been just absolutely tremendous advancements made in northern Saskatchewan.

And we go through the list of things that he has done — everything from the forestry file to the commercial fishing file, working with the trappers, of course being the first-ever Métis cabinet member — that all of that is so very, very much important.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, above all else the qualities that he endeared and certainly brought to the office was the fact that he always kept his roots; he always remembered where he came from. He kept his language — it was very strong. And certainly today as we can see, he's going back to education from whence he came from.

So I think — I'm not sure I used that phrase right — but I just want to point out that he is going back to education. He knows that's his higher calling — certainly not as high as this but

certainly equal — in terms of trying to teach many young people about not only politics, but many other aspects of life as well.

And I wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the reason why families is an important theme — important theme in this speech. It talks about secure, safe families. It talks about employment. It talks about all the opportunities of the family unit. And more so . . . and I think the whole concept of family talks about all families, Mr. Speaker, whether you're non-Aboriginal, Aboriginal, or not; that doesn't matter. As long as we're family, we're able to build on each other's strengths and successes and go from there.

Well, in reference to the opposition, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to also point out some of their fatal flaws. When the Governor General visited Saskatchewan, one of the things that Her Honour . . . Her Excellency pointed out was the fact that Saskatchewan, the province of Saskatchewan . . . the quote that she used was that there's a province that turned adversity into opportunity, Mr. Speaker. And that really says a lot about the people out there in Saskatchewan, about how they are able to be very, very tough, resilient people that are able to adapt to many changes.

And as I stand here as a member of government, and we talk about families, I recognize that family of people out there that stuck together and that build Saskatchewan. And what's the most amazing thing to me, Mr. Speaker, about this opposition is no matter what is being done by the families, by the business communities, by the communities in general, and by people as a whole, this doom and gloom opposition party continues to call down Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to them — and I say to them, they are doing a great injustice to the people of Saskatchewan, to our history, and to what people in the rest of the country perceive us as in Saskatchewan, and that is a province that turns adversity into opportunity.

Now again, we looked at some of the examples, Mr. Speaker, they talk about opportunity in Saskatchewan. The second thing out of their lips when it comes to opportunity, Mr. Speaker, is Alberta. And what we've often referred to the Saskatchewan Party as, Mr. Speaker, is the Alberta envy party.

And the people of Saskatchewan have said to me time and time again: if the Saskatchewan Party do not believe in Saskatchewan, if they are intent on doom and gloom, if they are intent on showing that Saskatchewan is for sale, Mr. Speaker, and if they love Alberta so much . . . they are off to Calgary steady to try and get some money for their little political challenge here in the province, and if they love that province so much; and they have no confidence in Saskatchewan — well, we'll see you later; move there. We got a province to build, Mr. Speaker, and that province is called Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, we have families in this province that wants to turn adversity into opportunity, and all we hear from that party every day — every day, Mr. Speaker — is doom and gloom, doom and gloom.

And what do they do, Mr. Speaker? They attack our health care, Mr. Speaker. They attack our highway system, Mr. Speaker. They attack our Crowns.

Is there anything that that party likes in Saskatchewan? We on this side wouldn't mind hearing about it once in a while, Mr. Speaker. And the people of Saskatchewan wouldn't mind hearing about that once in a while too, Mr. Speaker. My plea to them, Mr. Speaker, is show some confidence, show some confidence in your own province. Show some confidence that business people will come and certainly many families and many communities will get on the bandwagon and will start building Saskatchewan as a family of communities, as a family of people, to become a very proud province that turns adversity into opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I beg and I plead with the Sask Party, stop spreading your doom and gloom. And every day, Mr. Speaker, every day, every day they come into this Assembly and no matter what you do it's bad; it's bad. And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, the census . . . we talk about the census of the province as a whole . . . is that census will be updated and you will see that there are many more numbers in Saskatchewan than that party would like us to believe.

Those numbers will go up, Mr. Speaker, because people are coming home and they do believe in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now I think the most incredible thing that I've seen in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, is how in the world could you be so negative and have so much doom and so much gloom and non-confidence in Saskatchewan, and yet you want to be elected. Mr. Speaker, I think, I think that party is not knowing where they're going or what their message is, and that's why the people of Saskatchewan will never have them on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, never.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We stand up, we stand up as a family in this community, as a family in this province, and we're going to defend Saskatchewan and her interests, Mr. Speaker, to the hilt. And we're not going to go looking for answers in Calgary or Edmonton or Toronto, Mr. Speaker. We are going to look for answers in Ile-a-la-Crosse, we are going to look for answers in Saskatoon, we're going to look for answers in Balgonie, Mr. Speaker — not in Calgary, not in Edmonton. If you want to go find answers there, we'll see you later.

Mr. Speaker, and the other most confusing thing about the opposition, Mr. Speaker, they are a confused lot, Mr. Speaker. They vote right but spend left. They vote right but spend left, Mr. Speaker. They vote right but spend left. I can't figure that out. How do you do that? On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we have a balanced approach: north, west, rural, urban, Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal — the balance, Mr. Speaker, is here. On that side it's a confused lot.

And every time they get up and ask a question: (a) they attack Saskatchewan; (b) they don't know where they're going; (c) they have no plan; and (d) all they want to do is make sure that they continue with their mantra of spending left and voting

right.

(14:30)

So as a result of that confusion, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will say no — no to the Saskatchewan Party and no to their non-belief in Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to them, I say to them shame on you.

The Speaker: — Order. Members all know that all remarks are made to the Speaker and the Speaker does not really appreciate being told shame on you. Please keep that in mind.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to point out, I think the thing that's very, very important in my whole analysis of where the opposition refuses to recognize the positiveness of Saskatchewan and the families we have in Saskatchewan, the economy, the environment, and all the things we're trying to balance, Mr. Speaker, is to tell them to get with the program. Get with the program because you are elected here in Saskatchewan. You are supposed to represent your Saskatchewan values, your province.

And instead of doom and gloom and trying to tear down this province, why don't you get up once in a while and say, yeah, we are proud of something and this is what we're proud of. We have not heard that from that opposition for day after day after day in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And I will point out as well, Mr. Speaker, I will point as well that the people of Saskatchewan, the people that have left the province, they are looking at Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And look at some of the values we have. And I'll just give the Alberta-envy party a little example.

Number one is Alberta may have 7,000 freshwater lakes, Mr. Speaker. We in Saskatchewan, we have 94,000, Mr. Speaker — not 9,400 — 94,000, Mr. Speaker. We are . . . Actually, Mr. Speaker we have the most lakes, and I think in western Canada, than any other province. And we have a beautiful province and we have many things that can be offered in tourism, in fishing, and the list goes on and on.

I will point out, Mr. Speaker, to begin to espouse some of the values of Saskatchewan and some of the confidence and optimism that we should have to believe in this province, Mr. Speaker, then many people will come back.

Mr. Speaker, I have no question, I have no question in my mind that our Saskatchewan folks, Manitoba folks, Alberta, Ontario, they will come here. They will come home, to a home that is tolerant, to a home with a plan for the future, an exciting economy, and a place that welcomes all.

But the first step we have to do is we have to have a good attitude, Mr. Speaker. And I say to every man, woman or family that left this province, they probably heard the Leader of the Opposition's speech or one of the Sask Party's speech somewhere, they became depressed, and then they left, Mr. Speaker. What kind of opposition party is that? Are they opposed to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you there are

many times I listen to their speeches and I feel like leaving. I think there is no hope here, Mr. Speaker. I figure that the Calgary streets are paved with gold, according to them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a great province and it's time that we tell the Saskatchewan Party, up your attitude.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Now I ask the member one more time to be very careful about the way he phrases his sentences and to please make all remarks to the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Your . . . The other point I made is very important, Mr. Speaker, in terms of attitude, is that we begin to spread that message. And now I'll point out to you that one of the quotes I'm looking at. And this of course is part of the *National Post* article — the eastern *National Post*, I might add. And in Toronto, Mr. Speaker, where they point out and the headline reads, "Saskatchewan: not the biggest, just the best."

Now I'll read it out again, Mr. Speaker, for our Saskatchewan Party colleagues across the way. "Saskatchewan . . ." In case they haven't heard it — "Saskatchewan: not the biggest, just the best." So if the eastern media, Mr. Speaker, talks about how well Saskatchewan is doing, how well Saskatchewan is doing, then why don't they get it, Mr. Speaker? Why don't they get it?

And, Mr. Speaker, we talk about families. We talk about families, again continuing with the theme of families. I want to point out that we look at the Aboriginal community as a vital — a vital component of our Saskatchewan. It's very important that we recognize that. Saskatchewan within the next 10, 15 years has . . . we have got indication that approximately one-third of our provincial population will be of Aboriginal ancestry, Mr. Speaker.

Now there is two ways you can approach it. We can have the doom and gloom scenario as proposed by the Saskatchewan Party or the Alberta envy party or we can do what we're doing on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is we are saying we're embracing that opportunity. It is not going to be a negative, Mr. Speaker, it is going to be a positive.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, I would point out our First Nations brothers and sisters and our Métis brothers and sisters and all the Aboriginal community, they can add a tremendous amount to this province. And you ask any of those members there who have a few towns in their riding that would suffer dramatically if it wasn't for the economic buying power of many of the First Nations that live around their community. They all know, Mr. Speaker, there's many hundreds of examples of how the First Nations community and the Aboriginal community have propped up many businesses in small-town Saskatchewan through their stores, through their restaurants, through their service station, Mr. Speaker, so they add a tremendous amount to their economy. And yet what do we hear from these guys? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker, a big fat zero.

And I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, this government over the years has spent \$200 million to settle TLE (treaty land entitlement). It's a huge issue, Mr. Speaker. And at the end of the day the

TLE settlement, Mr. Speaker, will account to about 2 per cent of the total land mass of Saskatchewan. And yet \$200 million is what we're going to be putting down to assist that whole TLE process, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to . . . we're not going to do it in Alberta. Alberta's not going to do this, Mr. Speaker, and Manitoba is just beginning it. But Saskatchewan has led this file and we will continue to lead this file.

Mr. Speaker, in the North we recognize that families have challenges, families need employment, Mr. Speaker. They need to create opportunity for themselves and we have positions, Mr. Speaker, many people in forestry to become partners in the forestry . . . in the forestry industry so they don't sit back and cheerlead the economy of forestry; that they're an integral part of forestry, that they own some of these forestry opportunities, and that they direct and control the forestry activities in and around their communities, Mr. Speaker. That's the first time that was done in North America, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest to you that it may be the last.

Mr. Speaker, as I look across the way and I see some members from Saskatchewan Rivers, I see some other people from Shellbrook, and they've got a lot of good forestry opportunity there, Mr. Speaker. Good for them. We're proud of that. We want to be part of that.

Now the moment they get up and criticize some of the forestry activity in the North, all of a sudden we say well what's wrong here? You've had the opportunity. You've had the opportunity.

I looked at the member from Saskatchewan Rivers all day yell across here a number of negative things that Saskatchewan is doing, and yet in his own home riding there's a great opportunity in forestry. And we say good for that opportunity to be there, good for the people of that region. Very important for the economy of Saskatchewan.

But don't criticize our northern opportunities when it comes to forestry. You should get up and you should cheerlead that particular aspect of why we think it's important that the Aboriginal community be involved.

Mr. Speaker, we've not only done the employment opportunity, whether it's TLE, whether it's forestry, whether it's ecotourism, any resource opportunity, we believe that there are families out there that need that opportunity.

And I want to go on record as well to say that we support the families to bring in basic services — basic services — to the First Nations community and the northern communities, and the small communities. SaskTel for example, Mr. Speaker, they have done a call centre in which you can do Saulteaux, Cree, or Dene. And you call there and they can converse with you in your own language, Mr. Speaker.

We also got the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Mr. Speaker.

SaskTel, they went from 30 per cent of the First Nations community to 65 per cent hookup, Mr. Speaker. That's an incredible jump from 30 to 65 per cent.

We have spent in SaskTel, \$25 million in the South and \$39 million in the North to make sure people and families in the North and in the First Nations community have opportunity to do Internet, the telephone, and the basic service many of us in southern Saskatchewan take for granted.

Mr. Speaker, when their provincial cousins were in power they spent \$300 million in SaskEnergy hookups. And I can tell you that six First Nations were hooked up at that time, Mr. Speaker — six.

