

EVENING SITTING

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.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — I won't start from the beginning, but I would like to just mention a couple of things that I did say in detail. I talked about the Crowns and what the Crowns do for the people of Saskatchewan — rural and urban Saskatchewan — and how many people work in rural Saskatchewan for our Crown corporations and how much service they provide, how much industry they create by what they buy and what they build.

So what I do want to talk about . . . and I will go back briefly to start again with health premiums and the system in Alberta. The premiums are a payroll tax that in most cases must be administered by businesses, and it can be difficult and expensive to administer. For example, working couples in Alberta have to decide which one of them will pay for the premium and have it deducted from their pay.

Mr. Speaker, I am told that last year the Alberta government had to write off millions of dollars of uncollectable accounts — I was told over \$30 million — from people who couldn't or didn't pay their premiums. I'm also told, Mr. Speaker, that it costs more to administer the premium program with costs of about 15 million than it costs to administer the payroll of health providers for 10 million.

With our tax cuts, our low housing costs, our reasonable electricity and auto insurance rates and no health premiums, Saskatchewan cities remain cheaper to live in than Vancouver, than Calgary, than Winnipeg, than Toronto, than Montreal, than Charlottetown and even Halifax.

All of these advantages don't seem to be of interest to the members opposite, and we never hear them talk about it.

Mr. Speaker, as I have already mentioned, health premiums in Alberta are about to increase. And they will be \$44 per month for a single person or \$528 per year. For a family, it will now cost \$88 a month for a total of \$1,056 a year. That is compared to a family of four in Saskatchewan which I mentioned previously will pay 794 in sales tax. So health premiums in Alberta will be more than our sales tax in Saskatchewan. This is . . . they're raising the premiums in Alberta despite a 1996 promise in Alberta to the contrary, and 90,000 seniors will now have to pay the increased premiums.

British Columbia is the only other province to charge health premiums, and it has increased their premiums as well. An average BC (British Columbia) family will now be paying \$1,296 per year in health premiums. All that and houses that cost a quarter of a million dollars too, Mr. Speaker.

The Edmonton Journal reported that inflation in the price of energy last year in that city was 133 per cent. That's pretty scary, Mr. Speaker.

As a former unionized worker, I worry about the members opposite and their attitude towards working people who are unionized. And I want to remind all members that the benefits that union members have fought hard for have benefited other workers generally in society. Things like labour standards, which the members opposite may not like and in fact refer to as impediments or unnecessary regulations. Things like occupational health and safety standards, things like minimum wage.

And about the minimum wage issue, Mr. Speaker, people who live on the minimum wage will earn approximately \$12,700 a year if they work full time. After October, they'll earn 13,300. A rise in the minimum wage helps them to pay for their basic needs as well as allows them some spending with discretionary income, and that is good for local businesses in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the workers of Saskatchewan need to fear this group of people opposite. These folks have referred to unionized workers as job killers. What does that mean? Should every worker in Saskatchewan fear for their job under a government formed by this opposition? They're often quoted as saying that the labour legislation in this province is too onerous. What legislation would they repeal? What standards would they relax? Will there be fewer occupational health and safety standards? Will there be lower labour standards? Will hours of work be changed? Will overtime and stat holiday pay be eliminated? What will happen to The Trade Union Act?

One of the members opposite would make it much more difficult for women to collect maternity benefits. I read in *Hansard* from June 13 of last year that he preferred to have women work more weeks to qualify for maternity benefits. He was copying the Alberta legislation, another example where the opposition would make it more difficult for workers. I advise workers of this province to pay attention to the discussions of this legislation that takes place in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, education is the right choice for everyone. It's well known that education and economics go well hand in hand. Education remains one of our top priorities. Education is the most important, long-term, effective action we can take to improve the lives of our citizens. An Asian proverb says:

If you want to plan for one year, sow seeds. If you want to plan for ten years, plant trees. If you want to plan for a hundred years, educate, educate, educate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Education is important for all our citizens, but it's also very important for women, especially those who must support their families. And now that I'm on that topic, let me speak for a moment about this government's record on women.

I won't read all of my three pages of initiatives, but I will read some highlights. Our government has, under employment,

increased maternity and parental leave provisions from 30 weeks to 50 weeks; implemented the building independence strategy; increased the minimum wage in 1999 and 2002. We continue to implement pay equity within government. This initiative affects approximately 60,000 people working for government departments, Crown corporations and agencies, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) regional colleges, and the health sector. We've established a balancing work and family unit to help workplaces address work-life balance issues. We've increased support to child care initiatives in the last nine budget years. We've changed the tax system which will result in approximately 55,000 single parents, low-income seniors, minimum wage earners, and working families, and they will no longer pay provincial income tax. We've added a child tax credit to help Saskatchewan families with the cost of raising children.

We've enhanced maintenance enforcement through legislative amendments and the pilot of a dispute resolution process. We've developed and enhanced funding of screening programs for breast cancer, cervical cancer and bone mineral density throughout the province to ensure early detection and treatment. We've passed The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, the first legislation of its kind in North America. It enables police to remove the abuser and allows the victim to remain in the home.

We continue to provide funding to Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnerships to Solutions or STOP to Violence, a province-wide partnership of community-based organizations, individuals, and government working together to eliminate violence. And in our new legislation proposed for this session, dealing with the exploitation of children by prostitution, we will again help women.

Finally, I'm going to talk about health care, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure no one would accuse me of not wanting to get into this topic. Listening to the opposition always makes me want to say, and the rest of the story is? They use the tactic that if you say something is bad for long enough, everyone will believe it. It is also called programming the parrot. I see that evidence constantly by the empty rhetoric and inflammatory half stories that continually come out of the members opposite.

Perhaps the benefit of over three decades' involvement in health care causes me to view the world differently. I am concerned about calls for premiums in health care, for medical savings accounts, for privatization, because they take away from what should be the central debate in health care. That is, how do we improve the care that people receive and make things better for them? Health care should be centred around the patient. Patients must be the heart of health care, and everything must revolve around their care and safety.

People are scared in Saskatchewan about the opposition coming to power. With the massive tax cuts the opposition is proposing, people are wondering how their health care will be paid for. It's certainly not clear to anyone.

The member from Melfort-Tisdale talked last month about how inviting pharmaceutical companies to take advantage of the synchrotron will be his plan to anchor health as a contributor to the economy. Inviting research is important, but I fear that he really wants to invite private health corporations to

Saskatchewan to only take profits from the provision of health care.

He also complained about the length of time it takes to approve new drugs to our drug *Formulary*. This is another thing I'm worried about, Mr. Speaker. Is his comment a precursor to a Sask Party policy of less regulation on drugs? This would fit with their deregulation ideology. We must be careful when we introduce new drugs as some come on the market quickly and are later found to be ineffective or just plain dangerous. It shows that the member doesn't understand the ideas of efficacy and effectiveness in the use of drugs.

In the *Gull Lake Advance* of Tuesday, March 12, the headline says, "Sask Party fails to outline position on health care." Mr. Speaker, they made no effort to appear before the Romanow Commission because they really do have no plan for health care. If there is a plan, it's a very well-kept secret.

People across Saskatchewan have told us that they're also afraid of drastic changes like premiums and medical savings accounts. I've talked about premiums. They cost a lot of money to administer. Sometimes people don't pay. What do you do with those who don't pay? People hear from us that we aren't planning to go there, but the members across might be going there. And if we follow the lead of their friends in Alberta and BC, well, that's what they would probably do.

Let's talk about medical savings accounts or MSAs for a moment, and I want to do this because people have asked me about them. They also worry because the Sask Party says next to nothing, but they look at some of the suggestions made by the Mazankowski report, knowing how much the Sask Party likes anything from Alberta, and Saskatchewan people worry about what they might do and if they'll implement medical savings accounts.

Mr. Speaker, people want to help contain costs, and they want to keep their health care. So it's interesting that one of the solutions being proposed is to give people control over an account and say, you manage your own health care using this account. Proponents of this solution say it will encourage people to be more aware of the costs of health care, but the worry is that people won't seek health care in order to save money.

And there seems to be a problem with how to pay for these medical savings accounts. Are they a taxable benefit? Would employers contribute? What happens to the money if it's not all used? What happens if you have a pre-existing condition? Would you still qualify?

Medical savings accounts, Mr. Speaker, tend to benefit younger and healthier people at the expense of the older or sicker person. There is a debate in the United States as to whether patients would manage their medical savings accounts or whether they would be managed closely by insurance companies. There is a debate about whether they would help contain costs.

One of the conclusions of the paper I read on MSAs was that the relatively unhealthy will likely end up paying more for health insurance for out-of-pocket than they do now. They also concluded that higher-income, healthier persons are the most

likely to be attracted to the MSA approach.

So, Mr. Speaker, while some solutions may be interesting to some, they must be examined carefully. And with regard to the private, for-profit, health system in the United States, I want to take this opportunity to read some highlights from testimony of February 21, 2002 before the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. This testimony was given by Dr. Arnold S. Relman, professor emeritus of Medicine and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School and emeritus editor-in-chief of *The New England Journal of Medicine*. He is someone who has studied our system and the US (United States) system for many years.

He makes the following points:

Most of the current problems of the US system result from the growing encroachment of private, for-profit ownership and competitive markets on a sector of our economy that properly belongs in the public domain.

He goes on to say:

No health system is as expensive, inefficient and inequitable or as unpopular as the US system. The only parts of US society happy with the current market-driven health care system are the owners and investors in the for-profit industries now living off the system.

There is not much evidence that private businesses delivering health care for profit.

This is still him talking.

. . . have greatly increased the total cost of health care and damaged, not helped, their public and private non-profit competitors. They can't exist together. So goodbye public system.

The Medicare system has administrative costs of less than 3 per cent with the remainder of expenditures, (97%) going to physicians, hospitals, and other providers.

He goes on to say:

The private insurers have corporate and administrative costs of 15 to 30 per cent (and) in addition, out source, (which means) contract out many services they use to control costs.

As a result, only 50 to 60 per cent of the premium dollar ends up with the providers.

Private insurers at first held down premium prices by drastically cutting utilization.

(But) recently premium prices of private for-profit insurers in the US have begun to increase at double-digit rates, more rapidly than the cost of Medicare and Medicaid.

He goes on to say:

Several years ago senior citizens covered by Medicare were

encouraged to obtain their care from private, for-profit HMOs that would be paid for by the government. It soon became obvious that the costs of care under the private system were much greater and the senior citizens were dissatisfied with the care they received. A wholesale exit of senior citizens from the private system ensued.

In short, the US experience has shown that (the) private markets and commercial competition have made things worse, not better, for the US health care system.

Here is a very important point he makes, Mr. Speaker:

Many south of the border believe that you Canadians have the right idea in deciding that the financing of health care is primarily a public responsibility. We still think you are right and that we ought to emulate you, rather than vice versa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Dr. Relman goes on to say:

We must look at ways to optimize our use of resources and improve the quality of our health system.

That is what Ken Fyke did here in Saskatchewan. Dr. Relman makes the point that:

Splintering the delivery system into many different, highly specialized facilities is not in general a sound option for improving quality and effectiveness. A better approach would be to re-organize how physicians work together.

Now there is a novel thought.

We should both begin to encourage physicians and other health care professionals to organize themselves into self-governing, multi-speciality and multi-disciplinary teams to deliver comprehensive care.

He is reconfirming the models that we have in Beechy, Kyle, Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Hafford, and countless other places in Saskatchewan. He is reconfirming our primary care model. When great distinguished scholars agree with the work we do in Saskatchewan and say, that's the way we do it. We should pay attention.

Here's another confirmation, Mr. Speaker, that Dr. Relman says:

Physicians provide the best care when they work in teams not as competitors.

(19:15)

And another one:

To discourage over service, they should be paid primarily for their time and not on a piecemeal basis. That would reduce both fraud and the resources wasted on the processing of claims.

I want to emphasize the following important point that Dr. Relman makes:

It is a fundamental misconception to imagine that sick patients can or should behave like ordinary consumers in commercial transactions, selecting the services and prices they want.

Most of us can't shop for medical services when we are sick, Mr. Speaker. Health care is totally different from most goods and services, and that's why we have medical insurance in Canada and why sick people need the professional and altruistic services of physicians and other providers.

Finally this distinguished American doctor says:

I suspect that most Canadians understand why health care is special and why it needs to be insured by a public system like the one you now have.