I can tell you today that this government has certainly got close to 60 — 10 times the amount of First Nations community hooked up to natural gas. And, Mr. Speaker, that supports many families — bringing down those heating costs, Mr. Speaker. And this government done that.

If you look at the number of agreements we have, in particular with SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority), there's 900-plus workers, Mr. Speaker — 900 plus.

You look at the Cree courts; for the first time in history we have two Aboriginal judges. And that's something that we should all be very proud of.

We have The Métis Act, the recognition of the Métis veterans, Mr. Speaker, the flag, the cart, and all of course the historical communities of Cumberland House, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Green Lake, and the list goes on.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have had some great success. But they're not resting on our laurels. We know that there's much more work that needs to be done.

So on this side of the House we believe in the families, Mr. Speaker. Families of Aboriginal ancestry and families of non-Aboriginal ancestry. We believe of including both families into one solid economy that'll serve all the people of Saskatchewan for years to come.

Now last year we thought it was very important that we look at the response from the opposition — what was the opposition going to do, Mr. Speaker. And there's no question, no questions on the positive developments of what this government has been trying to put in place, Mr. Speaker. No recognition of some of the northern challenges, Mr. Speaker.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, they, along with the member from North Battleford, tried to hoist The Métis Act. They tried to hoist The Métis Act, and we stood up and we said no, that Act is not going to be hosted . . . hoisted; that Act is going to be proclaimed, Mr. Speaker.

And that Métis Act is a good Act, Mr. Speaker. It has a lot of challenges ahead of it but it will, in the final analysis, in the final days, prove to be a very valuable Act recognizing the Métis people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, they tried to hoist that Act. And the question I had, the question I have is: why would you hoist it? What is the logic behind hoisting that Métis Act.

There was no logic, Mr. Speaker. There was pure politics.

There's pure doom and gloom and there is no belief in the fact that this Métis Act, from that side of the House, could work well for the Métis people. They stood up and they voted against it, Mr. Speaker, and that should be entered for the record.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to my earlier comment today — Saskatchewan, not the biggest, just the best.

And I say today that as a member of this Assembly and as a member of the Aboriginal community, that we are incorporating, we are incorporating Aboriginal values, Aboriginal players, and Aboriginal people in this particular government to make sure that they are side by side with us to development that bold, new economy and that brave new world, Mr. Speaker.

And what I would suggest is that many on the opposition side like to stoke the differences between First Nations and Métis people and the non-Aboriginal community. For what purpose, Mr. Speaker? To divide Saskatchewan. To have that doom and gloom pervade throughout the land. But, Mr. Speaker, we are not having none of it.

We recognize, we recognize some of the challenges, Mr. Speaker, as a province. Every province has that challenge. But as always, I tell my colleagues and I tell this government to take a trip back to two, three, four, five years and see what was done and where we began.

Mr. Speaker, we were \$15 billion in debt in 1991; thanks to that PC (Progressive Conservative) government — \$15 billion in debt. And today, many people in Saskatchewan, as I mentioned time again . . . time and time again, that they said we're tired of hearing the debt. Well on this side of the House, we're tired of paying it, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll point out that \$650 million we're paying in interest could be of significant value to our roads and to our health care and the list goes on and on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important, very important that we again focus on the opposition. And I get in here; I listen to some of their comments. They attack the Crowns. They attack health care. They attack the government. They attack the business community. They attack all the people out there that they're supposed to be working with. And I wonder why are they so negative, Mr. Speaker.

Their whole premise, every time they get up from their chairs their whole premise is to make sure that they make Saskatchewan look bad. And I say they should take that Saskatchewan name out of that party; just put it the negative party or the doom and gloom party or the Calgary party. Because if they don't believe in Saskatchewan and people are sensing that, then they should never have that proud Saskatchewan name in front of that party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, there are many challenges, there are many challenges we have. And I think the Speech from the Throne sets the tone that we believe in ethanol; we believe in the agricultural community; we believe in the Aboriginal community; we believe in Saskatchewan.

It sets the tone of belief, Mr. Speaker. It sets a tone of confidence and of optimism. And the big question I have to all the people of Saskatchewan that is listening today, Mr. Speaker, is I would ask them, I would ask them is number one is, why don't you believe in Saskatchewan? And number two, number two I'm going to ask them is why do you vote right and spend left? That's the big question I have. Why do you . . .

The Speaker: — Just a little help to the member. Why don't they vote or believe? They instead of you.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask why they vote right and spend left. And every bit of good, Mr. Speaker, they have deliberately ignored it — every bit of good.

And I often sit down with the Minister of Finance and I say we've got the best Finance minister in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Eight years in a row we've balanced the budget, Mr. Speaker. We've paid down debt and never forget where we began from, Mr. Speaker. We have been fair to rural Saskatchewan, we've been fair to urban Saskatchewan, we've been fair to northern Saskatchewan, we've looked at the First Nations community, we looked at the non-First Nations, we looked at health, highways — the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

So today instead of celebrating that success — proud accomplishment and we hear of all these Dominion Bond companies saying Saskatchewan is doing a wonderful job — and all of a sudden we come here and we listen to the so-called financial experts on the other side saying, oh no, no, no, no everything's going haywire here. Well, Mr. Speaker, I tell them today nothing has gone haywire. The only thing that has gone haywire sometimes is their thinking and their math, Mr. Speaker. We see it every day in this Assembly.

So I want to point out that the Throne Speech talks about many, many values but the value I think is so very important is the family value. And I urge them, Mr. Speaker, to have the courage — to have the courage to be inclusive of all Saskatchewan families, the Aboriginal community and the non-Aboriginal community.

And I also encourage them to have the courage to believe in Saskatchewan businesses, to believe in Saskatchewan because I don't know and I don't believe that they do. And all I think that all the people of Saskatchewan are doing is climbing to the highest hill in the province of Saskatchewan, our highest peak, and yelling from that highest peak, we believe in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they got to do that. They haven't done this. On this side we absolutely, totally believe in Saskatchewan and all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And again, Mr. Speaker, I will point out, I will point out to Saskatchewan the headline reads:

“Saskatchewan: not the biggest, just the best.”

And what I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, again, again the people of Saskatchewan are pleading with the Saskatchewan Party, either take Saskatchewan out of your name or start believing in our province. We know they don't. We know they don't, Mr. Speaker. We know they do not believe in Saskatchewan. Otherwise they'd stop calling down Saskatchewan and they'd start building up our communities. And they are simply not doing that, Mr. Speaker.

And I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that in my closing remarks is that if we take a few minutes — if we take a few minutes, Mr. Speaker — just to think, to reflect of the accomplishments we have had over the last four or five years, that is why we call that the envy party, the envy party right across the way.

And it's very confusing, not only to us but to them too as well, as to some of their logic and some of their attack and some of their math. And I can say that in terms of their plan for Saskatchewan, people in my office don't say Grow Saskatchewan; after they hear one of their speeches, they groan Saskatchewan.

You know, and you look at the Leader of the Opposition. They talk about this brand new economy, they talk about a hundred thousand people — if the weather's right, we might do it. Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I can see the gates are down, the lights are flashing — gates are down, lights are flashing, but the train ain't arriving, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are many holes, there are many holes in the Saskatchewan Party's platform. And we will begin to dissect, we will begin to dissect that plan over this coming session, Mr. Speaker, so people in Saskatchewan will know what they stand for, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we let our issues be known. We are very proud of what we've done, and this is our plan for the future. But I would challenge every person in Saskatchewan is to check them out, Mr. Speaker. Where do they stand? Where do they stand on the Crowns? Where do they stand on private health care? Where do they stand on the number of issues, Mr. Speaker?

They refuse to answer because they know their answer will not be accepted by Saskatchewan, and it's better to sit there looking silly and asking silly questions as opposed to coming forward with a good solid strategy, Mr. Speaker. And I submit to you today that is their strategy, clear and simple.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to spend a few minutes on my constituency. First I want to thank my home community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, and the constituency of Athabasca, I believe, next to Cumberland is one of the largest constituencies in the province. I believe Cumberland and Athabasca share half the land mass. And I believe it's about 125,000 square miles, Mr. Speaker.

And I have about 25 communities in my constituency. Uranium City and Black Lake and Fond-du-Lac are of course in the far

North, and the furthest southern community is Green Lake, Dore Lake, and Sled Lake. And between them we have the communities of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Beauval, La Loche, and Turnor Lake. And the furthest east we have in terms of a community, Mr. Speaker, is Pinehouse. And of course the furthest west we have is the Canoe Lake First Nations.

And I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's an exciting part of the province. There are many opportunities, and as always I'm very glad to share some of the successes of the Athabasca constituency and to point out that many families in that area are very proud to be part of this government, very proud of some of the work that was done. They know there's a lot of work to be done yet, but they're continuing to work alongside of us.

So today, Mr. Speaker, in my final comment I'll stand that I say . . . I stand here today in very, very proud and undying support for the Throne Speech. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — . . . here in the Assembly. I want to welcome the new member from Saskatoon Idylwyld. Welcome to the Assembly. It's good to see you. And I want to welcome all the Pages to the Assembly today.

The member from Athabasca will be very pleased to know that I want to talk about very positive things today. I want to talk about successes. I'm here to represent the Watrous constituency, and I'm very proud to do so.

Watrous is . . . Very wonderful people live in the Watrous constituency. They're progressive, they're hard working, they're conscientious, very compassionate people, and they demonstrate Saskatchewan's reputation for being wonderful volunteers. They have a strong sense of community and they have a willingness to do the work. The people of the Watrous constituency pull together, and in spite of all the odds against them and in spite of the challenges that rural Saskatchewan faces today.

In February the Action Committee on the Rural Economy put out a report. The report was called community success stories, plans, actions and results. And in that book is a story of eight separate communities, and it tells what idea they came up with to turn around their community's decline in population. And it talks about the diversities they had in putting their ideas into place and the work that they had to do. And I was quite excited to see that two of those eight communities that were talked about and written upon were from the Watrous constituency.

The one . . . the common thread that I found in the stories was incredible leadership that we have out there in Saskatchewan among the people. They have vision, they have a plan, they have a tremendous amount of leadership abilities out there, and they're willing to do whatever it takes.

One of the stories is my hometown so it's particularly one that I know a lot about. It's about the community of Leroy. Leroy is not on a main highway. We don't even ask for money for highway. There is no highway. So they are sort of in the middle of nowhere, and they realized that their population was declining and number of the leaders in the community got

together and tried to come up with an idea of what they could do to stop it.

The idea they came up with, some people may have heard of. It was called . . . It was a field day. It was called DirectTech. It was the first that was hosted in our province. They invited a number of dealerships to come into the community and demonstrate direct seeding with their farm equipment and it had a tremendous turnout. And they repeated this for a number of years until they had the money put forward . . . or put together that they wanted and they spent it all within the community.

One of the most famous projects was putting in artificial ice in their rink and they re-did . . . renovated the whole entire rink and they had money to put into their regional park. Leroy Leisureland regional park has won awards. It's an extremely neat little park with tennis and golf and a swimming pool and one that the community should truly be proud of.

They didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker, they went on. There was a fire in the Stomp Pork Farm. They lost pretty much the entire one barn. So the community within weeks again got together and talked about what they could do. This was going to mean a loss of jobs. This was going to mean a loss of sales for local . . . or local sales for the grain in the community.

And within a matter of weeks they put together a plan for a new generation co-op and now underway is the plan and the construction for seven more hog barns, all of which will be community owned and will create jobs. It'll create spin-off industries; it'll give us a local market for our feed grains. And it stopped the out-migration within the Leroy community.

Leroy community has now stabilized and they're not losing people. The aggressiveness of the community has also attracted outside investment and fairly shortly they will be opening up a feed mill that has quite a large capacity as well.

The other story is a story about Manitou Beach and we often think of Watrous/Manitou Beach as the home of Camp Easter Seal but they too . . . and again it's a story about a fire. They lost their local chalet, which was a swimming pool. Manitou Beach is known for the water in Little Manitou Lake which is of an extremely high mineral content, and a unique mineral content that's believed to have a lot of medicinal abilities to it. And when the chalet burnt, it was at a time when the community again was failing, people were leaving.

At one time it was a resort but Saskatchewan people are going out of Saskatchewan quite often for holidays. And that's not meant to be a gloom and doom story. It's just that travel is so much easier. It is reality; we like the Disneyland's and so on and so forth.