I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, this doctor is the former dean of Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School and the former editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the two most respected medical journals in the world.

I want to briefly mention waiting lists since I hear that chirping going on across there often. We often hear about the length of waiting lists. Waiting lists are not consistent throughout the province; one is not the same as another. One doctor may have a long list, another a short list. There are few criteria to go on the list and are few definitions of who should be on the list. I know that recently when a waiting list was phoned through, many people had already had their operations. Other people didn't know they were on the list. Many people remain on the list longer than others as they have reasons not to have their operation on a given day that's offered to them.

Our government has a plan to make the waiting list transparent and to give everyone the opportunity to have their surgery as quickly as possible. Innovation continues in health care in Saskatchewan. Improvements will follow. We will be training more emergency medical technicians, and we'll introduce the paramedics Act. That will improve patient care. We will create 12 new regional health authorities. We will work to improve the efficiency of our health system, and we'll work towards having proper funding for the health system from the federal government reinstated. And our improvements will be for patients.

So, Mr. Speaker, to wrap up, our Throne Speech has given us an outline. The budget tomorrow will give details — Wednesday, I guess — will give details, and later we will introduce legislation to bring our plans to fruition. I have outlined good news that is occurring all over the province. I've highlighted the happenings in the economy and the housing construction industry in an effort to fight the doom and gloom from across the way.

I talked about how agriculture is diversifying. There are things happening that will help develop new industries in the province such as organic produce. You never hear those members opposite talking about great things going on in agriculture and the many people in rural towns and on farms being innovative

and responding to the changing world around them. I recommend that they read Al Scholz's book, *Don't Turn Out the Lights*. At least they should scan the contents and read the dedication. Al Scholz says he was surprised to learn about all the success in Saskatchewan in the food processing and textile industries. I encourage everyone to read about it.

I talked about the Crown corporations and how they provide jobs across the province, mostly in rural communities. I talked about the services they provide at a very competitive rate, about the goods and services they purchase from small businesses in the province, and about the good works their employees do.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about health premiums and how much they've gone up in Alberta. I talked about how expensive they are to administer and how many people can't or don't pay them. I talked about how we can't blindly follow Alberta's actions.

I've highlighted a few things of the many problems for the for-profit health system. I talked about how health care premiums . . . how health care is to remain patient centred and how everything we do in health care has to answer the question, how does this improve patient care? I talked about the fears that I have for workers and people generally in this province if the members opposite ever take power.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the motion so eloquently moved by my colleague from Saskatoon Greystone and seconded, in his maiden speech, by my new colleague the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to stand and join into the debate today on the Speech from the Throne. I think like a lot of other members, Mr. Speaker, that have spoke before me, I think I'm going to go along the same vein, as far as the start of my speech, and thank a lot of people that are significant in my life that have helped me through the two and a half years of elected life.

I think it's a bit of a function of time how . . . I mean I never mentioned a word I don't think after the . . . when I spoke the first time and perhaps not even the last time. But I think as we are longer in this life we realize the support system that needs to be there and certainly I am probably no different than anyone else.

I would like to thank especially my wife Cindy and my two boys Craig and Mark who at times don't have Dad around maybe quite as much as they did prior to elected life. I don't make every hockey game, baseball game, lacrosse game, football game, soccer game. There's a lot of sports going on in the family. So unfortunately I'm not there all the time.

Also I would like to thank my wife who has to not only look after the household and making sure the boys are at the right spot at the right time, but also holds down a job at the Regina Health District in the operating room and in the cardio cath lab. So I'd like to thank her.

I'd also like to thank some extended family I guess. My mother and father who live in Fort Qu'Appelle who . . . It's always

interesting, after I get up and speak in the House, I quite often get a phone call from my father who tends to watch this channel religiously. And I would have to agree with him; normally whenever he watches, after . . . when he phones me up he says, you know you guys make perfect sense but I don't know what those people on the other side of the floor are talking about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — So perhaps I come by it honestly because honestly I question too. I also would like to thank very much my mother- and father-in-law who tend to help out a lot. My mother-in-law, Anne, who looks after the kids quite often when I'm working late or if Cindy's working late. And also my father-in-law who has been just an invaluable help on my farm.

I still continue to farm, have farmed, and still continue to farm, and plan on farming well into the future. But it's not easy and with his help it's made it much more easy, or certainly a lot easier.

The other person I would like to thank would be my constituency assistant, Vonni Widdis, who holds down the office in Sedley, Saskatchewan — in the mall at Sedley, Saskatchewan — and does just a great job dealing with constituency concerns. Unfortunately I can't make all the phone calls, return all the calls, but she does a great job handling the casework and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the main part of my speech, what I really want to talk about as far as the Speech from the Throne, I'd really like to welcome back the member from Battleford-Cut Knife, for being back in the House and giving . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — . . . what I think was just an excellent speech. The member and I go back many, many years, long before political life. We worked together a little bit through the Saskatchewan Safety Council when the member was on the board with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and doing the work through SARM, and mainly on the transportation committee. And we used to attend a lot of meetings together and have always appreciated his input, and it's just great to see him back here again, Mr. Speaker.

The last person I'd like to welcome into the House is the member from Saskatoon, the newly elected member from Saskatoon. This last eight days it must be really quite interesting to sit over there and have as many people welcome you as what have welcomed you.

I would say the second or third week of your MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) life, especially in this House, may not be quite as rosy, especially from this side, but welcome and I hope you have a significant career in politics. It may not be long. It may not be long but at least put your heart and soul into it.

Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that it's been, you know, a number of months since we've been back. Unfortunately we went through a whole fall season of September, October, November that this House didn't sit. I know members on this

side of the House called for a fall session because we felt there were some issues that were of significance, some issues that really needed to be addressed at that time.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we go into this spring session, I would have to agree with our call for the session in the fall, to have been able to discuss some of the issues that were of significance such as the job losses. We have lost a pile of jobs, 16,000 jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker, and . . . the province of Saskatchewan has lost 16,000 jobs and we really felt it was time to get back into the House and do some of the work prior to this spring session.

You know, it's interesting as the session was called back in for the Speech from the Throne in March, and I was talking to a number of constituents and they say, well you're finally going back to work. And I don't know if they don't realize maybe what you do in between session, intersessionally, but there certainly is enough to do there. I find it often the same way when I'm farming and people say to me, so do you work? No, I say, I just farm. I don't really work; I just farm.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we could have answered a lot of those questions had we had a fall session, had we been back in this House doing the work of the people that we called for.

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't only the loss of jobs; it was the declining economy. We've seen oil prices drop and the significant impact that it's had on this government with now going into a deficit position.

We had the health care plan. We talked in length through the summer with the Fyke hearings that went on and we felt it was just a really great time to get back into this House and debate what the government's plans were for the future of health care in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And you know I would say that in health care many people go through the system and have no problem at all. And unfortunately, maybe I guess in the job that we have, we tend to get all the phone calls of people that have been through the health system and it hasn't worked out very well. And, Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say that in my constituency office, the number of phone calls I get on health care and health care gone bad, I guess you could say, is not declining; it's increasing, Mr. Speaker. So you can take from that, that it's a very serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, another area that needed to be discussed last fall, really was the whole ag file, and what this government was planning on doing in the future for agriculture. Unfortunately we start this House with the Speech from the Throne on March 14, we hear the latest ideas coming out of crop insurance — coming out of crop insurance — when our crop insurance are supposed to be filled out by the end of March.

Now, Mr. Speaker, had we had the opportunity to debate some of this, to bring some of this to the forefront back in a fall session, we wouldn't then be in such a tight time frame as we are right now.

Now I realize on seeded crops such as wheat and durum, there's been an extension to the middle of April. But, Mr. Speaker,

what that doesn't take into consideration is the planning that most farmers put into planning a crop, what they're going to grow, on which land, and everything else. We haven't even got the what-if statements from crop insurance to determine what we should or shouldn't be . . . what we should or shouldn't be seeding, Mr. Speaker.

So it's going to be . . . I know in a situation like mine which is . . . I don't farm a lot of land; it's not too difficult. But I can imagine somebody that's farming 80 quarters of land, that didn't have a clue of what this crop insurance program was going to look like until a week or two ago. Mr. Speaker, that is just unrealistic.

Now I guess if the Minister of Agriculture or the NDP (New Democratic Party) government felt that all you need is a week or two or three to make your seeding plans on 80 quarters of land, they're sorely mistaken, Mr. Speaker. So I really felt that it was time to come into this House and debate those issues back in the fall, where we had certainly a lot more time to research it and make better decisions than the decisions that have been made by this government just recently, Mr. Speaker.

Moving forward to the Speech from the Throne, and I've listened to some of the speakers on the government side talk about the Speech from the Throne, and I listened to the member from Moose Jaw that was talking about the four pillars and what a strong foundation this Speech from the Throne was built on, Mr. Speaker. But I tell you, I didn't hear that part of the speech I guess. I don't think any of the members on this side of the House heard that part of the speech, Mr. Speaker.

Because certainly there's a lot of questions to be answered after that Speech from the Throne. And I realize it's supposed to be just a bit of a direction of which way the government is going, but really there was no vision, no long-term future plan that was announced in the Speech from the Throne.

They did make mention of a couple of things. They talked about the Saskatchewan status of the arts Act that they would be introducing. They talked about a safe driver reward program which I would be very interested to see and how that is going to work. They talked about the national sex offender registry, Mr. Speaker. All of which are probably very good Acts and very good things to be talking about. But as far as how does that grow the province, how does that increase the population, how does it increase the tax base of this province, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear one word mentioned of that, Mr. Speaker.

The one thing that I would hang my hat on though, if I was the government, and I think they should hang their hat on this; it's the only rung on the coat rack left that they could hang their hat on, Mr. Speaker, is their ethanol plan. They talked about an ethanol plan in the Speech from the Throne and then shortly after the Minister of Energy and Mines talked and introduced the plan that the government has for ethanol. And I would applaud that, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a great plan. And you didn't hear one thing come out from this side of the . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — . . . this side of the House to go against it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(19:30)

Mr. McMorris: — And, Mr. Speaker, there was a real applaud coming out of the government side and they should applaud themselves, because it is a great plan.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from a September 19, September 19, 2001 news release. And the letterhead happens to be Saskatchewan Party caucus news release: Sask Party announces a plan for ethanol expansion in this province, Mr. Speaker. And we go down and we see that:

Saskatchewan has the opportunity to lead the way in the production and consumption of environmentally friendly ethanol.

Okay. Quote, Mr. Hermanson says:

Ethanol production has the potential to create new jobs, diversify the struggling agriculture industry and contribute to a cleaner environment . . .

If we act now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this document is dated September 19, 2001, was put out by the Sask Party caucus. It goes on to talk about a number of things about ethanol that were exactly the same blueprint or greenprint or whatever colour you want to call it from that side, that talked about ethanol expansion, such as the elimination of the fuel tax on the ethanol portion.

It talked about keeping it out of government hands, Mr. Speaker. This document talks about keeping it out of government hands.

And I will applaud the government on that side for taking a plan like this and putting it into action, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, and I think more significantly, Mr. Speaker, that this could have been done if it would have been a Saskatchewan Party government back in September 19, 2001. Right now we hear the government say it's going to be about a 16-month, 18-month wait before ethanol production is up and running in this province. Well we've already wasted six months from when we announced it to when this government decided that maybe everybody had forgot about our plan and they could reintroduce it, Mr. Speaker, and hang their hat on it.

So as I said, great idea, Mr. Speaker, great idea. I would ask, I would invite the government opposite to take a look at the Sask Party Web site because there are a whole host of ideas just every bit as good as this ethanol production expansion news release, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I think maybe what we should do is reissue all our news releases over the last year because as a government that seems to be completely null and void of new ideas of their own, we could certainly give them a few, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Speech from the Throne and I hear the members opposite, they talk about this or that in the Speech from the Throne and what a great idea it is, and perhaps that might be. I mentioned a couple of them that I picked out here whether it's a safe driver award program or the national sex offenders registry which no doubt the member from Humboldt had spent a lot of time on and pushing this government to act on. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the whole document and you look at the direction of where this government is going, Mr. Speaker, I cannot call it a success. I cannot call it positive forward thinking, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would use the example of on my farm that if I've got a quarter section of land that produces very, very well but at the end of the year my expenses are higher than my income, it's not a successful year. Yes, I can look at that quarter and I can brag about that quarter and say what a great quarter that was. It produced a great crop and my dollars per acre are way up, but when I look at the bottom line, when I look at the whole year of what my farm produced, and my expenses are more than my revenue, it's not a successful year, Mr. Speaker.