So again it took a group of community leaders to say, what can we do? Like, are we going to just let Manitou Beach as a village fail? And they said no. And they found investment dollars within the local community, they built a health spa with an adjoining hotel. And it truly is a wonderful place.

Since then a mineral bathhouse has been built, and within the last year . . . And some people may have heard the story. There is a dance hall that's located at Manitou Beach. It's a landmark

for Saskatchewan. It's a very, very old dance hall and the dance floor is famous because the dance floor is floating on horsehair.

And the owner of Danceland wanted to sell. He wanted to go on to something else with his life. So he was considering selling it and having it moved out of Manitou Beach. The people who want to promote it as a tourist attraction again got together, put the money together, and they purchased it and are running it themselves.

Within the last year a very active group called the Manitou Beach shoreline restoration association has started. They've got a lot of support from member . . . or people who live both in Manitou Beach and in Watrous. And they're going to start cleaning up the whole area. They're going to clean the shoreline of the lake. They're going to actively put together brochures and go to trade shows and start promoting tourism. And it's a great opportunity for them. They have simply decided they're not going to let their little village die.

When you go throughout the constituency those are two stories that were written upon by the ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) Committee, but they're only two, there are so many more within the Watrous constituency.

One that I've always found humorous that comes to mind is the little town of Watson. It's located on the intersection of Highways 5 and 6. And again, they saw, you know, that their little town was starting to decline, and the town council really thought out of the box. They knew they were on a major intersection so they thought: what can we do that will stop the person driving down that highway? What will make them stop, fill up with gas, you know, maybe stop at the restaurant or whatever?

And what they did was they erected the largest Santa Claus I have ever seen or any of us will ever see, I'm sure. It's a huge, gigantic Santa Claus.

(15:00)

So not only were they thinking, you know, outside of the box, but they're also thinking who's going to make you stop on the highway and have a bite to eat, grab some snacks, fill up with fuel. But it's going to be the kids. The kids are going to see Santa Claus. They're going to want to stop. They're going to want their picture taken there.

And since that time they've also built a state-of-the-art swimming pool and they're working very hard on developing more in their golf course. So I applaud them for all their efforts.

Lanigan, it was quite exciting to have the opening of their skating rink this year. Again, a beautiful, beautiful complex also attached to their hall. And we all know the success story of Poundmaker Adventures that is located at Lanigan.

Drake, again another small village, but a small village that refuses to allow the statistics to get them down. They're the home of Bergen Industries. Bergen Industries is a farm implement industry. It makes smaller farm equipment such as grain augers, livestock trailers and so on. They're a wonderful employer to have in the local community.

And it's also the home of Drake Meats. And Drake Meats is a wonderful little story in itself, a success story in itself. It's a family owned, two-generational, specialty meats company. And I don't know whether anybody here . . . Or most of us may have bought Drake Meat farmer sausage. It's so, so popular. And they went out and they marketed their product and they've got a market Saskatchewan-wide.

They phoned me and said they're ready to expand. They were very, very disappointed that . . . They are in competition with Harvest Meats and they were very disappointed that one meat packer got extra money but they did not. They, however, are not going to leave the province. They are willing to compete and they're willing to do what it takes.

Allan is a community basically built because of the mine that's located there. But it's not that far from Saskatoon and a lot of people will drive out to the mine from Saskatoon. So they too are fighting back and the town council have put forward some incentives to have people come in to build houses in Allan. And if you build a house in Allan, you will get . . . I'm not exactly sure of the break you will get on your taxes. You might even be able to live there tax-free for a few days. And you get a break on taxes for every child you have in the town of Allan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Nokomis is in the process of building a feedlot. I've talked about this feedlot a few times in the Assembly. So it's just still in the make.

And another interesting community is the little community of Meacham. The member from Humboldt will know about the community from Meacham. That's where she's from. And the unique thing about Meacham — I don't know how many people are there, probably about 200 or a little less in Meacham — and they host the Dancing Sky Theatre, a live theatre.

And I just talked to some of the organizations . . . organizers of that theatre and they're struggling for money, there is no doubt. And I said, you know, have you thought of relocating? And she said no, we want to be . . . we want to have arts and culture in rural Saskatchewan. It's important. And they will fight to remain in the little town of Meacham. So that's quite unique.

So these are all success stories. And these are success stories because of the people and in spite of the diversities of the decline in rural Saskatchewan. And they are success stories in spite of the policies of our NDP government.

A huge concern that is coming to me from a lot of these small communities that are fighting to survive and to stabilize and even build, is the continual and the unsubstantiated hikes in their utility bills for community facilities. And it has been extremely difficult because there's been such huge increases over the last, well, over the last two years actually.

And there's one in particular that comes to mind is the small community of Guernsey; it's 120 people. And their school closed and they were accepting of that. The unit board or the division board gave them the opportunity to rent the school for \$1 a year. And they decided to do that, convert it into a community centre for the youth and run it as the community

centre and hall.

But now they are paying just under \$12,000 per year for utility bills. So it's a community of 120 people trying to raise \$12,000 just — just — to keep the doors open with the utility bills.

The community at Bradwell finally gave up. They closed their hall down. And perhaps we could charge per capita but it would mean \$100 for every man, woman, and child.

But the thing is we put so much money into youth after there is a problem. After there is a problem we say, what are we going to do and what's it going to cost — and we should. Like we should address problems that our youth have but it seems we only address them after they become visual and statistical problems.

Whereas if we would react or rather prevent . . . if we would prevent rather than just react. We should maybe look at some of these facilities. I know the Guernsey facility, they rent it out for the cadets. They have volleyball once a week and the youth can come in and play volleyball for recreation. And, you know, should there not be some, some assistance there, that's where the youth can go. And we have to think of preventing some problems, not just reacting to them once they're there.

I find all these success stories within the Watrous community — or constituency — demonstrate a vision. They demonstrate it time and time again. They demonstrate that they have a vision; they come up with a plan; they act upon that plan; and they make things happen.

Perhaps our NDP coalition government could learn something from the communities within the Watrous constituency.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — I didn't see a lot of action talked about in the Throne Speech. I didn't see a plan and I didn't see a vision — in fact sort of an airy-fairy dialogue that reannounced many initiatives that they've announced before, the year prior and a lot of them the year prior to that. There was nothing new. It boasts about three industries but all of which are industries that they put money into themselves — one of which is in direct competition to Drake Meats. They promised to study, restudy, and look at, and heaven only knows what else, but there isn't one initiative to act on anything.

In particular, I was actually quite surprised to see the introduction of the greenprint for ethanol production yet again. It was announced last session. I've had people ask me about the greenprint. The report was promised to be done by midsummer; it was promised to be done by last fall; it was promised to be done beginning of this year; and now it's announced in the Throne Speech. And in the meantime, Gary Doer is making legislative changes in Manitoba, very . . . and he's being very aggressive and progressing . . . progressive in attracting the ethanol facilities to his province and making changes that were necessary to bring them there.

So you have to kind of wonder what is our responsibility as legislators. And I don't think as a legislator that I'm responsible to know how to build an ethanol plant. And I don't feel as a

legislator that I need to know how the inside of an ethanol plant works. But I do need to ask a few questions as a legislator. Is it good for the environment? And I mean there are a lot of studies out there that says, yes it is. It isn't too hard; I don't have to remake the wheel on that one. You can access all the studies that have already been done.

We need to ask if it's good for the economy. There's a number of jurisdictions that have very proactive ethanol production happening. We could do a little bit of looking into those jurisdictions to see if it is good for the economy. And at most it's showing that it creates jobs, it's value-added industry, and it gives a local market for feed grains which heaven knows we have enough of in Saskatchewan.

Do we as legislators need to examine the potential market? Well somewhat I think we do but I suggest that most of that homework should be done by the people that want to invest in the industry. They're going to invest if they feel that there's a potential market. If there is no potential market, they're not going to invest. So instead of worrying about the market, as legislators I think we should be worrying about how to attract the investors who will worry about the market.

So the question that we should be asking is: how do we attract the investors for the ethanol industry? What do we need to change legislatively to attract the people that are going to invest in the ethanol industry?

You know if it wasn't done anywhere, if we needed to remake the wheel, if we needed to study and restudy and study this . . . But the greenprint's been announced and announced and announced, and we've yet to see this document; it hasn't really happened yet. Why aren't we picking up the phone? Like, let's pick up the phone. Let's talk to Minnesota; let's talk to Brazil; let's talk to China — find out, what did they do? What did they do to bring the industry to their jurisdiction?

Most . . . I have no doubt, having attending a number of meetings, having attended the international workshop when it was held in Minnesota, all of the jurisdictions said one of the most prior thing that they needed to do as legislators was to exempt the excise tax or whatever road tax they had on the ethanol portion of fuel. And that is one of the number one things that they all said they needed to do in order to attract and expand that industry in their jurisdiction.

And amazingly enough, at one point in time that was done in our province. It's done in all other provinces in the . . . Canada. And it was done in our province. But this government chose to reapply the road tax. Now at a time when ethanol wasn't as popular as it is today, people didn't know a lot about it, we weren't as concerned about environmental issues — at that time sales rose up to 3 million litres. When the NDP government reapplied the road tax, sales plummeted within our province to less than 500,000 litres. What does that tell them? What does that tell them about what taxing it did to our market?

It's time that we sort of quit studying it and studying it and studying it, and let's just create a level playing field within our own country. And let's do what it takes to make our environment friendly for the investors to come in. And guess what? We don't need to build an ethanol industry then. It will

build itself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — We keep on hearing time and time again, it's been sort of the excuse that comes along, that times are tough in agriculture. And don't I know it? I live in an agricultural community, and my husband and I are producers. The NDP government tends to blame agriculture for job losses, for revenue losses, for people losses. For almost every loss that we have in our province, it's agriculture's fault.

And there's some argument for it and there's some argument against it. But irregardless, if that is what they have defined to be the problem, what in the Throne Speech addresses that problem? They're promising, you know, they're promising a safety net that they promised for years and years and years. It just goes on and on with promising this and yet nothing comes of it.

Interestingly enough, they don't have in the Throne Speech that they're going to enhance crop insurance because now that we've seen the enhanced crop insurance that has higher premiums, loss of spot loss hail, it's a loss of the variable option. You know I hate to say it as a producer: please, please, please don't enhance it any more. Like we can't afford any more enhancements; it's going to break us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Along with our enhanced crop insurance that's going to cost us a great deal more money, the other thing that is hitting agriculture hard is the increase in the property . . . the education portion of property taxes.

And in the RM, the rural municipality where I live, the education portion of property tax went up 43 per cent. But a neighbouring municipality, a fellow had come to my office and he brought his taxes . . . his tax returns with him and to show me — his taxes went up 81 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

This is in a sector where we're saying we have a problem; we recognize there's a problem. It's supposedly causing out-migration, it's causing job losses, it's causing revenue losses. And how do we address the problem? Well let's take away any type of insurance they may have and up their taxes and the problem will go away . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Eighty-one per cent increase. An 81 per cent increase. How can anyone sustain those type of increases? That's not coming from outside sources; it's not the federal government's fault. It's direct taxation by a provincial government that isn't willing to take their own responsibilities because it is a provincial responsibility to educate.

(15:15)

So perhaps if we keep on doing this, it'll all wash out, I don't know. I can't imagine it. There's no mention . . . I noticed last year or the year before, they mentioned a Department of Rural Revitalization. We don't even talk about that department any more. I've never heard of anything that it's done for this province or for rural Saskatchewan.

We haven't really heard a lot . . . we've heard lots that they went on a bus tour. We haven't heard what they heard when they went on the bus tour. I'm sure when they went on their bus tour they didn't hear that we need our property taxes to be higher. And I'm sure they didn't hear, when they went on their bus tour, that we need an enhanced crop insurance that gives us a higher premium for less coverage.

There was a lot of phone calls to my office after the bus tour with that very question: what did they hear? Because it was within the last year that a lot of services in my constituency had been taken away, moved, or relocated. And they are small services. They may seem insignificant to this government, but they are important to the small communities.

One I would like to mention is in Watrous, has had a conservation officer for a number of years but that office has been now moved to Saskatoon. And it's one family. I mean it may seem very, very small but it was a family that was extremely active, working in the community. It was a family that had a number of children going to the school. They shopped locally, and they spent some time locally.