And when I look at the ideas that are coming from that side of the floor, Mr. Speaker — from the government side of the floor, Mr. Speaker — when I look at the NDP's ideas, Mr. Speaker, yes they come out with the odd good one, but when you look at the balanced scorecard of hearing some of those people on that side, it's not very balanced, Mr. Speaker, because we have more certainly negatives than positives.

One of which would be the deficit, Mr. Speaker. We went from a . . . Talk about a long-term vision. Let's talk a little bit about a long-term vision. We heard the Premier last year talk about, and the Minister of Finance, talk about quite a bit of extra money in . . . a surplus of money in the budget. And so what did they decide to do? They decided to hire 570 more employees which would be a good idea I guess if you can extend that and can continue to have those people employed. Now this year, Mr. Speaker, less than probably 12 months after that announcement, we're looking at — in the newspaper — firing or releasing 340, 400 employees, Mr. Speaker. What type of a long-term vision is that for the province, Mr. Speaker? It is absolutely no vision at all.

And there are some complaints from the government side when we start talking about a deficit position that the government will be in and definitely they will be in a deficit position. They are in a deficit position. I'd like to quote from an article by Randy Burton in *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Speaker, dated March 19, 2002. And it says, "Straight Talk" and "Clarification", Mr. Speaker:

Finance Minister, Eric Cline says I am wrong in stating the government miscalculated its budget forecast by some \$450 million last year.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, he says, is right. He's right. The government only missed by 237.4 million, Mr. Speaker. That's what this minister has to correct him on.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is . . . the fact remains, however, the government will spend 478.4 million more than it took in last

year. Mr. Speaker, there is no way that that can be classed as a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

Last year they were able to make up the difference with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. We're going to talk about it this year, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately that Fiscal Stabilization Fund is no longer there. It was a shell in the shell game that had nothing under it, Mr. Speaker. When they lifted the shell up there was nothing there; and that's exactly what was left in that Fiscal Stabilization Fund come this year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to talk about, move onto now is a little bit of my constituency. I'll get back to some of the statements made by the government members in a bit. But what I wanted to talk a little bit about is the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone and the hard-working people in that constituency.

Every year in January/February I go through and make stops in every community, rent space in every community, and did the same thing this year, Mr. Speaker. I stopped in about 18 communities, spent three or four hours in each . . . two or three hours in each community — it was advertised well in advance — had some very good crowds come out, Mr. Speaker.

But it was interesting because what you do more than anything else, Mr. Speaker, is you hear what is on the mind of the people of Indian Head-Milestone, Mr. Speaker. You sit around and you have a coffee and you hear what the people are thinking, Mr. Speaker.

I will also go on, after I talk about the community tour that I did, I would be very glad to talk about the Grow Saskatchewan meetings we had around the province, Mr. Speaker, and I will deal with that. And I've heard members opposite, the government members talk about our Grow Saskatchewan meetings compared to their bus tour — their high-speed stops in different communities, Mr. Speaker. You can use that word high-speed stops. And we'll compare those two.

Mr. Speaker, what I first want to talk about are the communities in my constituency that I had the opportunity of stopping in, whether it was the small community of Edgeley, whether it was the community of Milestone, Indian Head, Fort Qu'Appelle, Yellow Grass, Wilcox, Odessa, Vibank, Montmartre — just a number of communities, Mr. Speaker.

And I could say without a doubt that every community — Osage, Tyvan — Mr. Speaker, every community was concerned about the out-migration from this province, Mr. Speaker. Every person has a story about a neighbour, a son, a daughter, a grandchild that has left this province, Mr. Speaker.

And when we look at StatsCanada numbers that have come out just recently, Mr. Speaker, the anecdotal evidence, over and over again, is spelling out true, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing our population in this province dip well below the million mark, Mr. Speaker. It's down to 978,000 people or whatever.

So the anecdotal evidence that we hear day in and day out, Mr. Speaker, is borne out in the StatsCanada . . . in the census done by the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

So one of the biggest issues that I heard was the declining population and what can a person do about it and what can a government do about it. And, Mr. Speaker, they said, you know we've been in this province for 10 . . . we've had an NDP government in this province for 11 years and we're seeing more and more people leave. And unbelievably enough I didn't hear . . . In every community that I went to, I didn't hear one person say, well that's good we have less people because there's more for the rest of us, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't hear that anywhere in the 18 to 20 communities that I stopped at. There's only been one place that I happen to hear an economic theory like that, and it was from the government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — But there is a declining population and it's affecting every community. It's affecting every aspect of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I think what we need to do is get some long-term vision on how can we regain population in this province. And that was certainly the direction that we went forward with, when we had our Grow Saskatchewan meetings around the province, Mr. Speaker. And I'll get to that in a little bit.

So declining population I would say was the most common topic that I heard when I was visiting community to community. And then I look at the Throne Speech and I say, is there anything in here that's going to attract people to our province or keep the people that we already have in this province here, Mr. Speaker. And I didn't hear a word of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard a lot about the highways in our province, Mr. Speaker, and I'll probably be rising almost every day in this House reading a petition from the people of Indian Head-Milestone regarding the 35 Highway.

Mr. Speaker, when I drive up and down that highway, and I've gone from the American border all the way up to Nipawin on that highway, and there are portions of it that are in very, very good shape, Mr. Speaker, very good shape. But there are a number of areas that are absolutely undriveable, Mr. Speaker, undriveable. Where my farm is, and when I run up to Fort Qu'Appelle, up to the lake at Fort Qu'Appelle, I honestly take a grid road every time because it is twice the shape as our highways are in this province.

It's an absolute disgrace, Mr. Speaker. And the problem with that, leaving that as an absolute disgrace, and the Minister of Highways is making a joke of it and thinks it's perfectly fine that it's in that disgrace, that type of shape. You know I mean that's just absolutely unbelievable that the Minister of Highways would think it's perfectly fine that that highway is impassable, undriveable, Mr. Speaker.

That highway goes from Tobin Lake all the way down to the American border. And I will guarantee you that if you drive that highway in the summertime you will see quite a few vehicles going north — quite a few cars and campers going north up to Tobin Lake for the fishing — but you very, very seldom see one of them come back south on that highway. They've driven it once and that was enough for their vehicle. They're pulling a

\$100,000 unit there and they cannot drive on the highways, Mr. Speaker, of this province.

We've talked about population increase and we've talked about growing economy — and tourism is a huge part of it — and then you get the members of the government opposite making light of a highway that would be a major corridor up through the middle of this province, north-south corridor. And, Mr. Speaker, they aren't doing a darn thing to fix it. So road rage was another issue that was raised often.

Health care was raised often, Mr. Speaker. And again, unfortunately, we hear case after case where people have accessed the health care system and it wasn't there for them.

Mr. Speaker, I just had a case and again — I mean, many, many different anecdotal cases — but it's a case where a lady from Indian Head was down south in the States and she had fallen and broken her arm. She had fractured her arm, and they said you better get back to Saskatchewan right away because of the insurance issues and also you need to be close to your medicare, where you can get good, quality, health care, Mr. Speaker.

And so that was the case. And they rushed home. They forewent the chance of going directly into the hospital in somewhere in Montana, I think it was Billings or wherever in Montana. They forewent that, going directly into the hospital and having it treated that day or the day later, Mr. Speaker, and they jumped in the car and they came back to Saskatchewan.

Well the doctor here, and through his diagnosis, thought it should be in a sling; and they put it in a sling and it wasn't healing. So then she went on the list to have this operation to set her arm, Mr. Speaker. And she was on the list and on the list and on the list, Mr. Speaker. The arm was unable to move, the atrophy was setting in. What they had to do is either completely lose the use of that arm or save the muscle that was there. And they went down to Minot and she had it operated on, because it was going to be something like a six-month wait here in Saskatchewan.

They could have been in the hospital that day or the next day in Billings, but they came up to use our medicare system which, Mr. Speaker, we can argue back and forth on the system. But the problem was, it wasn't there for her, Mr. Speaker. She ended up going back south across the line.

And I bet you there is very few people on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, very few government members, that wouldn't have a story about that — wouldn't have a story about that, Mr. Speaker. So it's just another story of health care that when you access the system at times it really lets you down. And that was just another issue.

(19:45)

Agriculture was always a topic because when you look at the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone you can't go from one community to the other community without dealing agriculture . . . discussing agriculture issues. Perhaps the only area in the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone would be the community of Fort Qu'Appelle which isn't as directly impacted with agriculture, but certainly does have some spinoff industry

in the Fort Qu'Appelle area; but agriculture is continually talked about.

Now in our area we weren't affected maybe quite as much a lot of areas with the drought but, Mr. Speaker, we also were affected greatly with the amount of hail, Mr. Speaker. Now the members opposite are joking back and forth and are saying, what about grasshoppers?

You know, I mean, that's what they care about. What are they hoping that we have a grasshopper infestation so that they've got another problem on their plate, Mr. Speaker? Right now they can't control the problems that they do have on their plate without adding another one, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the agriculture issue is a big one and we talked a little bit about it already today. We talked a little bit about it already with the agriculture. We had a number of questions from our ag critic talking about the issue of crop insurance. The member from Last Mountain-Touchwood went on about crop insurance premiums and the difference that's going to make.

Mr. Speaker, it's significant. It's a huge difference, Mr. Speaker, and I know the minister of Agriculture stood up in the House this afternoon and talked about well, you guys just don't understand — you just don't understand, Mr. Speaker. And he's still reiterating that that we don't understand about agriculture, Mr. Speaker. And I will tell you that I don't know everything about agriculture — no one on this side or that one does.

But it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, in the break between five and seven, a number of us went out for supper. There was 10 of us sitting around the table and you know what the topic was? What are you going to seed this year? What about John Deere equipment? What about Case IH equipment? We talk agriculture day in and day out and the minister opposite is saying we don't understand agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely out of this world to think that he would be the only person in this House that has any idea of what's going on in agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and he's saying that's right. He's the only one in this House that has any idea on agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite that minister to come out to a community in my constituency and we'll invite a bunch of people in, a bunch of farmers in, and ask how many are sure glad that their premiums for crop insurance are going to be going up — as the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood talked about — \$8,000, Mr. Speaker. How many people do you think in that hall are going to say, thank you, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Minister, you understand a lot more about agriculture than we do. I'm glad our premiums are going up \$8,000, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, there hasn't been one word mentioned from that side either when you deal with the Canadian Wheat Board. They talk about, well what's your ag

plan, what's our ag plan? Mr. Speaker, I would invite them again; go to our Web site, and you'll see our whole plan on agriculture, what would help turn this agriculture sector around, Mr. Speaker. And for some reason, whether they choose not to go to the web site or whatever, but there are a number of areas in agriculture that we talk about.

Mr. Speaker, this government is completely out of ideas when it comes to agriculture. Mr. Speaker, if I could give the Minister of Agriculture one word of advice, one word of advice — no more enhancements to the crop insurance program. Please, we can't afford it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've been listening over the last six or seven days regarding the government's response to the Speech from the Throne, and I've also listened to a number of our people speak regarding the Speech from the Throne. And often I think almost without a member from that side, they always make some remark about Alberta, and they call us the Alberta envy party, and they make all these sorts of accusations and claims, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, they make fun of Alberta.

I know the member from Saskatoon — I'm not exactly sure which constituency — that was just finished speaking, and she was talking about the Alberta tax rates going up, Mr. Speaker. They talked about the tax rates going up. Yes, they went up. They've gone up to the lowest in Canada. Wouldn't that be a shame. They've gone up to the lowest in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so when you hear them talk about Alberta and how things are so much worse in Alberta. How could you ever do that. You've got health care premiums. You've got this. You've got that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of things that they've failed to realize, Mr. Speaker, they've failed to realize.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at Alberta and you look at Saskatchewan, I know that Saskatchewan is definitely a have-not province. We receive transfer payments. What would you like to call those transfer payments? You could call those transfer payments welfare virtually, couldn't you? Mr. Speaker, this province wouldn't be able to operate unless we had transfer payments from the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

Who do you think pays into the provincial . . . the federal coffers as a have-province, Mr. Speaker? Who would be one of those provinces? Well I would think it would be Alberta. See you've got a government slapping the hand, biting the hand that's feeding them, Mr. Speaker. They are putting money into the federal coffers so we as a welfare province, a have-not province, under this NDP government have to collect.