Lanigan: they took away the number of times that a licence evaluator would come. And again, it seems kind of minute but, you know, when you bring your child in to test for their licence, you're going to stop at the coffee shop, you might pick up a few groceries, there's a drugstore. It's a small thing but it's these small things that are killing our small towns. So it's important that we have these services in rural Saskatchewan and not just located in the urban centres.

The most recent concern that I'm hearing is as a result of the Fyke Commission report and the new regional health authorities. The regional health authority that the Watrous constituency is in will include Gabriel Springs, Central Plains, Living Sky, and Saskatoon. It has a population of over a quarter of the province. So the number one question is, if we have the population of over a quarter of the province, why don't we just have 4 regional health authorities instead of 12?

But the big concern is when the board was appointed, there is three rural board members, nine urban board members. So I do believe the people of the Watrous constituency have every reason to believe that they will not be represented on this board. And we have yet to hear announced how the funding will be allocated, but I am sure there could very likely be a concern there as well.

As long as this government wishes to control everything and own everything, there will always be more money taken out of the government coffers than possibly can go back in. And a very wise person once said to me that the government does not drive the economy and business does not drive the economy, but people drive the economy.

We need to grow this province. This last statistics on population is devastating for our province. And the Saskatchewan Party's plan, the Saskatchewan Party's vision, that I'm proud to be a part of, is to grow the province by 100,000 people in 10 years. And the people in this province are ready to make this happen. They have the idea. They have the determination and they have the willingness to do whatever it takes to make this happen. All

they need to do is for government to get out of their way and quit competing with them on every front that they try to do so.

It's time to end what I consider to be a disaster, social experience . . . experiment. It's proving to be far too expensive for our economy, for our population, for the future of my children and everyone else's children in this province. That is why I will not support the motion put forward by the government but I will support the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a distinct pleasure to stand today to respond to this Speech from the Throne and to do so on behalf of the constituents of Regina South that I represent. This is my seventh opportunity to respond on their behalf in this Assembly to the Throne Speech. And this Throne Speech in particular, I think sets out a very clear direction where this provincial government wants to take the province; how it will help lead the province into greater economic prosperity.

And I believe that this session will lay out a very clear divide between those of us who do believe in Saskatchewan as a province of opportunity and those on the opposite side of the House who do not believe there's an opportunity here in Saskatchewan. This will be a defining session, Mr. Speaker. I believe this absolutely. And having listened to the members opposite speak as they have over the last couple of days, I think that we are seeing this more and more clearly.

I found it very interesting listening to the member for Watrous — as it always is — to her, to her comments. And I particularly appreciated the fact that she started off by talking about what people in the communities of her constituency had to say, and their sense of optimism, their sense of hope, their dreams, their beliefs, the positive spirit that they have.

It was unfortunate the speech didn't stop there. It was unfortunate that she didn't simply bring forward the views of her constituents, but rather had to twist it and put a little bit of political spin on it. I was with her right up that point, Mr. Speaker. And then I found I just had to start saying, well now what exactly is the issue here?

We went through talking about each of these communities, about the hopes that they had. Certainly this was the same sense that we had as we travelled through the province on the bus tour this last summer. This is very much the experience that I have talking to constituents in my own riding, is this sense of optimism out there that things are in fact getting better in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that since the last time this Assembly met that we have seen some rather tremendous changes in our province, indeed in the world, and the result on our economy has been unfortunate.

I don't think any of us could foresee what had happened during the fall and the impact that now Canada is involved in a war; the fact that we are involved in trying to recover an economy which has been hurt. The impact certainly for Saskatchewan is significant. We have seen the impact on falling commodity

prices. We have seen the impact in our communities. And we are seeing the impact as we try to work through the provincial budget.

Saskatchewan is not alone in this situation. Certainly as we look across the country we can see that every province, every jurisdiction is going through a similar process. Ontario is talking about a massive, multi-billion-dollar deficit. British Columbia is in a multi-billion-dollar deficit. Alberta is barely balanced. Manitoba is having their own financial problems.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is not alone in the difficulties that we have faced in this past year. The members opposite may try and tell people that this is a result of the actions of this government. I think any citizen of this province who has picked up a newspaper, turned on a television or a radio, knows that the very things that we are facing in this province today are shared by Canadians across this land, by jurisdictions across this country, and that we are working at it in a responsible, responsive way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, this session will set forward two separate visions of how we take this province forward — a vision outlined by this government in the Speech from the Throne and a vision outlined by the members opposite in their so-called Grow Saskatchewan platform. Mr. Speaker, for the record, that was the sound of one member clapping.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this Grow Saskatchewan plan that the members opposite have been out around the province talking about, from what I can see reading the press clippings, has not exactly been a resounding success — closed door meetings, low turnout, lack of interest. And it's a lot like what I think we expected from the members opposite and their negative attitude towards how this province is going to grow.

Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with what was a very successful initiative launched by the Premier this past summer as his caucus, his cabinet, and he travelled this province — talking to people throughout the communities, listening to what they had to say, getting ideas, accepting those ideas. And now we're putting those ideas into action. Mr. Speaker, that is what we have done.

And the member opposite is reading, I know, off from a list of all the communities that we went to, and many of the good ideas that we've heard. And we see those reflected in this Throne Speech. We see those reflected in this Throne Speech.

I want to talk a little bit today about how this Throne Speech impacts on the residents of Regina South, on the people who live here in my home community of Regina, on the people of the province generally, and, certainly, on our economy.

Other members have spoken eloquently in this House about the agenda for social development and I will not spend a great deal of time on that today because I think the others have done better justice to it than I would.

What I do want to talk about though, very specifically, are some of the things that we are going to lay out in this session to help

move Saskatchewan's economy forward, to continue on the growth that we have seen, and to celebrate the successes that have been such an integral part of Saskatchewan under this NDP government.

The members opposite always like to trash talk the province. They always like to talk about the negatives. I say to them, Mr. Speaker, that I think they need to be cautious of this. There is a point at which such naysaying becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy — that they will, through their naysaying, drive off the investment, drive off the opportunities, drive off the kind of attitude that we need in this province in order to help turn things around and continue to build on the successes that we've seen over the last 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, we don't do enough to celebrate our successes in this province. I take a look at the great things that we've seen over the last seven years that I've had an opportunity to serve in this Assembly — years of successive cuts to personal income taxes, years in which we have seen . . . in fact we have been the only province in Canada to see a reduction in child poverty.

Accomplishments in terms of new programs around community schools, accomplishments in terms of building our economy — these are the kind of things that we should be celebrating in terms of our success in this province, that we should be building on, that this Throne Speech builds on. And I would invite the members opposite to join with us in supporting that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, as we've gone around the province, there's a start to a speech that I like to give when I'm out talking to different groups to remind them of just how successful we are in this province. And it goes a little bit like this:

We are the fourth-richest province in this nation. We are the third-largest producer in terms of mineral wealth. We're the second-biggest producers in oil and gas revenue. We have led the world in production of uranium. We are the best and biggest producers of potash. We have tremendous potential to be dominant in the world in terms of diamond production. That's simply on the mineral wealth side.

I dare also say that, thanks to the members opposite, that they are the first people to forget about these successes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have tremendous resource wealth here in this province. And we are using it to the benefit of creating jobs for Saskatchewan people, creating economic opportunity for Saskatchewan companies, and in turn providing opportunities in our communities through continued growth of social development programs.

There are a couple of areas that this Throne Speech speaks of that in particular I want to talk about today.

We have tremendous opportunities in this province on energy resource development. Certainly we have seen this growth in terms of our oil patch and in terms of natural gas sector. It may interest the members of this Assembly to know that since 1991 we have doubled our production of oil in this province —

doubled our production of oil in this province since 1991, since this government took office.

(15:30)

Now we should understand this. The members opposite are constantly telling the business community, they're certainly telling the people in Calgary, the investors, that there's nothing good here in Saskatchewan. That this NDP government has been a hindrance to development.

What is not true and what is not pointed out, is the fact of the opportunities that this government has opened up, particularly in the energy sector. Look at the fact — look at the fact that oil production in this province has doubled since the Romanow government took office and we are going to continue to see growth under this new Premier. There is no doubt of this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — There is no doubt that we have an opportunity in Saskatchewan to move into new forms of energy production. And certainly the aggressive approach, and I think a very positive approach taken by this government in terms of moving into wind energy, will be a positive for us.

I want to talk in a few minutes about climate change and some of the things that we're doing there, but let me say that we are taking a much broader perspective on energy development in this province than has been taken by any government in the history of this province. From oil production, gas production, ethanol production, green power through renewable sources such as wind, these are the kind of things that we are going to continue to build Saskatchewan's economy on because these are the things that we've seen the successes on in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is part of the plan that is laid out in this Throne Speech. It should be of interest to people that we have seen the kind of growth and development that we have over the last 10 years.

I was saying to some of my colleagues the other day that I have had the privilege, as a result of the prudent management of this province's finances, to have never had to support anything other than a tax reduction for personal taxes in this province since I was elected in 1995. This is a very important and positive thing that we should celebrate. As a result of the actions of this province's government over that time period, Mr. Speaker, we have laid a foundation which is allowing Saskatchewan people, ordinary Saskatchewan residents to participate and to see the benefits of that wealth.

It should interest the members opposite that the Toronto Dominion Bank has recently released a study which says Saskatchewan will lead the nation in terms of the growth of our standard of living this year. We will lead the nation in the growth of our standard of living in 2002. Only three provinces are expected to see an increase in their standard of living. The other provinces will fall back. Saskatchewan is not only one of those three, but is the top one of those three.

But the members opposite never want to comment about that. They don't want to talk about the benefits that Saskatchewan

people share in as a result of the actions of this government; they don't want to talk about the strength of our economy; they don't want to talk about the resource wealth that we have and the development opportunities. And they don't want to talk about the sustainable development approach that we put in place that rebalances the agenda so that we can ensure in the future Saskatchewan people continue to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, we can all stand up and talk about what we think is happening. I listened to the member for Watrous share with us her views and I appreciate those views. But I think there's something to be said when the people that study these things come forward with concrete facts and that those are the things that make for informed debate. The Toronto Dominion Bank talking about us leading in terms of standard of living. We have a study, in terms of KPMG, showing that our major . . . four major cities are not only competitive but are among the most competitive in North America in terms of business development.

Now the members opposite talk about a bad business climate. Isn't it interesting that the business community doesn't talk about a bad business climate? Isn't it interesting that when we take a look at what the statistics are that we see when all the pieces are added together, that in fact Regina, Saskatoon, P.A., Moose Jaw, are all communities that compete not only effectively within Canada but within the North American market.

But the members opposite never say that. All we hear is a steady stream of doom and gloom coming out of them.

The member for Humboldt yesterday or Friday talked about the population issues. No mention whatsoever of the fact that her community is one of the fastest growing in the province. No sense of celebrating the fact that we have helped build an infrastructure there which attracts people, which attracts business. There's no celebration of the successes in her neighbourhood — certainly not by the member. But I can tell you the business community understands that. And I can tell you the people that read the statistics understand that. And I can tell you that the taxpayers understand that. And I can tell you that the voters are going to understand that.

That is the fact of the matter. We have a competitive business environment. We see continued economic growth. We see growth in our standard of living and those are things we should celebrate in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, we are not going to simply celebrate the past. What we are going to do now is we are going to build on that foundation that has been put forward by this government through successive balanced budgets, through prudent management of our resources, and through a regulatory regime which encourages investment. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, how I see this Throne Speech and the items contained in it working to build on those successes and build on those advantages.

One of the most important things I think that this Premier has introduced during his first year in office was an investment

attraction council. This council that he has set up has the mandate to deal specifically with fast-tracking of projects to make sure that we have a coordinated approach within government to deal with regulatory issues brought forward, to make sure that we have a clear line of communication between investors and businesses here, between the businesses and the government that sets the regulatory environment.

This has been a very positive initiative — something which I don't hear the members opposite saying that they would continue; something which I don't hear the members opposite saying that they support.

Why wouldn't they support an investment attraction council? Why would they not support us working to make sure government and business and investors and communities work together in lockstep so that we are headed in the same direction? Why don't they? Because success is not what the members opposite believe in. It doesn't work to their political advantage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to talk about this.

But this is in fact what this government is doing. They say, where is the plan? Well the plan's there. The plan is there. We've got the investment attraction council. We've got a Throne Speech which I dare say is probably the most detailed Throne Speech that I've seen in the nearly seven years that I've served in this Assembly.

It talks in four very clear areas about what we are going to do to make Saskatchewan a better place. It talks about investment in the economy, in the environment. We certainly never hear the members opposite talk about the environment. It talks about investment in infrastructure. We hear them ask constantly for more Crown corporation investment in their communities, but they simply turn around and criticize the way that we end up having to pay for it.

We talk in this Throne Speech about the provision of quality education. When was the last time the members opposite did anything other than complain about property taxes? Where's their support for School^{PLUS}? Where's their support for the education system?

Their support is not there because all they're interested in doing is talking down the school system so that they can work towards a low-tax, no-tax kind of regime. Well who is going to pay for it? Where does it get paid for?

And we talk in this Throne Speech about the need for healthy and self-reliant families. This is undoubtedly one of the strengths of this government, is the work that has been done in terms of building self-reliant families, and building a healthier set of communities.

We believe, and it says in the Throne Speech, and I want to reiterate it today — we believe that economic growth in Saskatchewan will continue to be led by private sector investment. I'm pleased to hear the members opposite support us. And I'm sure that when they stand, they will. That's what we believe in.

The members opposite though, they raise an interesting comment. They raise an interesting comment about the brewing

company — Great Western Brewing — certainly the subject of discussion this morning in question . . . this afternoon in question period. This is an interesting point because this is where we see how this government, how this NDP government has used the tools available to it to support our economy, to help keep jobs, and to help build investment in this province.

The members opposite, we know what they would do. They would allow those companies to go south or west or east. It would be like the member from Watrous who encouraged the arts group out of Meacham to move out. Why don't they find a different location, she says. Their response was, they kind of like it there.

Well indeed, that's what Great Western Brewing is saying too. They kind of like working in Saskatoon. And my guess is, the people that work for Great Western Brewing kind of appreciate the fact that the government is there to help them.

I can tell you if you think that a private sector is going to be there to support that alone, I'd say simply take a look at the situation with Labatt's; take a look at O'Keefe; take a look at Molson. And you, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the members opposite, tell us — tell us how this works and how you protect those jobs without putting your money where your mouth is. How does that happen?

I hear the members opposite talk about . . . It was very interesting as they talk about jobs because they talk out of both sides of their mouth on this. But one member was talking about the conservation officer that moved out of her riding. I suspect that that conservation officer was funded in part by a budget vote that we had last year that they voted against.

When we put more money into protecting water, into the inspection services, into the community services, into our health networks, where were the members opposite? They voted against it.

They didn't vote to hire more people; they voted to fire them. Not because of fiscal restraint; not because of that being in the best interest of their communities, because we certainly hear that they want more services. They simply voted against it to obstruct what is happening on the good things in this province and the support that this government can make to their communities. It was in their political advantage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to vote against it — not in the interest of their constituents.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that this again shows an important cleavage between what we believe on this side and what the members opposite believe. And you'll see this laid out time and again.

Isn't it interesting that today we listen to this debate criticizing our Crown Investments for investing in Saskatoon?

An Hon. Member: — What about Georgia?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Oh well the member opposite says you can't invest in Georgia; you can't make any money off of any other foreign investments; you can't invest in Regina; don't think about investing in Red Deer; oh and by the way, don't invest here at home either.

And by the way, could you just put up a few more cell towers? Oh and by the way, could you expand the CommunityNet process into my community? Oh and by the way, we would sure like to have another conservation officer in our community. Oh and by the way, could you just put some more money in to keep the hospitals open? Oh and by the way . . . And the list goes on and on and on and on and on.

And that's what those members come forward with. This is their plan. But this isn't a new plan; we saw this plan before. This plan is a classic. This plan is one that said, spend like there's no tomorrow and don't worry about how you pay for it. It was a case of spend like there's no tomorrow and don't worry about where you're going to pay for it. This is their advice to us on the Crowns: make all these investments. Oh and by the way, just forget, you know, that that billion dollars worth of investment that the Crowns have made in the province, don't worry about that. That doesn't really matter.

That's not what they're talking about, Mr. Speaker, as they say. What they're interested in are these other issues. And so they say, put the services on but don't charge us extra for them. Run that power company but by the way, my rink should pay less. Oh you've got to make some profit out of those Crowns because otherwise they're losers and should be sold.

This is the most inconsistent policy that I have heard in probably 15 years. And I think that it's very interesting that the members opposite are laying out this plan again. This is the same plan, by the way, that taxpayers are still paying for the last time it was implemented.

I wish that we did not have that more than \$600 million worth of debt interest payments every year. I wish that we didn't have a debt in this province in the \$10 billion range. I wish we didn't. Because if you think about all the things that we are doing in this province today given those constraints, just imagine what this government could have done if we had been given a clean slate to work with when we came in. Just imagine the work that we could do in our local communities. Just imagine the support for rural Saskatchewan. Imagine what could have been done to help keep farm families here if the members opposite had not squandered those opportunities the last time they were in office on this side. Just imagine that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(15:45)

The members fail to understand, on the opposition side, that you can't simply speak in platitudes about how they're going to move forward. Grow Saskatchewan? Their plan is not about gutting Saskatchewan; their plan is about gutting Saskatchewan. That's what it will do. Unsustainable spending, unsustainable promises, all for their political benefit. It will result in gutting this province, and that is their objective, Mr. Speaker.

It's unfortunate. It's unfortunate that they are prepared to promise anything in order to attempt to get elected. This is not a new approach. We've seen it before, and it's unfortunate that we see it again. Grow Saskatchewan — I don't see anything particularly new there. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't see anything particularly innovative coming from the members opposite in terms of how they'd move forward.

But this Throne Speech, as I have said, outlines a different approach. It outlines an action plan for Saskatchewan. It outlines the things that we've heard from Saskatchewan people that they want done. I was pleased this summer to sit on the . . . as a member of the Standing Committee on Health Care in this Assembly as we had people in this House from all across the province coming in and making their presentations, telling us what their views were on the health care system.

This is what they said. They said that they wanted us to put forward a clear, concise vision for health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased with the work that my colleague, the Minister of Health, has done in this regard. And I know it has not been an easy task to pull together these kind of very different ideas. And in fact we did hear many different things. I won't say that there was any one consistent message we got. We heard everything from moving towards health care premiums, to us going to a completely fully funded system, to adding more services into the system, to maybe de-insuring on some items.

This was a very interesting exercise though, because it allowed people to come forward and have that direct discussion with their legislators about an important issue in front of them. I think our government responded in a very appropriate way. What we put back into the system was stability. What we put back into the system was sustainability. These were key parts of what came out of this process, from the Fyke Report that ended up going through the legislative hearings and resulted in our action plan on health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our action plan for the economy is no less bold and no less important. And I'll tell you that this Throne Speech lays the foundation for where we are going to see that growth.

I want to speak a little bit about our energy resources. I want to speak a little bit about how we move forward in terms of a new, more sustainable approach to development. And I want to talk about how Saskatchewan is playing an important role in the western Canadian economy in helping develop, I think, a much more sustainable oil and gas regime.

As the Throne Speech notes, we have approximately 35 billion barrels worth of known oil reserves in Saskatchewan. Most of this is heavy oil. This is both a blessing and certainly a difficulty for us as we look at moving forward to develop it. Heavy oil is extremely energy intensive. It has certain price sensitivities that we need to be careful of, and it still is at a point where we need to be thinking seriously about how we move forward with that extra development.

We have put into place a number of different initiatives to help improve our extraction of the oil resources. Certainly Saskatchewan leads the nation. In many cases, in North America we are a leader in terms of the work we're doing on enhanced oil recovery. Our horizontal drill program has been a very successful one in terms of helping communities like Estevan, in terms of the deep Southeast, even in the Swift Current area. We have seen how these programs that this government has helped bring in, these programs have helped build the economy there.

I find it surprising that the member for Estevan does not speak more positively about the good things that are happening within the oil patch in her own back yard. I'm very surprised that we don't hear her speaking in support of what the business is and the investors are doing in terms of making a more sustainable use of the oil reserves down in that area of the province.

I want to say again, I'm surprised that the members opposite don't stand up and support this government's initiatives on things like oil recovery that have helped us double the oil production in this province in the last 10 years. Instead it is simply an approach the members opposite take to turn their head to anything positive and focus on the negative.

Well this isn't what I hear from the investors. This isn't what I hear from the business people. This isn't what I hear from the communities.

What I hear are the things that we can do to help move them forward. Certainly the work that has been done on enhanced oil recovery has been very positive. Certainly the work that has been done in terms of horizontal drilling has been very positive.

The member for Rosetown, the Leader of the Opposition was recently in Calgary, I understand, speaking to a group at the Petroleum Club talking about how his plans to grow Saskatchewan would involve the oil sector. I'm told that there was in that 40-minute speech, one reference to the oil and gas sector. In a 40-minute speech at the Petroleum Club, one reference — and the reference was that they would work with the industry on royalties.

Well it certainly set me back. I mean I just don't know how to respond to that. Needless to say, for the last 10 years that's what we've been doing is working with it. We've been making the changes; we've been helping them work with industry; we've been building an industry — and we're seeing the results of that. Not the promising of results . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Where have we seen the results, the member asks.

Well let me just go through this. We have just gone through two years of record production — two years of record production in oil and gas sector. We have seen a doubling. We are now at over 400,000 barrels a day of oil coming out of this province — 400,000, double what we were at 10 years ago.

Where's the growth? The growth is with small companies throughout rural Saskatchewan. The growth is with young people who are working on the rigs. The growth is with young people that are working in the services and supply company. The growth is in the communities that those members claim to represent. That's where the growth is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It figures that the members opposite, like the member for Estevan, would say, where's the growth? I would invite her to come with me to her constituency and we'll see where the growth is. I would invite her . . . I would invite the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy to come to Weyburn some day. Come to the riding that she says she represents and we'll show you where the growth is. That's what I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The members opposite ask where's the growth.

Now what we are seeing today has been a slowdown in the oil

sector. That slowdown — and this will come as a surprise to the members opposite — is a result of dropping prices. What caused the prices to drop? Oh, I half expect them to say the NDP government. Well unfortunately we're not a big player in OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and we don't have a lot of control over the world economy.

What has caused prices to drop, I think we all know, has been a situation of instability. We have seen a drop-off in terms of industrial demand in the United States as a result of their softening economy, and we are in a time of somewhat instability in terms of oil and gas prices. That is what's caused the price fluctuation.

Now today the price of oil is moving back above \$25 US (United States) a barrel. This is a positive thing in terms of the industry and the potential for drilling activity. Of course drilling activity always lags behind price a few months and certainly many of the capital commitments have already been made.

We are active in terms of working with the industry to help build a resource regime, a regulatory regime, a royalty regime that works to the benefit of Saskatchewan people and attracts investment. And I dare say that over the last 10 years the proof was in the pudding and that is in the fact that we have seen a doubling of our oil production.

We see a growth . . . I see and certainly this Throne Speech notes this as well that we believe there are two areas of opportunity for us to grow in the energy resource sector. One of those is in heavy oil. The heavy oil resource on our western border is largely known but largely untapped.

As we move forward into . . . with higher differentials in the price, we have an opportunity to see further development. As we see the United States move forward with more of an interest in continental energy policy, we have an opportunity to play in terms of supply of that market as they want to decrease their offshore dependencies. These are opportunities that we need to now start to think about in terms of positioning Saskatchewan to supply this resource.

I think we have tremendous resource wealth in heavy oil. I think we have a tremendous opportunity in heavy oil, and it's something that we need to work on with the industry in terms of developing.

There's a second area that I think we have tremendous opportunity in and that's in natural gas. It was not that many years ago that natural gas was really a waste product. There was no real opportunity for it to be shipped. There was no market at the end for it.

Certainly over the last 10 years we have seen tremendous development in terms of natural gas potential. We are seeing a tremendous growth in terms of the demand for the natural gas product.

We are also seeing, I think, a very encouraging sign in terms of the geoscience is happening in terms of finding new gas wealth. Certainly the find in northeastern BC at Ladyfern has caused people to think that perhaps in the western basin that we are not in a case of declining reserve, that there are in fact new deposits

that can be found.