Wouldn't it be just a shame if this province became a have province, if this province grew to become a have province so that we could put into the federal coffers instead of being a welfare province under the NDP and take out of the federal coffers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member from Regina Centre. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Centre went . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, order. The member for Indian Head-Milestone has the floor.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll have it for quite a while yet, I hope.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when I listened to some of the speeches from the members opposite, and I listened to the member from Regina Centre, Mr. Speaker, and she went on about Alberta and the debt that Alberta has. And she announced it a couple of times that Alberta has got a \$6 billion debt, Mr. Speaker — \$6 billion debt.

But it was just a typical NDP salesmanship that they told half the story, Mr. Speaker, and they forgot the biggest half. The biggest half would be, yes, they do have a \$6 billion debt, but they also have a \$12.2 billion heritage fund that they take from, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Let me say that again. They have a \$12.2 billion heritage fund versus a \$6 billion debt, Mr. Speaker.

Now the minister from Regina Centre would like to make fun of that. But, Mr. Speaker, if I was given the chance to have a \$12 billion heritage fund compared to a \$6 billion debt, I would take it, Mr. Speaker — I would take it.

And the \$12 billion heritage fund is not a shell game. It's not like the fiscal stabilization program that this government likes to operate under, Mr. Speaker. It's actual cash in the bank, Mr. Speaker — \$12.2 billion cash in the bank with a \$6 billion debt compared to the situation that we are in in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was also listening to the member from Athabasca. I was also listening to the member from Athabasca that was talking quite a bit about Alberta and he said, you know, those members opposite — meaning the Saskatchewan Party — they've got Alberta envy. And all you can do is talk about Alberta. And all you can do is talk about Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so the minister says, if you like Alberta so much, Mr. Speaker, if you like Alberta so much, why don't you just move there? That's what the Minister of Environment, SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), the member from Athabasca, said. Why don't you just move there?

Mr. Speaker, if 20,000 people can't get it through their heads — that have already moved to Alberta — what's another 26 going to do, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Twenty thousand people have moved to Alberta out of this province and we lost 12,000 because of our death to . . . rate ratio; we have more births than we have deaths. But, Mr. Speaker, the anecdotal evidence over and over and over again are people talking with their feet. They're voting with their feet, Mr. Speaker.

In the last three years we've lost about 20,000 people. What

does that mean? That means the town of . . . the city of Estevan, that means the city of Weyburn, are gone out of this province in the last three years. And they sit on that side of the House and say, oh, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter.

In fact, if I can quote the member from Regina-Qu'Appelle, in his Speech from the Throne, said, let's not make too much of this census thing. No, no, no, let's not make too much of this census thing. I mean we've only lost 20,000 or 30,000 or 40,000 people out of this province, but let's not make too much of that, Mr. Speaker, because you know what it might signify? It might signify a government that's out of ideas and lost touch with the economic realities of the 21st century, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, you also hear the Minister of Post-Secondary Education; the Minister of Post-Secondary Education. And I heard her talking and she was very right when she said we have some excellent educational opportunities in this province with our two universities, and the SIAST campuses around the province, and the community colleges, and the extended education. There are some excellent opportunities for education in this province, Mr. Speaker. We educate some of the brightest kids coming out of this province, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, that is the problem, Mr. Speaker. This government has no plan to retain the people that we're losing.

Now I remember campaigning in 1999 and going from community to community. And I remember, Mr. Speaker, at a all-candidates forum in the town of Fort Qu'Appelle where the member from Melville was sitting in opposition to the government, Mr. Speaker, and I was sitting in opposition to the government, Mr. Speaker, and we were both talking about the NDP's plan, Mr. Speaker.

The only person, unfortunately for him, that was speaking for the government's plan, out of the three constituencies, was the former SERM minister, Mr. Lorne Scott. And he was having to defend the government's policies during the 1999 election.

But it was sure interesting because the member from Melville and I could really go after the member — well, the former member from Indian Head-Milestone, Mr. Scott, regarding their education platform. I think . . . what was their education platform? They had talked about something like a free year's education for the first year, Mr. Speaker — free tuition.

And I remember the member from Melville saying, I mean, that's ridiculous, that's ludicrous. But now we hear this member also today speak in the House defending just about every program this NDP government has put in place over the last three years, not mentioning going back three or four years or ten years and supporting every one of those programs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when you look at this province, this province has got so much opportunity. And we hear the members on the opposite side talk about doom and gloomers. You want to talk about doom and gloomers? It's the

members on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, doom and gloom because they're satisfied with what we've got in this province. They're satisfied with the status quo, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this province should be . . . we were at a million people 50-60 years ago; we're still at a million people . . . we're below a million people. When we look at neighbouring provinces that have doubled and tripled — tripled — their population, and these people feel it's perfectly fine the state that this province is in.

Can you imagine what our tax base would look like if we could double or triple our population, Mr. Speaker. I do realize that the Minister of Economic Development wouldn't be that happy because there wouldn't be as much for him, Mr. Speaker, but I think everybody else that are paying taxes in this province would be quite welcome to two million people paying taxes, not a million, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when you look at people wanting to invest in this province and when you look at growing this province, Mr. Speaker, of course what we need to grow this province are people. We need people in this province to grow, Mr. Speaker. But people need jobs. So what you also need in this province is to grow jobs.

We've lost 16,000 in the last number of years, even though the NDP promised that they would create 30,000 new jobs, Mr. Speaker. My calculation says it's a difference of 48,000 jobs from where we are now to where they said we would be, Mr. Speaker. That would be 48,000 more people working in this province, Mr. Speaker; 48,000 more people paying tax in this province, Mr. Speaker; 48,000 more people sharing the load of the social programs that we all truly believe in in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you need people, but for people you need jobs, for jobs you need business, Mr. Speaker. We need business moving into this province, Mr. Speaker. But for business, do you know what you need, Mr. Speaker? For business you need capital. You need people bringing their money and investing in this province, and unfortunately right now in Saskatchewan people do not feel comfortable investing in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Many, many times I talked in years past when I was dealing with driver education and the new ABS (anti-locking brakes system). We used to talk about ABS all the time. It was anti-lock brakes system, Mr. Speaker. But ABS no longer means anti-locked brakes in this province, Mr. Speaker. For capital investors it means anywhere but Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(20:00)

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of reasons you know . . . And they make light of some of our members and our leader, a very successful leader's dinner in Calgary the other day. But, Mr. Speaker, when you talk to some of those,

when you talk to some of those business people of Alberta and they rate different areas, constituencies, not necessarily constituencies but jurisdictions.

And they rated Saskatchewan compared to another number of jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, 300 different jurisdictions. We were about 250th to invest in, Mr. Speaker. A lot of these oil companies would rather invest in a banana republic in Central America than they would in this province, Mr. Speaker, and there are reasons for that. That just doesn't happen. That happens because of government policy.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Members, I think the tradition of the Assembly certainly, in my opinion, is that a quip and a heckle is always welcome. However yelling and screaming just to drown out the person who's got the floor is really not acceptable, and I ask members to note the difference.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess one way I do know I've got their attention when they're trying to yell and drown out my voice, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that this government looks at why investment capital is not coming to the province.

Investment capital doesn't come to a province when it's afraid that the government is going to take over that business that they got into, Mr. Speaker. Investment capital is not going to come into a province when it's coming into a province that has forced unionization, Mr. Speaker, that we experienced last year, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of reasons why investment capital will not come into this province. But most significantly, Mr. Speaker, is that it's got a socialist government, and they're not willing to invest their dollars in a province like that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's been very interesting and I don't remember as much the first year that we were elected in 1999. I certainly heard it a lot more last session, and I'm hearing it certainly a lot more this session, Mr. Speaker. When we bring up issue after issue after issue, when we challenge the government on their positions and their stances in . . . whether it's Crown corporations, whether it's economic development, whether it's population decline, whether it's crop insurance, Mr. Speaker. Every time this government will not stand on its own record. They'll turn around and they'll say, well it's your fault, you would do this, you would do that — not what we're doing as far as a government is concerned. They blame it on everybody else.

How many times have we heard in the last two or three days that it's Alberta's fault, that it's Manitoba's fault, that it's British Columbia's fault, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, when will a government take responsibility for the programs that it's implemented and the consequences those create, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, when will this government look at the falling population, Mr. Speaker? When will they look at the economic deficit they've put this province in, Mr. Speaker, and say you know maybe we are doing things a little bit wrong, Mr. Speaker? Maybe we should look at ethanol production in this province outside the Crown, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we should look at putting tax incentives in place to create and to attract capital investment, Mr. Speaker.

And I would just applaud them for that very thing, Mr. Speaker, because at least then they're saying that just another Crown corporation can't do it any better than the private business, Mr. Speaker — just another Crown corporation isn't the way to go, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I mean there are so many more issues that a person could talk about. You could talk about SaskTel and their \$24 million or 20 million plus 2.4 plus more into Georgia. You could talk about all the different investments that they're making all over the world, Mr. Speaker.

You could talk about them . . . And I read this article again, it's March 16 from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* "futures bright is an optical illusion," Mr. Speaker, because they keep saying that everything is fine, everything is fine. Things are going just the way we planned them. That's a pretty scary thought: that things are going just the way they planned them; and we've lost 30 or 40,000 people out of this province over the last decade; we've lost 16,000 jobs in the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker; and that's just the way we planned it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're in a sorry state that a government can't look at . . . take its responsibilities and look at the direction this province is going and say okay this is what we need to do in order to get to point B, in order to grow the province. When all they do is look at blaming everybody else, it's everybody else's fault, it's never their fault, they've never done a thing wrong in this province in the last 11 years, because if they have we haven't heard a word about it.

We've heard lots of people in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan say, man was that a crazy idea. But never from the government side. They've done everything just as planned and just as planned has made this province drop down to 979,000 people with 48,000 less jobs than what they had planned on in 1999, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the only prospect that people are clinging on to right now . . . and when you talk to people in Saskatchewan, especially rural Saskatchewan, they're getting a little frustrated. They're getting a little antsy, Mr. Speaker, because after the last election, Mr. Speaker, they thought that number one, there could be an election soon after because it was a minority government. They didn't know how long that the cabinet ministers from the Liberal side would stay with them, Mr. Speaker. They were really excited with the anticipation that there may be an election within the next year or two, Mr. Speaker.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we've gone two and a half years, possibly another year and a half to two years, Mr. Speaker, and the problem with that is, what type of shape will this province be in in another two or three years of NDP government? If I could quote the Economic Development minister, he'll sure have a lot for himself then because the population isn't going to turn around and start increasing under their policies. It's probably going to continue to decrease, Mr. Speaker.

So I would urge the government, from many, many people that I talk to in my constituency, call an election, Mr. Speaker. Call an election, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, and they say, where is your plan? Our plan is on the Web site and, Mr. Speaker, call an election and you'll see a lot more of our plan, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting when you hear members on that side talk about the 1999 election and they're quite proud and they've got this strong mandate to carry on what their plan has been, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is one political party in this province that garnered the most votes, Mr. Speaker, and it wasn't a party on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — It was the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. More people in the last election voted for the Saskatchewan Party than any other party in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I daren't to say that in the next election you'll see that number increase a whole lot more, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Speech from the Throne because it lacks vision; it lacks direction, Mr. Speaker; and it lacks ideas to make this province grow to be the province that it needs to be to compete in the 21st century, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's one thing about the Throne Speech debate that has not changed over the years and that is no small amount of inflated rhetoric and bravado that seems to come from the opposition benches, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I want to wish you well in the session. I know how difficult it can be. It's not always apparent to those that have not been in the Chair, but yours is a difficult, demanding job, and I want to wish you well during the course of the coming session.

Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the new member for Saskatoon Idylwyld. I enjoyed his remarks. I've known the member longer than many people in this House, and I know him as a person of substance. I am confident that he will make a solid contribution to development of public policy in this Chamber and in government and that he will serve his constituents well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the mover, the member for Saskatoon Greystone. The member for Greystone is known as a hard-working member, a knowledgeable member, incisive, caring, passionate in his beliefs, and certainly he showed all of that in his excellent speech, Mr. Speaker, and we thank him for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — I should like to acknowledge the support of my constituency assistant for the excellent work that she has done, continues to do for me, and without her I would be half the member that I am now, Mr. Speaker. I think sometimes we do not recognize those who serve us on a daily

basis in our constituency, but I want to make a point of recognizing her.