We are seeing . . . one of the very bright spots, I will tell you today, that we are seeing in Saskatchewan is in natural gas drilling in the Swift Current area. We are seeing nearly double the wells drilled on natural gas than we did a year ago. Why? Because they've had better exploration and we've seen certainly better opportunity for development.

We need to continue to work with these companies, with these investors, with these communities to find a way to extract that resource wealth, that natural gas, and get it shipped off to market. I think we have tremendous opportunity here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's something that this government is certainly interested in working on.

We have an opportunity also to start dealing with renewable fuels. One of the questions I'm asked regularly is: why is the price of gas as high as it is given where the price of oil is? I have to admit I wasn't asked this question very much before I became the Minister of Energy and Mines, but now it seems to be a . . . I guess I'm expected to know more so I will . . . I asked my officials this. And the answer I get back is that one of the key components, one of the key components of course is refining capacity. We have tight refining capacity in North America today and this is one of the things that has caused the price of gasoline to go up.

This provides us with a unique opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that opportunity is for us to take a look at how we can make use of renewable fuels to extend the life of our other . . . of our carbon-based fuel system like gas and oil. Clearly one of those big opportunities for Saskatchewan is in the area of ethanol development.

I am very pleased that the Speech from the Throne speaks of the green print on ethanol production. I am very pleased with the work that this government has done on this and the leadership shown by this Premier because this is an initiative that would not have happened without the direct intervention of the Premier and his vision in terms of how we move forward in terms of sustainable development and new areas.

We have a tremendous opportunity to grow an ethanol industry in Saskatchewan. An ethanol industry that, I think, will provide opportunities to local farmers, it will provide opportunities to local communities, it will provide opportunities to the energy sector as well as we start to expand the life of the existing gas resource.

We have an opportunity today to build a grain-based ethanol industry in Saskatchewan. This green print on ethanol production, that will be released shortly, I think will outline how the government can work with communities and investors to do that.

But there is another opportunity down the road and that is in the area of biomass. That we can start to take a look at how do we use products today that are not a great price or great utility to us in terms of waste wood, in terms of straw. These are other opportunities that we can pursue into the future. Saskatchewan is very well positioned in terms of our market, in terms of our resource, in terms of our investment climate to build on this

initiative and I am very optimistic about the results we'll see. The question . . . one of the questions that I'm regularly asked as we talked about ethanol is why now? What makes ethanol today more of an interest to Saskatchewan people than, say, ten years ago or why does it make it more viable?

(16:00)

Well, frankly, there are two reasons. One is we have better technology which has helped bring down the cost of ethanol production. The second is there is a growing interest in terms of renewable fuels and the impact it can have to reduce greenhouse gases, and as a result the impact it can have in terms of the climate change, mitigating climate change and reducing global warming.

Certainly one of the big challenges that we have, and I dare say the single most important environmental challenge we face today, is climate change. This is something which all Saskatchewan people will understand has a very direct impact not only on our quality of life but on our economy. This is an issue which all members of this legislature should take a very keen interest in because it is something which affects the farming community as much as it affects our cities. It affects us as consumers in terms of the price that we pay for our power supply and it affects us in terms of how we . . . the kind of climate that we are going to be leaving for our children.

This is the single, most important environmental threat to Saskatchewan today. It is an environmental threat; it is an economic threat, and it is something that we need to be prepared to deal with.

The federal government has suggested that one way that we may want to deal with this is through the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. This protocol, as members will know, is a part of an international agreement which is worked on to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Certainly our government over the last several months, in fact the last several years, has been working with Ottawa to better understand what it is that the Kyoto accord would do. There, today, are still many questions that need to be answered. We understand that targets have been set for various nations in terms of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

I can tell you that from Saskatchewan's standpoint, we understand very clearly that Canada has 3 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. We know that within that we are the fifth largest emitter. Saskatchewan is the fifth largest emitter within Canada of greenhouse gases. We know that we need to work on that. We know that a large part of that is, in fact, because of our transportation network, the sparsity of our population, the type of climate we have. We know that part of that, of our growth over the last 10 years has been because of an increase in our industrial base. And we understand that agriculture also is a significant emitter of greenhouse gases.

The challenge for us is to figure out how do we play a part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions? How do we reduce this, how do we help meet our environmental commitments, and how do we do that while continuing to strengthen our provincial economy?

We have engaged Ottawa, we have engaged the provinces, we have engaged industry in a process to start to discuss seriously how we start to mitigate these issues. Kyoto presents some opportunities, Kyoto presents some very big challenges for us. Certainly one of the issues which we need to understand here in Saskatchewan is that we have such a significant growth in our economic output from that 1992 period, 1993 to about 1997, that we saw a tremendous increase in our greenhouse gas emissions.

It is unfortunate that the Kyoto Protocol sets as the target to reduce below the 1990 levels. This puts Saskatchewan at something of a disadvantage because our industrial growth was after that time period. We need to work with Ottawa, we need to work with our national government, with other provinces, and with industries to set realistic targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We need to clearly understand what the impacts are going to be on the province in terms of its environment, on the province in terms of its economy, and on the citizens who live here in terms of what the impact would be in terms of the consumers. That is the approach that we are continuing to work on as we work with Ottawa on this very important issue.

But we are not waiting for Ottawa to give us their reports and their studies, which I'm sure they've done. We're already moving forward with a long list of initiatives which we should be very proud of here in Saskatchewan. I am very pleased with the fact that today, just next door to my constituency at the University of Regina, there's construction going on on a new Greenhouse Gas Technology Centre. This centre will be an international test centre for technology to help mitigate greenhouse gases.

We should be very proud of the fact that we are a world leader in terms of carbon sequestration programs. We have moved forward in term of a very innovative project in Weyburn — which incidentally I never hear the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy talk about — in terms of the PanCanadian carbon sequestration project, the CO₂ project, the fact that we have a project there which involves partners from really across the world that they are involved in this project.

It was interesting I was at the university about three weeks and was meeting with some professors and one of them, one of the researchers came forward and quickly showed me a copy of a *Hansard*. And I thought oh, what is in this *Hansard*? What did I say now? As it turned out, fortunate for me, it wasn't of me. It was a speech from the House of Lords. And what do these folks over at the House of Lords in London talk about?

Well it turns out one of the things they talk about is Weyburn, Saskatchewan. They talk about this remarkable project that PanCanadian is involved in down in Weyburn in terms of sequestering this carbon, and one of the opportunities it has for us to move forward with moving this . . . dealing with the environmental research, helping to improve the climate, while at the same time also dealing with resource-extraction. A very innovative project. I was very happy to see it receive the kind of international accolades that it is, and certainly we have been very proud to be a partner in this.

The work that is being done by our government, the

investments that we have made are not simply on resource extraction. They have been investments that have helped us grow our economy, to protect our environment, and to move forward in terms of better research.

The first opportunity I had to speak in this House was actually in a role that was very ably filled by the new member for Saskatoon Idylwyld this time and that was seconding the motion in response to the Speech from the Throne.

In the comments that I made in 1996, I guess it was, I had talked about the need for us to move to invest more in research at our universities, to move this research from the microscope to the marketplace. Very much that is what our government has moved forward to do, and we simply need to look at the successes that we have through the Saskatchewan Research Council, through the work that's done at the University of Saskatchewan in its research laboratories, through the work that's done here at the University of Regina — and we can see the benefits of this.

I've already spoken of the Greenhouse Gas Technology Centre which is being constructed. This incidentally is a project in which the American Department of Energy is involved. This is a case where Saskatchewan is attracting not only investment, not only research funds, but knowledge. We're attracting the people here to build a better economy. That's happening here in Regina. Of course we never hear the members opposite say anything good about Regina. But that's one of the things that we are doing.

We have seen great success with the Petroleum Technology Research Centre which has been constructed over at the University of Regina also. This is an innovative approach and it involves government, it involves the university, and it involves industry. In terms of talking about how do we move forward with smarter extraction of our resources. How do you reduce your environmental footprint? How do you make sure you get better extraction of the petroleum resources? How do we make it last longer? How do you get more value added out of it? And how do we move forward into that 21st century of new technology in terms of the resource extraction?

This is part of what our government has invested in.

I'm always happy when I see others talk about what we should do in this province and I always like listening to other good ideas.

I was reading in *The Leader-Post* just at the end of January that our Liberal friends had offered a business plan. And the headline read: "Karwacki offers his ideas." And I thought well, this will be interesting. I thought let's see what Mr. Karwacki has to say. Well, lo and behold, his great new idea is that we should invest in the Petroleum Technology Research Centre. I thought well, that's a good idea. Happen to be a few years ahead of him on it but this is good to see some support there.

He suggests that he wants to promote a CO₂ injection project at Weyburn. Well this is another good idea. I think we are starting to see why maybe the member for North Battleford, there may be room over here again on this coalition. These are the kind of good Liberal ideas that we certainly want to welcome over here.

His leader says that one of the things he wants to support is an international test centre for carbon dioxide capture for greenhouse gas research. Again, another ingenious approach to Liberal policy.

I was very pleased to read that these were what Mr. Karwacki's ideas were. Particularly pleased because they were ideas obviously brought forward in part by this government. And put into action.

The members opposite always say, where's the action plan? Well the action plan is pretty obvious. The action plan is in our research centres; the action plan is in the highways that have been constructed; the action plan is in terms of the fact that we have reduced the child poverty rates — that's where the action plan is. The action plan is in reduced taxes for Saskatchewan people; the action plan is in economic growth; the action plan is in the fact that we are going to lead the nation in terms of the growth in the standard of living — that's where the action plan is. That's where the action plan is.

But I'm always happy to see when . . . I should really not be too critical of the Liberals for supporting us on this and I think this is very good. Because indeed the members opposite in the Saskatchewan Party, I would encourage should follow the Liberals in this; join with us in supporting these good initiatives that are happening throughout our communities and throughout our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I won't go on much longer today. We have many other opportunities, I'm sure, during the next several weeks to talk about the great things that are happening in our province and that we're very proud of.

I want to very sincerely welcome back to Regina the members who are from out of town. I think that we have here in this beautiful capital city of ours, great opportunities. We've got some very innovative entertainment areas. We've got some great options in terms of economic growth, and that we really are, I think here in Regina, leading the way on many, many issues, not just for Saskatchewan but for Canada. And I hope that over the next several weeks they'll have an opportunity to take a look at some of these.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that, I simply want to say — I suspect what is obvious — I will be voting against the amendment. I will be voting against the negativity put forward by the members opposite and I will be voting in favour of a very innovative, solid, substantive plan that is laid out in the Speech from the Throne. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter into debate on the Speech from the Throne. But first off I must make a comment about the previous speaker, the member from Regina South and the one on the other side, earlier, the member from Athabasca. And all I can say is I'm very pleased to be standing this far away from him so I didn't get any of that stuff on my shoes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Athabasca talked about doom and gloom and that we're talking doom and gloom on this side. Well let me suggest that the doom and gloom has been created by 10, 12 years of NDP government and 50 years of CCF-NDP (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) government in the past 70 years. That's what creates the doom and gloom. All we do is identify a little bit of it.

The member from Athabasca also talked about family. Well I think we're all very, very touched with his speech about family and family values, and we support that. Every time we drive to some other province to see our family, we think about that. How can the individual get up and try and be eloquent about family values and whatnot when we send our families away to other parts of the country?

The member from Athabasca also talked about . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member over there says his kids live here. He's one of the lucky ones. Probably in a couple of years they'll be gone.

The member from Athabasca, Mr. Speaker, also talked about Saskatchewan Party — how can they use the name Saskatchewan in Saskatchewan Party? I'd like to throw that back to the member on the other side, when they have New Democratic Party. What's new about it and what's democratic about it? So I think he should look at internally a little bit before he starts complaining about us using the word Saskatchewan.

We talk about growth and potential for growth and yet our people are leaving. On the government side of the House, look at the people from their caucus that have left: Link, Anguish, Shillington. All their supporters that were in cabinet, where are they now? You talk about us talking doom and gloom, their own cabinet members are leaving this province. How do they explain that?

(16:15)

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to touch base on a few issues within the Throne Speech. It's a recycled Throne Speech, we know that. It was done on recycled paper but it's also a recycled Throne Speech, and I just want to touch on a couple of issues.

Saskatchewan is leading in gross domestic product per capita — well what a profound statement. When you get your per capita down, it's no wonder we're leading in gross domestic product per capita. All you have to do is chase more people out and your per capita rate goes up.