I also want to recognize my family for the support that they have given me over the years and that they continue to encourage me to do the thing that I love best — and that is being elected and being in public life, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to recognize one other group in our society, and that is the excellent performance of Canada's Olympic team during the recent Winter Olympics. These Olympians, including those who come from Saskatchewan, gave us all much to cheer about and they made us all proud to be Canadians.

The Olympics were significant for me too in that a very strange thing happened during the course of the Olympics that I was so caught up in the Olympic coverage that for a moment, for a moment — and I know that members will know that this is impossible — but just for a moment I forgot that I was a politician, Mr. Speaker. This is not like where you go on holidays and you don't think about politics, but this is where I was confronted by something and my first thoughts weren't political; they were something else entirely. They related to the Olympics.

I think it was the morning after a late-night curling game featuring Kevin Martin, and I believe he was playing the United States, where I watched that game or most of it and went to bed shortly after Kevin Martin winning the game. I woke up in the morning. I went out to get the newspapers, and there's three of them. And as I stumbled my way back into the house, there were . . . the newspaper on top, I believe it was the *National Post*, the headline said, "Rock 'crossed the line': Martin." And my first thought was, you know, I watched most of that game but I don't remember that controversy. And then I thought, well you know, he won the game, why is he complaining? And then, furthermore, why would the *National Post* be writing about it? But then as I read on, of course it was about Allan Rock and Paul Martin and goes on in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

But I thank the Olympians for bringing me to that stage where just for a moment I forgot all about politics. My wife says that's healthy.

Mr. Speaker, in previous speeches I've talked about my constituency, the people in my constituency. I've talked about the sense of community that people in my constituency in the various neighbourhoods have. I've also talked about the very active economic development that we've seen in Regina Victoria constituency because so much of the economic focus has shifted to retail development in east Regina that I represent.

I want to tonight just mention one institution in my constituency where there has been a lot of activity and I speak of the University of Regina. Most people in Regina and those that go by Regina will know about the development that is taking place at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College because it's so evident, and what a beautiful building and what a beautiful addition that will be to architecture in Saskatchewan and in Regina once it's completed.

They'll probably be less familiar with the Petroleum Technology Research Centre which I had an opportunity to tour

a few months ago. It's located at the University of Regina and it's a partnership with the Saskatchewan Research Council, Saskatchewan Energy and Mines, and Natural Resources Canada, and it's there to ensure that oil production in Saskatchewan continues on for many years to come.

In addition to supporting research and development projects, the prairie technology research centre will ensure that the findings of the work it supports are applied by the petroleum industry. I was very impressed with the high level of activity and research activity that I saw at the centre. And it's one of the reasons that it's gaining international recognition for the work that it's doing and it will serve the people of Saskatchewan and certainly the petroleum industry well for many years to come, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for some of the content of my remarks, I will be relying on the research of my legislative intern, Wendy Moellenbeck. I appreciate Wendy's good work and I would certainly recommend to all members that if they have the opportunity to obtain the services of a legislative intern, that in fact that they do ask for one. These are bright young people, Mr. Speaker, who have much to offer and can make an excellent contribution to helping members prepare for discussions and matters of public policy, Mr. Speaker.

One area that my assistant, or my intern, has done a great deal of work is to examine the US health care system. Mr. Speaker, you will know, and as members and I think the public will know, that over time there is much discussion about health care in Saskatchewan.

From time to time members of the opposition will let it slip that they admire or they would prefer to see us go to a more privatized system of health care, that there's less opportunity or if there's less emphasis on public administration, indeed even public funding of the health care system. And from time to time too I think they express admiration for the US system which epitomizes of course a privatized health care system. So I was interested in that and I wanted to take a closer look at that and I appreciate the work of my intern in being able to do that.

Without getting into a great deal of detail, one of the interesting conclusions that we found when comparing the two systems, is that you know when it comes to health expenditure per capita, and you know people say that well if we had a private system, then you won't need to spend as much from the public purse, and there will be more money available for other things. But at the end of the day, whether you pay private or you pay public, you are paying.

And so therefore it's instructive to look at what it is that people are paying. Whether it's public, whether it's private, or some combination of the two, it's interesting to note that the health expenditure per capita — Canada versus the United States — in Canada this is \$2,360; in the United States this is \$4,165. So from the viewpoint of expenditure by an individual, you have to ask yourself where is it that people are spending more money — whether it's private, whether it's public, whether it's some combination of the two — clearly shows that people south of the border are paying more. And also as a percentage of the gross domestic product of all the things that we manufacture, the whole wealth of the economy, it's apparent that people in the States are paying more than here in Canada — 9.3 per cent of

our gross domestic product is used to . . . is used for health care expenditures while in the United States this is 12.9 per cent.

Now you might think does this higher expenditure — and it's a significantly higher expenditure by people in the United States — does that result in better health indices for people in the United States. Well the research that my legislative intern conducted shows that it's not necessarily the case. When you look at things like life expectancy for females, the life expectancy in Canada is 81.4; the United States it's 79.4. Male life expectancy, 75.8 in Canada; 73.9 in the United States. And here is an interesting one, infant deaths, infant deaths per 1,000 live births in Canada there are 5.5, in the United States there are 7.2.

So on a very broad level one has to ask themselves, why would the opposition in Saskatchewan continue, sometimes overtly as the member for Weyburn has done, sometimes less so by attacking our system in a great doubt about the system we have, why would the members of the opposition want to continue to move us towards a system that costs more, but gets you less? And that's a question that I certainly have after listening to the members of the opposition and looking at the work that my legislative intern has done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also asked my intern to look at another issue that interests me, I think that interests all the people of Saskatchewan, and is an issue that continues to be raised even during the course of the Throne Speech interventions that we've heard, even tonight in the speeches, and I think virtually in all of the speeches that have been offered by members opposite, and that is the question of population. And the question I ask is that, you know, we make all these comparisons between Saskatchewan and Alberta on the issue of population. What would happen if we made a comparison with other jurisdictions that are contained wholly or partly within the Great Plains region of North American and states such as North Dakota, Mr. Speaker?

And it's very interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the trends in Saskatchewan, trends in Saskatchewan are far more similar to US jurisdictions whose economy is primarily or to a very great extent based on agriculture, the same as Saskatchewan. Now, that tells . . . an agrarian economy.

That tells me something about powerful trends that are affecting agriculture and which, in turn, are affecting jurisdictions not only here in Canada but also to the south of us in the United States, because when you look at those population figures, there is a great deal of common trends that we can see between those American jurisdictions and Canada.

Of course, that's not something they want to talk about. But I can tell you that from the viewpoint of public policy, it's very important to understand that because if there are powerful trends, powerful trends that affect our economy because our economy is so agrarian, then you have to question are there things that you can do — or for that matter, even should do — to try and counteract those trends when you may not be able to do . . . well, from the viewpoint of public policy, next to nothing, if anything at all.

And recognize that some of those trends — I think as the

president of John Deere indicated at the Farm Progress Show — that some of those trends where we see increasing farm sizes, where we see increasing mechanization on the farm, increased use of fertilizers and other inputs, that those trends are likely to continue for some period of time. And you know what? There ain't nothing, Mr. Speaker, that any government can really do about that.

And it's important to understand that when you're talking about what kind of public policy is it that we should be pursuing in Saskatchewan, in Canada, in North Dakota, in the United States, for that matter. So it's . . . I very much appreciate the very good work that she's been able to do for me.

Just on a related item, Mr. Speaker, I . . . and I don't know if the public is aware of this, and they probably aren't, but for many years now, Saskatchewan . . . the Legislative Assembly has been a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association brings together parliamentarians, people from legislatures such as ours, in meetings. We have Canadian meetings. We have regional meetings. There are international meetings, Mr. Speaker, where we talk about issues of common interest to parliamentarians or those people who work in a system that's based on the British parliamentary system.

And one of the things that I've noticed over the years is that the issues that we tend to discuss tend to be more related to the process of parliamentary democracy than they are related to specific or substantive issues, social economic issues. For example, in the CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) during the course of the last number of regional meetings, the regional seminars and conferences, we've discussed electoral systems and democratic change, committee reform, which seems to come up just about every meeting, power shift from elected official to global organizations, reconciling party discipline, parliament in the media, does religion have a role in politics, the use of technology in legislature, public perceptions of office holders, enhancing the role of private members, balancing between the legislature and the executive, and I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

But we do not often have an opportunity as parliamentarians to discuss substantial economic trends because in a country as diverse as Canada we in fact have very little in common with the economy that's operating in the Maritime provinces. We have very little in common with the economy that's extant in the province of British Columbia. We have very little in common with the economies of Quebec or Ontario. But we do have a lot in common with the economies to the south of us in the Great Plains area in the Midwest area of the United States because those are agrarian economies to a large extent, or arose from agrarian economies, and we have a great deal in common with them.

So one of the interesting things that's happened, and that the public may not be aware of, is that over the course of the last number of years, Saskatchewan has joined an American organization. In short, we've joined the Council of State Government Midwestern Legislative Conference. Not as a full member, of course, but as an associate member. And the reason we do that is because we've come to the realization that we have a great deal in common with the people to the south of us,

the people in North Dakota, the people in South Dakota, the people in Nebraska, the people in Iowa, the people in Kansas, where they have great grain-producing areas, like we do in Saskatchewan, and that agriculture in those areas has an important influence and an important impact in the economies in those areas. So it's important to learn from them and for them to learn from us about important social and economic trends.

And just on that, Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to read a recent publication of The Council of State Governments, Midwestern Office. It's called *Signs of the Times*. And it's about Midwestern demographic trends and their implication for public policy.

And just for your information, Mr. Speaker, and for the public who may be interested, this publication can be accessed at www.csgmidwest.org.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to draw your attention to one introductory paragraph. Now you've got to remember, Mr. Speaker, this is about the Midwest's, about states who were largely built on agrarian economies. And this introductory paragraph states:

While every state in this region saw population increases (of varying degrees) between 1990 and 2000, none matched the national average . . .

And of course Saskatchewan did also not match the national average; the national average in the US being 13.2 per cent.

Now they say:

The numbers would have been even more dramatic if it wasn't for the influx of immigrants into the Midwest, where the foreign-born population grew at rates higher than the national average. International migration patterns help keep Midwestern populations growing, but many states in this region have experienced negative net losses in the area of domestic migration.

Well does that ring any bells for people? Does that sort of call to mind any jurisdictions in Canada, Mr. Speaker? Of course, that's not something the opposition ever wants to talk about, Mr. Speaker.

They state that:

This region is suffering from a "brain drain." Many highly skilled, well-trained workers have left the Midwest for the South and the West. (Sounds like Saskatchewan to some extent, Mr. Speaker). Furthermore, national projections indicate that the labour and skills shortages seen in the 1990s will only intensify in the future.

And I found that very interesting reading, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the members opposite never, never, never want to talk about the fact that the trends that are affecting Saskatchewan — which are powerful, powerful demographic trends based on changes, fundamental changes which are taking place in the economy — they somehow try to give the impression that this is something that only narrowly affects Saskatchewan, doesn't affect any place else in the whole world,

doesn't affect any other region of Canada, not even rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, or rural Alberta, doesn't affect any other jurisdiction, just Saskatchewan.

(20:30)

And the conclusion they somehow come to . . . so if we have this problem, it must be the fault of the Saskatchewan government. And we heard this again tonight from one of the members opposite. The member from Indian Head-Milestone — correct me if I'm wrong — said, you know in the last 10 years the NDP government this and the NDP government that; now we have population loss, so therefore the one must be causing the other, Mr. Speaker. You hear the line from some of their supporters which is, you know, if we hadn't elected Tommy Douglas in the 1940s, Saskatchewan would be like Alberta today. Well we all heard that. We all heard that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe that's an explanation for Saskatchewan, but I don't know what the explanation would be for South Dakota, North Dakota, and any number of jurisdictions to the south of us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to introduce that into the debate because it's very important that we all understand what it is that is affecting the economy in Saskatchewan and what it is that we can do something about, but also what it is that we cannot do anything about, because if you try, try, or you make the decision to take substantial government resources or public resources to try to counteract trends that are irreversible, you'd be spending your money very, very foolishly.

And I don't get any deal of comfort, Mr. Speaker, when I listen to them and their lack of understanding of these trends as to what it is that they would do if they were ever elected, heaven forbid, to form government in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's one of the things that I find encouraging about the Throne Speech because the Throne Speech is realistic. The Throne Speech is encouraging in that way. It doesn't take an unrealistic point of view about what is taking place in Saskatchewan. It recognizes the importance of maintaining what has worked in Saskatchewan and there have been things that have worked. Over time we have seen a great increase in the number of jobs in manufacturing and processing in Saskatchewan, and we want to continue that because we've been successful in that. We've seen an increase in jobs and the people working in the resource sector in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and we want to continue that.

The Throne Speech also recognizes new opportunities for new kinds of jobs in Saskatchewan that will be created by things such as the Canadian Light Source synchrotron in Saskatoon and the research jobs that that will create for Saskatchewan; by the film sound stage in Regina which will add to the development of a very healthy film industry that we've seen take place in Saskatchewan, and particularly, I might say, Mr. Speaker, in Regina. It recognizes that.

It also recognizes new initiatives such as ACRE which is the Action Committee on the Rural Economy and their report

which will hopefully form the basis to diversify the rural economy and create jobs, because if agricultural trend suggests that you will keep losing jobs and keep losing population, then it becomes even more important to invest in diversification of that economy, Mr. Speaker. It also recognizes the greenprint for Ethanol and what a tremendous opportunity that can create for Saskatchewan.

It was interesting that even though the opposition say, oh we applaud that, it's simply though a rehash of something they had to say in opposition, well I might say, Mr. Speaker, if that's the way they want to go, it seemed to me that at least one of the candidates running for the NDP leadership well before that also enunciated a similar plan, Mr. Speaker. But no one ever accused them of originality, Mr. Speaker, either in ideas or in the way they approach the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to deal with a few more issues, and one is the discussion that they tried to engender about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Mr. Speaker. Now in Saskatchewan we have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and we set up the Fiscal Stabilization Fund so as to ensure that in Saskatchewan, because Saskatchewan is very dependent on resource revenues like Alberta, Saskatchewan's revenues can be very volatile because as people will know, oil prices can change in an instant and can have significant implications for the public purse. So we took the point of view that given the volatility of resource revenues, it would be wise in Saskatchewan, wise from a public policy point of view to create a fund so as to cushion the impact should there be any major downturn in resource revenues. And we said that money should be set aside.

Now we've always set aside money in some way or another, usually through the liquor and gaming reserves over the years. We've set money aside and then drawn on that for much the same purpose. But the government took the point of view that we should be more transparent about that, that we should have an Act about that and suggest how those funds should be spent, Mr. Speaker, so that the public understands.

But all of that, all of that seems to have been lost on the members opposite over the years, Mr. Speaker, because whether it was the liquor and gaming reserve or whether it was the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, any issue came up, they'd say, you're sitting on money. You've got money, spend the money. Just get it from your liquor and gaming reserve. Get it from your Fiscal Stabilization Fund. How come you let so much money build up there? What are you doing? What are you sitting on? Why don't you spend it? We've got a problem in health; spend some money. We've got a problem in highways; spend some money. We've got a problem in education; spend some money. Don't sit on the money.

And then they said — when we weren't spending the money — oh we know what you're doing. It's just an election slush fund. You're just saving it for the election and when the election comes, you'll haul out all those monies to try and buy votes. Well that's what they said, Mr. Speaker. That's what they said, Mr. Speaker.

But you know what they're saying today? You know what they're saying today? Why are you spending money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund? As if there's something wrong with

that.

Well all I can say, Mr. Speaker. We set this fund up to help cushion the impact of violent swings in resource revenues so that they would not have as major an impact on the people of Saskatchewan as we now see the case being in some other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. Most notably Alberta, where the government didn't have any such fund, has had to take drastic action, Mr. Speaker, to increase their revenues, increase their health care premiums by 30 per cent.

We in Saskatchewan are fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we've had the benefit of effective, forward-looking public policy to put into place a fund such as that to help cushion the impact of the impact of the economy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, they chatter from across the floor but I am just, I am just so delighted, Mr. Speaker, that over the years that we didn't listen to them. And it's like almost a daily occurrence with them in question period. Oh you've got the money. You've got the money. You're sitting on it in the liquor and gaming reserve. You're sitting on it in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Spend the money. And we said no; we have to save some of that money for when we really need it. We need to save some of that money for a rainy day. And now we are having a rainy day, and I'm glad we are able to save that money and that we didn't listen to them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Now one other issue I just wanted to touch on, Mr. Speaker, is the question of Crown corporations. It's no secret to the people of Saskatchewan that the opposition has over the course of the last number of years attacked the Crown corporations. Every opportunity they've had, they've called into question the functioning of the Crowns, and they've called into question the kind of activities of the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret to the people of Saskatchewan that they, they — that is the opposition, Mr. Speaker — are flirting, flirting with the notion of selling off some or all of our Crowns, Mr. Speaker. And that, that I daresay is no secret to anyone in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that they are so, if I might say, so oriented, Mr. Speaker.

Now it's ironic that they would do this because at the same time that they float these notions about the efficacy of the Crowns, the role of the Crowns and what it is that the Crowns should do as opposed to what the private sector should do, they stand up in this House and say but, but, forget about that; I have things that need doing in my own constituency that only the Crowns can do. I mean, they stand up here in the Chamber. They present petitions and say, I want cell phone service in such and such a town. Many members have done that, and I think that is the member for Estevan that in her Throne Speech intervention talked about extending cellular coverage to some of the communities in her constituency. Minton is one community that comes to mind, Mr. Speaker. Well it's ironic that they would stand up in this House and say we need to invest more public resources to serving the people of Saskatchewan; at the same time say, or at least giving the notion, that we should sell off these Crown corporations.

Now I have one question, one question, one question out of this: does anyone, anyone in their right mind in Saskatchewan think that a private corporation would provide the level of service that they are demanding in this Legislative Assembly for their constituents compared to any Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I don't think there's a chance of that, Mr. Speaker.

And it's just not SaskTel. I understand the people of Lloydminster would like to see SaskEnergy extend its network to include the people of Lloydminster on the Alberta side as well. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know. There's something strange here about, on the one hand saying we don't want these Crown corporations, but their constituents are saying, we want the services of these Crown corporations. The one thing I conclude, Mr. Speaker — they haven't been listening to their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say one other thing about the Crown corporations and that is that their musings, their musings about selling off the Crowns doesn't go over well with the Saskatchewan people. I think generally speaking, Saskatchewan people, generally speaking, Saskatchewan people, as evidenced by the petitions that they present in this House, appreciate the good services that Crowns can and potentially can provide for the people of Saskatchewan — good services at a reasonable price, Mr. Speaker — compared to what they know or understand or think they understand about comparable services in other jurisdictions.

The other thing that I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, is from the viewpoint of a raw political strategy. Now their strategy is that they in the last election . . . I know the member from Indian Head talked about they should have been the government. Well, they weren't the largest group and our system works on whoever is the largest group gets to form the government.

And the reason they aren't the largest group is that they kind of ran out of gas. They ran out of gas, Mr. Speaker. They ran out of gas at the boundaries of the cities in Saskatchewan. They ran out of gas at the boundaries of the cities of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And they ran out of gas because urban people are less than wildly enthused about their ideas and the programs and suggestions that they put forward, Mr. Speaker.

And I can tell in you in Regina, if it's your political strategy, if it's your political strategy to embrace Reginans and it's your political strategy to show that you're urban-friendly and that you're Regina-friendly, the dumbest thing you can do is talk about selling off the Crown corporations, my friends. It is just absolutely the dumbest thing that you can do. Here is the sector . . .

The Speaker: — I would just remind the member to continue making his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, people in Regina are very sensitive about a sector that provides 4,400 jobs in Regina, has an annual payroll of about \$300 million. They understand the significance and the importance of that sector to the local economy, yet here is a group, here is a group that always talks in destabilizing ways about that important sector in the Regina economy.

Is it any wonder then, Mr. Speaker, that people have their suspicions about that group and what they might do? And no matter what they say, Mr. Speaker, no matter what they say about, oh, they'll keep jobs here and all that malarkey, Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan keep asking, you know, where did the head office jobs go from that old Saskoil? Where are they anyway? Well they're not in Regina any more, Mr. Speaker, and that was a privatization case in point that worries the people of Regina. And I, for one, I just don't understand their political strategy.

And I might say, too, Mr. Speaker, that I find in one way that their talk about what they might do for Crowns is economically destabilizing — economically destabilizing. What kind of business man, what kind of business person, would want to invest significantly in the Regina economy when you have a significant political group in the province who says, but if we get in, we're going to make decisions that are going to have massive impacts on that payroll; we're going to have a massive impact on those kinds of jobs? Well anybody who's thinking of making investment decisions has to bear in mind what it is that that group is saying, Mr. Speaker. So I don't know if they fully appreciate what it is that they're doing to the Regina economy and the Saskatchewan economy, for that matter, Mr. Speaker, but it's no good. I can tell you that.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Throne Speech. It presents a solid plan for growth. It builds on the successes that we have seen. It offers improvements in vital services that the people of Saskatchewan want and need, Mr. Speaker. I guess my question is: I don't have any problem with our Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, but where is their plan? I mean, where is their plan? Where is their plan?

Well they said they had something called Grow Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but listening to the members, it's clear that Grow Saskatchewan is not a plan; it's only a goal. It's only a goal. But you need more than a goal, Mr. Speaker, to have a plan. A plan sort of indicates a series of steps and strategy to achieve your goal but they don't seem to have that.

Now I understand that they've had a number of focus groups throughout Saskatchewan — well not quite focus groups, they hadn't had enough people at these focus group sessions to really warrant calling it a focus group because in my understanding a focus group is that you need sort of at least a dozen people or so to get some legitimate input. And when you have two people or three people outside of the MLAs involved at these meetings it doesn't exactly qualify as a focus group, Mr. Speaker.

And I understand too, Mr. Speaker, now that some of these meetings as opposed to being public meetings, they've decided to have them as private meetings, Mr. Speaker, which raises some questions as to whether or not public funds should be used then to pay for those meetings, Mr. Speaker. But that's another question. I'm not going to raise that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they say that they're going to, notwithstanding these massive demographic trends, these sweeping changes that are affecting agriculture not just in Saskatchewan, not just in rural Manitoba, not just in North Dakota, but all of the great plains regions, they say that notwithstanding that — notwithstanding that, they're going to grow the Saskatchewan

population by 100,000 people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, last night was the Academy Awards and of course they didn't have the Academy Awards for this one because that was a year or so earlier but I've got to tell you that one of the favourite movies I watched this year is a movie called, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* And the reason I like that movie so much, Mr. Speaker, is that the excellent soundtrack that it had, Mr. Speaker. And one of the songs that I liked so much . . . and you know what, Mr. Speaker, it begins to remind me of their Grow Saskatchewan. It's a song called, "The Big Rock Candy Mountains."

And "The Big Rock Candy Mountains," Mr. Speaker, is a wishful song by a hobo who talks about a better life, a heaven somewhere, a dream world that he's inviting the other hobos to come along with him to see. And there the big rock candy mountains where you have lemonade springs and alcohol streams and the fruit grows on the trees and there's hay in all the barns and the sun shines every day and the jails are made of tin so that you can get right in and walk right out again, Mr. Speaker. It's a dream world, Mr. Speaker. And that reminded me of their Grow Saskatchewan plan, Mr. Speaker. Well it's not a plan; it's a goal, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, this government has a plan and I will support that plan and I will support the motion, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise again in the Legislative Assembly and enter the debate over the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

At the outset of my remarks I'd like to once again acknowledge the great constituency of Swift Current, and the people of that constituency which is basically, Mr. Speaker, the city of Swift Current and a small rural area to the north and to the south. I want to thank them again for the unqualified honour that I have to represent them here in the Assembly.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm at it I'd also like to offer some words of welcome as well to the new member for Saskatoon Idylwyld to this Assembly, and certainly to our colleague, the member for Battleford-Cut Knife. It's a joy to see him back here in the legislature.

I want to acknowledge as well, Mr. Speaker, the support that I receive from my family at home, from my wife, Tami, and our children, Megan and Colter and Faith. We have quite a young family and so her support and their support is very, very important to me and allows me to be able to do this job.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was looking for some quotes to use from somebody that would aptly describe the Throne Speech as I saw it, and as I've heard the various debates. It's difficult to find just the right quote but I hope I was able to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I found a quote here in a book called *With Malice Toward None*, and it's a quote by Abraham Lincoln who

at the time of making this quote he was a little frustrated with a US Supreme Court decision called the Dred Scott Decision on the issue of slavery and the citizenship of the slaves at that time.