Now we talk about investing in Saskatchewan. In the Throne Speech it talks about the investments in Saskatchewan, the strand board in Meadow Lake, Premium Brands and Harvest foods in Yorkton, a food processing plant in Saskatoon. Guess what is common about this, Mr. Speaker? They're all government projects. Here we're expanding Saskatchewan one more time with government projects. And they're talking about expanding the economy, it's expanding government, growing Crowns and competing with the private sector. Is that a way to grow the economy?

Investment in the economy and the environment. Saskatchewan

will be led by the private sector in investment. This is from a socialist government that is talking about the private sector, and yet they just went ahead and talked about putting government money into all of these other initiatives. We even hear again today about government money going into the private sector initiatives, which is really not private sector — it's government.

I would like to comment on a radio program I listened to one day not too long ago, when Air Canada was having its financial woes and the Minister of Economic Development was on the radio, and his . . . I can't give you the exact quote, I'll give you a version of it. He said, we do not support bailing out Air Canada. We have a viable airline industry in this province that's making a profit. Why can't we let the private sector and free enterprise run its course? Can you imagine this from a socialist, saying let's let free enterprise run its course? My goodness.

We talk in the Throne Speech again:

. . . a comprehensive National Farm Safety Net Program.

This is the 10th year in a row we've heard we will be advocating a comprehensive national farm safety program. What is new. Same old, same old.

And talking about the ethanol industry — and I'm going to touch on ethanol a couple of times — the Minister of Energy and Mines spoke ethanol and how the potential in ethanol is huge. And I agree. We have a tremendous potential in this province for ethanol, some options for our farmers. The biggest fear in the ethanol industry is government. The fear out there is the government will create a Crown corporation for the ethanol industry and that will scare away every private investor.

The minister I understand is going around the province and his little speech is on ethanol and saying the Saskatchewan Party have a 10 per cent plan — they want to import ethanol. What kind of rubbish is he talking about? I don't know what he's smoking but it sure isn't something that's legal.

In the Throne Speech here again, here again:

My government will respond to . . . review . . . the (workmen's) Compensation Act . . .

How often do we have to review, Mr. Speaker? This is something new — we will review, time after time after time.

Investment in infrastructure. I found this one kind of interesting:

My government (will put) . . . \$900 million, three-year plan to improve our highways.

Well is this ever good. Is this ever good, Mr. Speaker. That is down from 311 million last year. Is that progress?

And I can't help but mention:

. . . SaskTel will . . . (expand) high-speed internet to . . . (business) in 191 more communities by 2003.

Well that's about the same thing they said last year. Does

high-speed Internet come out to rural areas? Not where I live, I can assure you. Can cell coverage come out there? No. Is it going to? Not likely.

. . . my government's plan includes other initiatives to tap the vitality and ideas of our youth.

Well I applaud that — tapping the ideas of the youth. It's about time they listened to somebody and they have to go to somebody to try and get some new ideas because it's certain they have no new ideas sitting on that side of the House.

And one more, one more on the Throne Speech specifically, Mr. Speaker. During this session of the legislature, the resources of our police service will be strengthened. The government will also monitor and report on measures taken to reduce crimes. Boy, can you imagine how much crime is going to be reduced because they're going to monitor and report.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech, for my constituency, does that much good.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit now about some other issues. The Minister of Economic Development, and we've heard about this already, on an interview he had stated that the Sask Party plan — and we have a plan — is not doable. And this is on a radio interview that the minister was talking and he referred to the Sask Party plan as not doable.

Well there are a few things that come to mind, Mr. Speaker, thinking about that. First off, first off, he must have read our plan so he knows we have a plan if he read it, for him to have the thought to say that it's not doable. And I'm very glad that he's conversant with our plan. But for him to get up and say that our plan is not doable, I must assume that that side of the House they get together and they say we have to make sure that everything we do is doable. And I would like to look at a few of the specifics on this.

Let's look at Channel Lake. Do you think we could lose \$15 million? Sure, so let's do it. That's doable. Do you think we could lose \$2 million in Guyana? Yes, let's do it. That's doable. NST (NST Network Services of Chicago), \$16 million. That's doable. Let's get it done. SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), boy is there ever a doable one.

This has to be some pretty small thinking on that part to sit around on that side of the House to come up with these ideas about what's doable. Twenty-nine million to lose on SPUDCO, let's do it because it is doable. ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), well, my goodness, let's start out and give ISC a few dollars to start this information services. That's doable. If they want more, we'll give them more money. That's doable. Eighty million dollars, well that's okay, that's doable.

So they do have a doable plan over there, Mr. Speaker. I don't agree with it, but they're doing something — all in the wrong direction.

Let's go a little further on that. Let's put \$80 million into Australia. That's doable. How about 200 million into Alberta, millions in Mexico, millions in Chile. That's all doable,

according to them, so they'll do it.

Let's have Crowns compete with businesses. Oh boy, that's doable. We can sure compete with businesses. Does Clickabid and SecurTek sound familiar? But, it's doable.

Let's be brave. Let's be brave as an NDP group and say let's forecast that we're going to have 30,000 less students in this province. What a pessimistic outlook, Mr. Speaker. But with their policies, it's doable.

Let's create policy that will eliminate 12,000 jobs. They did it because it's doable.

How about, let's have a deficit budget this year and try and cover it up with smoke and mirrors. We're going to need a lot of smoke and many mirrors, but we can cover it up because it's doable.

Let's increase surgical waiting lists. Hey, we can do that. Let's reduce the number of nurses. Let's say in three years, let's reduce them by 1,192. That's quite doable. And let's blame the federal government; let's blame the Saskatchewan Party; let's blame whoever else for the lows of this province. They can do that. It's doable.

So let's not forget, let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, from the NDP side of the House, the biggest one of all — let's grow government. We can and we will because it's doable. And that's what they did, Mr. Speaker.

So we have a plan. Even the Minister of Economic Development has read our plan so he talks about. And we have a plan to grow Saskatchewan not to chase people out. So what do the citizens of Saskatchewan really want? A Saskatchewan plan to grow the province or a doable plan that the government has been doing that I just talked about? I think the obvious choice is very, very clear to most people in this province, the majority — maybe not the odd socialist.

I'd like to talk a little bit about an article in the paper, and I know our leader the other day referred to this article, but there's a couple of items in the article that I would like to further touch on and it's from Randy Burton.

I think it would behoove members on the other side to read the whole article because I think it says quite a bit in there. He talks about the provincial government. When it should be leading the way, the provincial government is wallowing in indecision. And, Mr. Speaker, I have a quote that I make quite frequently and that is: "Flexibility is the key to power, but indecision is the key to flexibility."

Mr. Speaker, we see this government operating on two tracks simultaneously — one of them promoting government's role in the economy; and the other role, tearing it down. A quote from the article:

What Calvert and company ignore is that government has a central role to play in establishing the climate that encourages a positive attitude.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is not being done.

Mr. Speaker, another article from the Saturday *Leader-Post*. There's some good articles and good quotes in it that I think are quite important. And I quote:

Rumour has it Premier Lorne Calvert chose the title, Province of Opportunity, for his second throne speech because Province of Reduced Expectations didn't quite have the right ring to it.

I again quote:

Well, for one thing, we should stop studying everything and start doing something.

I spoke about that a little bit earlier.

For example, introducing a "Greenprint for Ethanol Production" doesn't sound like something that's going to see the construction of ethanol plants in Saskatchewan any time soon.

Again, we can study and study and study, but until there's action, nothing is going to get done.

Let's get moving on developing more intensive livestock operations in the province. Rather than buying . . . 15 million (in) shares in Premium Brands, the province should be building the infrastructure to support the industry, such as roads, irrigation, tax incentives.

Funny. That sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Imposing new red tape and new costs on businesses, such as higher minimum wages and tobacco restrictions on retailers and hoteliers is no way to build our economy.

Mr. Speaker, another article in Saturday's paper I'd like to touch on also, and it's headlined: "Sask. population drop blamed on Crowns, taxes." Again we have a government that is out of touch with reality.

Saskatchewan's population will continue to drop unless government stops squeezing out the private sector with Crown corporations, red tape and high taxes . . .

"Government must shrink; the private sector must grow," said economist Graham Parsons . . .

For much of the last century, "Saskatchewan experimented with policies towards the economy . . . (and) systematically weakened the province," said Parsons.

"Jurisdictions, like Ireland, with low tax rates, few trade barriers, modern infrastructure, deregulated markets, and a vibrant private sector tend to enjoy strong economic growth . . .

The lessons are quite clear: . . . (Strengthening) the private sector, allow it to grow and it will happen."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now talk a little bit about my constituency of Wood River.

We heard the minister earlier blowing steam about profits and putting cell phones into rural Saskatchewan. That's a huge issue in my constituency. Will we get cell phones? Not as long as we have this government in. They want to do it on a business plan; they talk about it doesn't work because there's not enough business, as they chase more people out of the constituency.

Ethanol is a huge topic. And this is where the worry comes into my constituency. We have five separate entities in my constituency that are looking at ethanol production. The common theme from every one of them is, get government out of our way. Every organization that I talk to involved in ethanol say, get government out of our way.

And no, Mr. Speaker, they do not want money from the government because if money from the government comes in, the government will want to take over the ethanol industry and they do not want that. They are, they are definitely worrying that the government will form a Crown corporation and start doing their own little . . . (inaudible) . . . out in the area.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about the cell phones and high-speed Internet. In the town of Coronach I asked — we had a meeting with SaskTel — and I asked them if at the time, that cell coverage would come to that area. The answer was maybe in a year, maybe not, we don't know.

About a week or two later, I got a . . . I received a letter from one of the people in Coronach saying, can you find out for us if we will get high-speed Internet? So I called SaskTel and said, I'd like to see a plan or hear your plan of when high-speed Internet can be expected down into this community. There was no plan; they had no idea. So the community went ahead and put in high-speed Internet on their own.

Now here is a socialist system that supplies to everybody in the province but would not put high-speed Internet into this town, or cellphones into this town. So they're going ahead and doing it on their own.

Now I understand that SaskTel has some interest in doing it now because they are going to do it on a private basis. So now we can go and compete with the private sector on it.

In Willow Bunch, a bus in Willow Bunch — we talked about this in Crowns — the little town of Willow Bunch lost its bus service a number of years ago. Will it come back? Who knows. I asked them, I asked them specifically if they would put a bus service back into Willow Bunch and they said it didn't make a business sense. They had 1.8 passengers per day and they would not put the bus back in. And yet, on the other hand, there was one that had point five a week that they included. I wonder how, I wonder how they voted.

We've talked with the Minister of Municipal Affairs about issues with a local dam in the Killdeer area and the answer I received back is that they will close the gates on this dam. It had been left open for a number of years and noxious weeds were spreading and actually going into the United States and so they are now closing the dam. But even from the minister they said, we want to find out if anybody in the local area will take over this facility.

Well my recommendation to the people in the local area is, don't touch that with a 10-foot pole. Why would you? The government came in and built a dam and then want to walk away from it. Why about the environmental concerns? What about the noxious weeds concerns? So I think we have to hold the government's feet to the fire and make sure that something is done and done properly with this facility.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about health care and we just heard the Minister of Energy and Mines talking about being on the board or the committee for health care. And I would just like to reiterate one of the statements I made last year and how health care is going in rural area and in my constituency.

The hospital at Climax — we will remember and I will refresh — we heard that the rumour was spread that palliative care was going to close. So with the palliative care rumour out, that it was going to close, those with loved ones there said rather than transport them back and forth on Friday to another facility and back Monday, we won't put them in that facility. Lo and behold, it was a month or two later, the then associate minister of Health said, well it's not being used, therefore we closed it. What came first, the chicken or the egg?

So now that's happening again, is why I bring that one up.

We have in Lafleche a long-term care facility. Unfortunately four people passed away so there's four beds available. Are they using them? No. They took about a month to paint them so there is a list of people to get in but they took so long to have them painted, these people were again backed up and backed up on the list.

So when they finally got them painted, people are starting to move in, but on 30 days, on respite. So they will not let them in for long-term care. So what is this going to mean? Somebody will get up and say there is no waiting list for long-term care so we can close the facility. Again, it's kind of a backward way of looking at our health system.

As I travel the constituency, Mr. Speaker, some of the issues that are very, very near and dear: the closure of more rail lines is imminent; the tobacco law.