And he was also a little frustrated with the argument that was put forward by his arch enemy throughout his political life, a fellow by the name of Stephen Douglas. He thought his arguments were a little thin and he said of Mr. Douglas' arguments, he said he found them "as thin as the homeopathic soup that was made by boiling the shadow of a pigeon that had starved to death," Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I read that quote and it jumped out of the page at me because that is exactly what the Throne Speech is that we're debating here today. This Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is as thin as the soup made from boiling the shadow of a pigeon that starved to death.

And if we needed a proof of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we needed any proof of that, we only had to listen to the comments by the previous speaker, the member for Regina Victoria. In his defence of this Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and he actually concluded his speech with it, he basically criticized the official opposition's response to the Throne Speech, a response that has included specific criticisms but also the presentation of a plan — and yes, a detailed plan for the future of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he criticized them basically by saying, in his last reference there, that people ought not to dream, that people in this province ought to settle for the way things are, that the way things are today in terms of the out-migration of the tax base and of our population is something that we have to put up with. We can't do anything about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's why this Throne Speech is so much thin gruel. It has no hope for the people of the province who now more than ever need that hope. They want to hear from their leaders that it is okay to dream. They want to hear from their government that it's not okay to settle for what we have to date, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Instead what they get is a Throne Speech that is devoid and bereft of any hope or any ideas as to how we can turn the situation around and, more to the point, it's supported, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by members, former cabinet ministers no less, that stand up and basically shrug their shoulders and give up, Mr. Speaker — give up on the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recall reading the clippings as we were getting ready to come back to session, and the Premier indicated that he believed this session could be characterized thusly. He said it'll be really a showcasing of competing plans, of competing visions for the province's future. That's what he said. And to some extent he's right. I think many of us on this side of the House would wonder where the other plan is. We've certainly presented ours; we haven't seen theirs yet.

But I can assure you, I can assure you of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are relishing the opportunity, we're relishing the opportunity this session and in the months ahead to contrast the plan of the Saskatchewan Party for the province of Saskatchewan and the lack of a plan that's coming from this government in the Throne Speech. We couldn't agree more with the Premier and our only hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the people of this province have ample opportunity to check out

those two competing visions, to hear the comments and the plans from this side and the politics and the lack of a plan that comes from this side.

And if they have the opportunity to check out those competing visions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're going to clearly see the NDP approach to governance over these many years, and they're going to clearly see that that approach hasn't changed. It is the tired old dogmatic approach to our economy and to our government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an approach that relies almost exclusively on government. It is an approach that puts government ahead of any other sector of our economy. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an approach that has been rejected, that has been roundly rejected by every other free market economy in the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an approach that places a priority on an unwavering confidence in government as the solution to our challenges and all too little faith and all too little importance with the people of the province, with the small-business men and women of the province and the workers of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we've seen in the Throne Speech is representative of the approach of this government. And frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's the economic approach that governments have offered in this province for 60 years. For 60 years we have seen the same sort of a strategy and approach from different governments of Saskatchewan. And to be fair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that approach has been forwarded, not just by the NDP, but by three other parties — by their predecessors, the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and, to a large measure, by Liberal governments and Tory governments in this province that have not substantively changed our province's reliance on the government.

For 60 years, we have tried precious little else than this unwavering and unbalanced dependence on the government for everything on the economic side of government and on the more soft or social side of government. Governments of those four different political stripes have relied on government intervention. They've relied on a very active Crown corporation sector. They've relied on direct investment. They've relied on indirect investment. They've relied on a lot of program spending, frankly.

One of the best examples that I can think of is the home improvement programs that we heard about in the 1980s. Very, very costly programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the treasury, the benefits of which I think everyone would agree are questionable. I remember the home improvement program of the '80s and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that program though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was matched. In fact, it was exceeded in a bit of a bidding war by the NDP. In that 1986 election I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they wanted to one-up the government of the day. They wanted to outspend the government of the day. They wanted to out-gift the government of the day. So they introduced something, I think it was called the 7-7-7 program. I think that's what the NDP called it.

(21:00)

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, regardless of political stripe, up

until this point we have had political parties that differ only on the margins. They differ only on the margins when it comes to how we can grow our economy and what we can do to turn our province around. For the most part, they have agreed and relied on government and on the Crown sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all that seems to have changed is the names of the programs. Maybe a few new Crowns, or maybe a lot more new Crowns, under this government — 70-plus and counting, if you can believe it.

Mr. Speaker, the program names have changed, the governments' names have changed, the names of the parties in place have changed, the names of the premiers have changed, the names on the door of the cabinet offices have changed, but what has not changed is our approach in this province and the approach of the government, led for the most part by the NDP and the CCF.

And so if we've tried the same thing over and over and over again for 60 years, I think it's fair to say that now is probably a good time — maybe 30 or 40 years ago would have been a better time — but now is as good as time as any to try to evaluate what those 60 years have wrought for us, what that unwavering reliance on government has left us here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1929 our population was just under 1 million people. And today it's just under 1 million people. In 1944 the province of Saskatchewan accounted for about 35 per cent of the population of the Prairies; and we're down below 20 per now. We account for less than 20 per cent of the population of the Prairies.

What about our private sector? Has it grown after these 60 years of reliance on government; after all these years of NDP-CCF rule, inter-sprinkled by parties that didn't change much in a substantive way in terms of its economic approach? Well no, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For a province that is 100 years old, for a province that is the Dominion's second-largest producer of oil and gas, the world's number one producer of uranium, a province with the most arable acres in all of Canada, all of those assets, you'd think in 60 years or in 100 years that our private sector would be vibrant, our population would have grown. None of those have . . . None of that's occurred, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact I think the Minister of Finance was lamenting, in some of his pre-budget media interviews, he was lamenting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government, this government had budgeted about \$300 million in corporate income tax this last budget year and they were going to receive about \$150 million this past year. Half what they budgeted — just barely more than a point on the PST (provincial sales tax), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And perhaps most important, what has this approach to government, to the administration of our province, what has it done to our ability to afford medicare or a excellent education system or social services?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today it's pretty clear that there are precious few resources — too small a tax base, some would say, to support the kind of health care we want for our constituents.

And it's more than just rhetoric of course when you consider it can be measured in terms of Saskatchewan — Saskatchewan having the longest waiting lists, the longest waiting lists in all of Canada.

Our education system is creaking under the weight of an increasing reliance on the local property tax base, because this government, this NDP government downloaded \$300 million in education funding to local governments and to the property tax base.

So what are . . . the reasons for all of this are pretty clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this government perhaps is the best example we have had yet. For 60 years we have had governments that have focused themselves on cutting up the same pie. They have focused themselves on redistributing wealth, comfortable that almost all of the corporations in our province of any critical mass are government owned and government controlled, comfortable with the tired old notion that the government can somehow generate wealth, that the government can create jobs. They just try to look at that same pie, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and find a different way to cut it up.

Well, Mr. Speaker . . . well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a reason why the province of Saskatchewan, rural and urban, are responding to the Saskatchewan Party plan. Because for once, in six decades, someone is talking about growing the pie, growing the province, so there are more resources, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so there are more resources for health care, a larger tax base to generate wealth for education and social services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, we're going to be having our 100-year birthday and isn't it sad that when we mark that special occasion that our private sector, that sector of the economy that can do the things that we want it to do for health care, education, and social services is so incredibly small?

It's no wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's that small. The private sector, small-business men and women in our province, have had to endure 60 years of socialism — 60 years of trying to compete with their own tax dollars, 60 years of high taxes on investment and high taxes on productivity, 60 years . . .

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

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a couple of minutes to ask the Assembly to join me, through you and with you, to ask the Assembly to recognize my youngest daughter, Taylor. And Taylor is visiting the Assembly.

And I think the last time that Taylor was here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was when I was elected in 1995 which was seven years ago. So she is no stranger to the House, but the last time she was here she probably was sleeping in one of my speeches, Mr. Speaker. So now she is going to stay awake through the whole thing, she said. So thanks again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were commenting on how, in 2002, our private sector is so unfortunately small in the province of Saskatchewan. And it's little wonder, for what our private sector have had to endure, what our small-business men and women have had to endure in terms of high taxes on productivity and in terms of the ever-intrusive family of Crown corporations often competing with those small businesses with their own tax dollars.

Well eventually all of that takes its toll, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Eventually all of that has an impact. Eventually entrepreneurs get fed up. They are by nature among the most restless group of people out there. Entrepreneurs are by nature in a hurry, and there's only so long they'll wait. There's only so long they'll wait for the business climate they need to go ahead, make their investments, create jobs, and generate a tax base for the province of Saskatchewan.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this government doesn't understand, and the Throne Speech is more evidence of it, is that venture capital investment is the lifeblood of any free market economy or society; it's the lifeblood, Mr. Deputy Speaker — that venture capital is the only thing, the only thing that generates wealth. It's the only thing that creates permanent, lasting, economic development. It's the only thing that creates a job. It's the only thing that creates employment for people so they can pay the PST, so they can pay the income tax, so they can pay their property tax, so they can enrol their kids in a school division. It is the only thing that allows companies to pay their corporate income tax, their corporate capital tax, the PST, their small business tax if that's the case, their education tax. That is how we're going to be able to fund the things that we want to fund off of the tax base.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether we like it or not, venture capital follows the path of least resistance. It always has and it always will. Maybe we wish that it weren't so, but it is. That's the nature of venture capital — it'll always follow the path of least resistance.

And so what can a government do in that respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well a government can either put barriers in the way of that venture capital stream. It can pile rocks in the stream until it backs up and eventually just goes elsewhere. Or it can remove those barriers. It can get those roadblocks, those dams, it can get them out of the way. And that is what the Grow Saskatchewan plan is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can pick any one element of the plan, and in and of itself it's not revolutionary, whether it might be a reduction on the taxes in productivity, reducing the corporate capital tax in Saskatchewan, or maybe ensuring that our labour legislation is fair for both employees and workers.

But when you take it as a whole, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you take that plan as a whole, it represents a fundamental change for the province of Saskatchewan. In and of itself each point may not be revolutionary, but taken as a whole it represents the very first time in 60 years that any political party has understood how we can grow this economy in a lasting way — that's what it represents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Compare that with the attitude of the speakers opposite. Compare that with the remarks from the member for Regina Victoria who unbelievably stood in the Assembly and said, well you know there isn't really anything we can do; we're kind of an agrarian economy and other agrarian economies are having trouble. And sort of throw up your hands — there's not much you can do.

Well he makes one fundamental mistake in that assertion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is one thing that we have not tried in this province. There is one thing that we have not tried and it's a recognition in the ability of entrepreneurs, it's a recognition in the ability of venture capital to create a tax base for this province so that our health care system is sustainable. We've never tried it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The good news is that after the election we will try it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will try it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, you could measure the toll of 60 years of this kind of government intervention in statistics. You could talk about unemployment statistics. You could talk about out-migration. You could talk about demographics.

Today though, I'd like to underscore exactly what the results of that kind of approach that we see from this government is in terms of a story of a family from my constituency. They are a relatively young family, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in their 40s or so, and my colleague from Indian Head-Milestone assures me that that indeed is very young. They live just outside of Swift Current and they're in the constituency of Swift Current.

They came here about 10 years ago and they established a business. And throughout that business they were able to employ some people — different people at times, sometimes one and a half employees, maybe sometimes two but they always had people on staff. The wife of the family also started a number of businesses, catering. They tried whatever they could, whatever they could, and they worked very hard. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here lately they had to move on and try another business but they tried it here in Swift Current, here in Saskatchewan. They wanted to make it work.

And while they were here for those 10 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did employ people. They paid income tax. They paid the sales tax. They paid their property taxes. Their kids

enrolled in local schools to help an excellent rural division that we have called the Prairie West Division and an excellent school called Wymark where their kids went. And they contributed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the local economy and to their area.

And then a week ago Sunday the pastor in our church made an announcement. He announced that this particular family was moving to Claresholm, Alberta; and he thanked them for the work they had done in the church and confirmed that indeed they were leaving to Claresholm.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we raise these individual cases or when we talk about out-migration in general, we often hear the Economic Development minister say: well it's farming, that's the problem; it's agriculture; we wouldn't have depopulation if it wasn't for agriculture. That's what the Minister for Economic Development says.