And we hear the tobacco law, how flawed it is. And that's a real concern in the rural area. It's a concern all over, but in my constituency it's a very, very deep concern that this tobacco law has to be changed. For goodness sake, we allow, we allow kids under age to smoke, we just don't let them . . . allow them to see them or to purchase them. But they can stand outside a facility and smoke.

Mr. Speaker, what we need to do is create an atmosphere for business and create jobs in the rural areas. And how do we need . . . how do we do that? It's by getting government out of the hair of business.

We need some water policy for the drought areas. I had a call today where an individual, his cattle had no water and he had to dig a well. He looked at how he could do it. He went through the government agencies, was told that there was programs that he could get money. He went to the bank, borrowed \$20,000 so he could put water in to water his livestock herd. He did not

want to sell it.

So when he finished the water project so he could feed his . . . or water his cattle, he submitted a bill to the government with all the proper documentation. The answer back is, well we don't have any money. So here he is holding the bag again — another great government program.

The other big issue in my constituency is people are wondering when the next election is. We lost people in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. From the census, we are down about 1,400. Where are they? They are going out for jobs. Can we bring those jobs back to rural Saskatchewan? Yes, we can. All we have to do is get government out of the way of business.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to touch base on one of the impediments to business. And it was in the Minister of Labour's own constituency. It was a business coming in from Calgary and they had a visit with the mayor of Moose Jaw and decided not to come. For two reasons, only two reasons this business would not move in. One was the labour laws and the other was the labour attitude of this province. That's how we are stifling business in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we hear rhetoric from the government side says we are out there listening to people. We are out there listening to people around the province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just . . . I would like to refer to a letter how this government listens to people. And the Minister of Education is probably very familiar with this. It's from the school of Wood Mountain, the mayor of Wood Mountain.

And there has been some correspondence that's gone back and forth but here is a letter from the deputy minister — the minister would not even sign off on the letter — but from the deputy minister. It says:

Neither the minister nor the department has any further comments to add in response to your various concerns and arguments.

In other words, shut up and don't bother us. That is how this government listens to people. Shame.

Mr. Speaker, we've already heard about the Minister of Economic Development's statement — less people means more money for those of us who are left. Well, how ludicrous can that statement be? And then, and then the spin doctors went out and tried to spin it saying he was taken out of context. Well, Mr. Speaker, how can you be taken out of context if it's on a live TV interview?

Mr. Speaker, the NDP, I think they do have a plan to keep people in Saskatchewan, albeit facetious. We'll let the car thieves increase. We'll let the young people steal the cars and not stop them. That way people won't have vehicles to leave the province. Pretty poor way of trying to keep people in the province.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch base on the election promises that have been broken. I touched on some already but I think it's worthwhile.

The promise: we'll create 30,000 jobs. The record: 12,000 jobs lost. The promise: we'll keep the budget balanced. Record: 478 million deficit 2001-2002. Promise: surgical waiting times to be cut by at least 30 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, waiting lists have increased over 50 per cent and Saskatchewan is the proud owner of the longest waiting lists in Canada.

The NDP promised less crime. Well we've all heard of that. Regina is the car theft capital of North America. I don't believe that's less crime. The NDP promised to hire 200 more police officers and what do we have? Forty-five more hired and that's probably just to make up for the people that have retired.

And one I've alluded to already, the NDP promised we will hire 500 new health care providers, and what have we seen — 1,192 fewer nurses than 1999.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no plan. It has a lot of rhetoric and no plan. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, as one would expect, I will be supporting the amendment and not the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to have you back at the helm. Just a brief starting comment, because I can't resist, about the member opposite from Wood River's comments: once a bomber, always a bomber. There was so much stuff flying around this room it was hard to know what he was trying to hit where. If I ever figure out what he was trying to say, Mr. Speaker, I'll respond to it.

Now as well on a more serious note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome back the member from Battleford-Cut Knife and wish him well. I know that that kind of a struggle takes a great deal out of a person, and certainly have watched people close to me deal with serious illness and so I just say that we're glad to have you back and glad things have turned out well for you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(16:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And I do want to start by thanking Her Honour for her most excellent address and, as well, a special thank you to the member for Saskatoon Greystone who moved the Throne Speech and I think, among other things, provided a very excellent overview of environmental and community issues in Saskatchewan that hopefully this House will be very thoughtful about.

And a second special thank you to the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld who seconded the Throne Speech and brought the perspective of a newly elected person with a passion for community that comes out of working in Saskatoon schools and community organizations and certainly understands the importance of programs that strengthen family and community. I was pleased as well, Mr. Speaker, to see that I have a little bit of oomph there as someone who also understands the importance of the cultural community. So I'm looking forward to more discussions on that front.

But one of the things that was common to all the speeches, Mr. Speaker, was hope; accomplishments for the present and hope

for the future. And I think responses to the Throne Speech do provide an excellent opportunity for elected members to respond while adding their own ideas, their own thoughts, because elected people are never content to rest, Mr. Speaker. We go into this kind of work because we want to make the world a better place and I think, until every child has an opportunity to fulfill their potential, we won't be done.

So never content to rest on their laurels, Mr. Speaker. I think that hope springs eternal and I look forward to hearing all the speeches of the members.

But at this time in the world's history, I think we should be particularly thoughtful about our democratic opportunities. You know, there's people who study democracy and they study why some areas have more economic and social success than others. And they've determined that democracies are places where economies flourish. And some of this is obvious.

We know that strife and conflict detracts from putting our energies into moving forward. And we certainly have seen the effect that strife and conflict can have on tourism, on service industries, on all of the kind of things where people travel in the conduct of creating wealth.

But strife also pushes people away, whether they're visitors or whether they're people who live in a community. And when it escalates into armed actions, it creates wounds between families and cultures and regions that are difficult to surmount even in the common interest.

I don't know if you know, but today was a day of remembering Dalton Camp on the radio. And Flora McDonald was actually on with some remembrances during the time I was in the car and she was recollecting a discussion she had with him — with Dalton Camp — within the last week or two. And so the reporter said, well what did you talk about? And she said, well he said to me, you know Flora, you've got to get in there and do something about this conflict in Afghanistan. She said it's . . . some of the approaches have just gone too far and I can't do anything about it from where I am, so I'm counting on you to do something about this.

And regardless of a person's particular views about that, I think the point that she said that was very constant throughout Dalton Camp's life was that he urged people who took on the mantle of elected office to actively work and fight for the things they believe in and care about. And I think that's a very good message to come out of his life.

Now the second part of a democratic and civil society that the researchers have identified is volunteerism. And we know that's alive and well in Saskatchewan. People have been quoting this article, "Saskatchewan: not the biggest, just the best." Certainly there's some of us who think that small is beautiful, especially those of us who are 5 foot 2. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the 2001 census report had some very good things to say about Saskatchewan — about charitable giving, volunteering, and community involvement, or in other words, caring — people who care enough to help, who care enough to become involved. In fact I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition hears this phrase: caring enough to become involved rather than simply sitting back and sniping from the edges.

But one of the striking discoveries the researchers made was how high Saskatchewan rated in all of the categories. Charitable donations: we give an average of \$308 per capita. That was double many of the other provinces. In volunteer work, 45 per cent of people give up their time in Saskatchewan, 60 per cent join in community activities and associations. Everywhere Saskatchewan was well out in front of all of their other counterparts.

Four times as likely to be involved in church and twice as likely in sport or cultural activities. Now civic participation, Mr. Speaker, is a form of social glue, although you have to be careful not to get too far into the glue. But it's the kind of thing that makes Saskatchewan have a high quality of life and have the regard that we have from many people around the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — So, Mr. Speaker, according to both the research and the pundits, we have the ideals . . . conditions in Saskatchewan to use our democratic process to the fullest. And that's what I intend to do today, Mr. Speaker, and tomorrow, and possibly the day after, depending on how long it takes me to tell everybody all the good things that are going on in this province.

And first of all, I want to spend a few minutes talking about my constituency because they are very dear to me, Mr. Speaker. I think they're the very best. And whether it's north-central, the Transition Area, core, Cathedral, the Italian Club area, or McNab Place, every part of our constituency places a very high value on community. It's expressed through community services, community schools, social housing, heritage preservation, energetic small business, celebrations of community, tree banding, community garbage pickup, festivals of talent.

And SaskCulture, who is one of the organizations that operates under the lottery system in this province, they have a motto, it's Culture Builds Community. And certainly both the Cathedral Village Arts Festival and the Core Community Festival, which are two of the more established festivals in our area, are a big part of bringing together diverse cultures in the community, but as well, showcasing all the talents and skill of people in the community.

And every person who's ever visited Regina Centre has commented on how it feels good to be there. So I'm just going to say that I'm very pleased to represent Regina Centre. And I'm going to get on with the Throne Speech debate. I can't adjourn yet.

And I'm going to follow the lead of several presenters and use the four pillars of the Throne Speech to support the areas I want to emphasize. But like . . . in the words of Robert Frost, many people have explored many topics and I'm going to take the road less travelled and try to talk about some of the things that I think have maybe not had as much attention. But I will mention that no one governs alone and no one builds a community alone.

So the areas I will be talking about will reflect substantial working partnerships with educators, mayors and city councils,

health districts, community associations. And as laid out in Her Honour's most excellent address, the four pillars of the Throne Speech are: investment in the economy and the environment, investment in infrastructure, provision of quality education, and healthy and self-reliant families. Now I think I just have time, Mr. Speaker, to start on investment in the economy and the environment.

But a bit about the opposition first. You know, a wise businessman once said that success in business is 90 per cent attitude. Now the other 90 per cent is hard work. And I know that's not my math that's at fault, Mr. Speaker. I know that that's 180 per cent, but I believe that it takes 180 per cent to be successful in a small business.

And I also know . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . oh there's lots the opposition doesn't know about me. I've run many businesses.

But anyway . . . I know that the Sask Party was out recently in rural Saskatchewan on their busted tour and they were ostensibly out there to talk about growing the economy but it became apparent very quickly, Mr. Speaker, that they needed to be out there growing their meetings because there wasn't very many people who came.

Now yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosthern tried to make a great deal about the shortfall in this year's revenues. Now first I want to remind the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that the balanced budget legislation recognizes the cyclical nature of Saskatchewan's economy and because of that requires that the budget be balanced over four years.

And so now the member portrays this as a huge calamity, but you know, Mr. Speaker, I remember last year — I'm getting a little bit older but I can still remember last year — and last year the members opposite couldn't have enough to say about Alberta. But you know I don't think we'll be hearing much about Alberta this year because here's a little fiscal reality — Alberta style. Alberta may delay business tax cuts.

Now if the House Leader would not participate in the speech we would get a little more done here, Mr. Speaker. But I think I would like to quote just a little bit from this:

Klein admits Tuesday's budget will be a far cry from his blueprint last year which suggested Alberta 6.5 billion accumulated debt would be paid off in a few years.

And why is that? Why is that? Because Finance minister Patricia Nelson warns her new budget will reflect reality. I'll say that again, Mr. Speaker. Finance minister Patricia Nelson warns her new budget will reflect reality. Now I think that if Alberta has conceded that reality exists out in the world — fiscal reality — that certainly the cheerleaders from the Sask Party would agree that, that some reality exists as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We believe it's the right plan. And unlike the members opposite who think they don't need one, I remember a party who thought they could run government with notes they made on the back of their cigarette packages. Well it's even worse, Mr. Speaker. A lot of them have given up smoking. Now those plans are written nowhere.

And I have to tell you that, that we do have a plan. It involves investment. It involves an appropriate tax structure, improved highways, leading edge communication technology, good water, schools, health care facilities, and it's a plan, Mr. Speaker, that's sustainable.

Now I know that people will be hanging on every word so I am just going to close with a few words about reality. Alberta knows a few things the opposition doesn't. One of them is that 75 per cent of our trade, Mr. Speaker, is with the US. So if the US economy is struggling, I suspect it's possible that it may affect our economy.

When people are saying that corporate tax revenues have been affected by September 11, then certainly it's a fact that every province's corporate tax revenues have been affected.

And when Alberta is reeling from lowered oil and gas prices, then as one of the next largest producers in Canada, it would only stand to reason that we would have some difficulties.

But tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, my theme is going to be action and hope, based on a plan. And I'd like to move adjournment of the Speech to the Throne for today . . . debate . . . Speech to the Throne. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.