I want to tell you where this gentleman is going to work, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He is going to work in southern Alberta where they've had a drought arguably a year longer than we have and he's going to work in agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He's going to go work on a farm. He's going to go get involved with a feedlot operation there.

And they're going to be leaving this weekend, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we hope to see them off because it's my brother, Barry, and my sister-in-law, Glenda, that are leaving. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're family, so certainly I'm going to miss them and my folks will miss them, their friends will miss them, the church will miss them.

(21:15)

But more important for this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the province will miss them. The province is going to miss their income tax and their small-business tax and all the consumables they purchased. They're going to miss the kids in their local school and their taxes to the local school board, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I have tried, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to understand, in light of that recent development in our family, I've tried to understand the Minister of Economic Development's remarks when he says that, well maybe a good way to look at population loss is that there will be more left for the rest of us.

And I can't square it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in his case, in their case, and in the cases of so many other people that are leaving, there will be less for the rest of us. There will be much less for the rest of us, and not just in terms of finances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in terms of the contribution that they make to their community.

And so it leaves me a little bit angry, frankly, when I hear the Minister of Economic Development make those sorts of comments that a population loss maybe isn't so bad because there will be more for the rest of us.

We need a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that believes that losing families like that is unacceptable, that it's never good, that it's never right, and we better . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, we better move heaven and earth to find a way to keep them in the province of Saskatchewan, and that's the difference tonight

between this side and that side of the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, for thousands of people, it's too late. It's too late for my brother and his family. Anything that a government could do, any government could do, is too late. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's almost too late for a whole other group of people that are planning an exit strategy. And they really are.

But the bottom line is, and the good news is, for the rest of us it's not too late just yet, it's not too late. But it will be if we can't change the government, if we can't change the attitude of the people that sit to your right hand and have a government in this province who fundamentally understand that we can do better in this province and that we will do better if we try something that we haven't tried for 60 years, if we try something that has worked in every other jurisdiction that has tried it in earnest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker one of the barriers I spoke of earlier in terms of what the, what the governments of Saskatchewan have put in the way of venture capital and entrepreneurs, one of the barriers is Crown corporations. Not the Crown corporations themselves — the Crown corporations themselves and many of the staff and management at those Crown corporations, at those Crown corporations are absolutely assets; they're assets to our province.

It's the management of the Crowns. It's the direction of the Crowns by the members opposite that's a barrier to growth in this province. The only thing, I should think, that consumes their thoughts more than Crown corporations and how they can further expand their influence and purview, the only thing that they obsess more, I think, is our position on Crown corporations, is what the official opposition thinks about Crown corporations.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we often hear them — and they're chirping from their seats right now to prove the point — we often hear them inventing opposition Crown corporation policy. I think I heard the member from Regina Wascana in her speech say and I quote, that we would, quote, "sell everything that's not nailed down." Well that's a genuine intervention in the debate, Mr. Speaker. That's a reasonable statement to make.

We've heard other members say, we've heard the Minister for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) say the same thing. When he has no answers in question period, he sort of resorts to rhetoric and that's the kind of rhetoric that we hear. Every single time, Mr. Speaker, you hear that kind of statement coming from those benches over there, you'll have to know, Mr. Speaker, that it is not true — it is not true. And were I allowed, I'd use stronger language than that.

Mr. Speaker, if you have a doubt of that I simply invite you and through you to any other member in the House to bring some sort of shred of evidence, some sort of utterance that we've made that they can base this outlandish claim on. But they won't do it, Mr. Speaker. They won't do it because that would get in the way of the time-honoured NDP political tactic of fearmongering, Mr. Speaker. That's what it would get in the

way of.

You know, Mr. Speaker, people ask us incredulously, how can they do that? How can they just say something that they know fundamentally isn't true? To tell you the truth, Mr. Speaker, we don't know the answer to that. But we do know, but we do know it's part of their political heritage. We do know that it is their political stock-in-trade to fearmonger. That's what they've been about for 60 years in this province, Mr. Speaker.

It used to be, it used to be the medi-scare and everyone knows about the medi-scare. Anyone who has ever been involved in any political campaign in the province of Saskatchewan, they know all about the NDP medi-scare. The medi-scare is pretty simple, Mr. Speaker. The medi-scare is as follows. Any party that opposes them, any organization that opposes them would take away your medical care. They'd take away medicare. That's their stock-in-trade, Mr. Speaker.

I think it was a by-election in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, a by-election in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg in the late 1980s, if you can believe this, Mr. Speaker, that the then leader of the opposition, Mr. Romanow, sent out a letter and an accompanying press release, and I think the letter went to every single municipality in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. And do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? Know what the letter said? Mr. Speaker, the letter said that, if you voted for our opponents, for the NDP's opponents, if you vote for them, they will close down every single hospital in the constituency. I think there were five. Mr. Speaker, that is the NDP tried and true tactic of fearmongering.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the medi-scare tactic doesn't work any more because of what they have done to medical care in the province of Saskatchewan, because of the hospitals that they have closed. And every time they try to perpetrate that kind of bunk on the people of Saskatchewan, they remember things like the 50 hospitals that were closed. They remember the Plains hospital, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't work any more.

Mr. Speaker, that party, that party trying to tell the voters that they should be scared of the Saskatchewan Party's health care policies, that's like Dracula telling people that they should be scared of Harry Potter, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't wash.

But they've moved on to a new scare tactic since the health scare, the medi-scare tactic doesn't work any more. They found something else to fabricate. They found something else to whip up. And it's easy to see why they would be a little sensitive about Crown corporations, frankly, Mr. Speaker, because what is the real fright in all of this is the NDP's record on the Crowns. Their record on the Crowns, Mr. Speaker, is what they desperately don't want the public to know. They've sort of wavered. For the most part they've been about expanding the Crowns.

But we found out last session they were looking to privatize up to a third of SaskTel. We know they certainly don't mind privatizing non-core assets. They sold a bunch of shares in Cameco not long ago, Cameco which used to be, used to be SMDC (Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation) which was a member of the family of Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

But maybe we should review though, Mr. Speaker, and I'm certainly prepared to do that. Maybe we should review about . . . review the actions of this government as it relates to Crown corporations and how the Crowns have strayed from their original mandate. There's perhaps no better example of a Crown corporation that has strayed from its original mandate, its public service mandate to provide telephony to the province of Saskatchewan, than SaskTel.

Last session we found out that SaskTel had lost about a million plus in something called IQ&A. IQ&A, Mr. Speaker, was an ill-fated attempt by this government to set up another sub of another Crown to sell people's personal health care information.

So they wasted millions of dollars of taxpayer money until they found out that no other government in Canada wanted to sell their health care information. That was the first example we raised.

The second was a company, an ingenious . . . an ingenious plan by the government opposite called Clickabid. And Clickabid was going to compete, if you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, with eBay, the world giant Internet site that offers on-line auction services. And they lost a couple million in Clickabid and wrapped that up.

There was agdealer.com, Mr. Speaker, where the government invested in a business that directly competes with a burgeoning, a wonderful new company in Outlook. They invested in that as well — an Ontario-based company to compete with a Saskatchewan-based company.

There was *tappedinto.com*, which is a video/audio streaming dot-com in Nashville, Tennessee. The other shoe hasn't dropped on *tappedinto.com*, Mr. Speaker. We don't know how much money the taxpayers have lost in that.

There was SecurTek, Mr. Speaker, which confirmed — which confirmed for us last year, and we'll hear more this year — that they have lost millions of dollars of SaskTel's money. Money that could be used to expand cellular service, money that might have been used to improve SaskTel service to the province, has been squandered in these ventures.

And what's worse . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — What's worse, Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that SecurTek's been losing SaskTel's money and the taxpayers' money, but in the bargain — in the bargain — they've been competing with Saskatchewan businesses. There's a constituent in Swift Current who's now out of that business because of the competition he faced from his own Crown, from his Crown corporation. People in Swift Current were very surprised late last year, I think it was, when they found out that SecurTek's latest investment was to buy a monitoring company in Medicine Hat, Mr. Speaker. Investing in Medicine Hat, the city that poses the greatest economic threat to Swift Current, and this government through SaskTel throws a little more money their way.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I got a call not long after that from a business person in Medicine Hat, who were in that same business that SaskTel had invested in through SecurTek, and they were upset. You know, Mr. Speaker, not only do Saskatchewan business people resent competing with the Crowns, but apparently Alberta business people don't like it very much either. That was her concern; now she's competing with the Saskatchewan taxpayers there in Medicine Hat.

Mr. Speaker, they are currently speculating on the Australian Stock Market at SaskTel; we know that. We know that they're currently in the ditch and we understand it's going to get much worse before it gets better. If it gets better. We know, Mr. Speaker, that they've announced \$80 million for a place called Newcastle, Australia, where they're going to invest in telephony and in telecommunications in Australia.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, we've heard members opposite stand up and sanctimoniously defend these kinds of schemes saying, well we need to do these things to invest in Saskatchewan if you want us to build out the infrastructure in Saskatchewan. That's just ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. How about the \$80 million they're going to spend in Australia's infrastructure system? A lot of people in Saskatchewan are saying, why don't you use that? Why don't you use that if you need some resources to develop the cellular network to improve service in the province of Saskatchewan? Why don't you put the people of Nipawin ahead of the people of Newcastle, Australia, Mr. Speaker? That's what the people of the province are asking.

We can move on to SaskEnergy. They've been investing for some time now in Chile. Last year in Crown Corporations Committee we asked, well how's that going; have you made any money? No, no, we haven't made any money, but boy, we're going to; we're going to make more money. Like we're so sure we're going to make more money that in November they announced they're going to spend more money in Chile and Mexico to boot. With some hope, some prospect of return maybe. But these are high-risk investments — \$30 million in Chile and Mexico.

SaskPower. What about SaskPower, Mr. Speaker? Well in December there was a rate review panel that was commissioned to look at SaskPower's rate increase request. And that rate review panel did the right thing. They hired an independent consultant. And the independent consultant looks at the books of SaskPower and that independent consultant concluded that SaskPower International's plan to spend almost \$500 million over the next number of years could well show up on our power bills.

(21:30)

Saskatchewan SaskPower customers could be paying for still more ill-fated, ill-advised investments. That's what the independent consultant said, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the latest example of SaskPower comes into place close to home, and many members on this side have talked about it. It has to do with the wind farm. It has to do with the wind farm near Gull Lake where the government kind of, sort of, kind of half got it right last year when they went down this

road because they wanted to partner with the private sector.

And two companies out of Alberta were ready to play the game; they were ready to make an investment. They needed certain assurances from SaskPower. They got the assurances they needed and the projects went up, I think on time and on budget. I think they are generating power. I think they are more efficient than anyone expected them to be, and so SaskPower had to look at that, I guess, and thought to itself, well . . . and the NDP thought to itself, well it worked so well, why don't we just do it ourselves? Why don't we just leave the partners out of this and why don't we do this ourselves?

And if anybody, Mr. Speaker, has any doubt about the impact of that on RMs (rural municipalities) in the area — I think the two are Carmichael and the RM of Webb — they need to only go down and ask the people down there how that works, because the private/public partnership model is paying taxes — 70,000-plus I think is what they're paying.

An Hon. Member: — Seventy-six thousand.

Mr. Wall: — Seventy-six thousand, the member for Rosthern says.

So how much do you think the family of Crown corporations is paying to the RM that they are going to be located in. Bupkis, Mr. Speaker. They are paying absolutely nothing. And if you want, if you have a question, if members opposite have a question, Mr. Speaker, as to what model might be best in the future, public partner private . . . public/private partnerships, where Crowns might build joint venture relations with other private sector companies or just the government blindly, ideologically proceeding with the Crowns, if you want to ask them the question of which they prefer, the answer is pretty clear. They want to try something new. They want to get away from this tired, old attitude that the government has to do everything. It doesn't have to do everything. And when it does do everything, side by side with a private sector alternative, it becomes pretty clear which is more effective, which is more beneficial for the tax base.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the latest one that we were talking about in this Assembly was a company called . . . was a company called Retx. (Retail Energy Transaction Exchange). We raised Retx in the legislature last week. Retx is an Atlanta-based dot-com company that the government got into a couple of years ago. It first got into it with about 49 per cent and now it owns well over 60 per cent and the taxpayers have \$20 million in this thing.

We asked in Crown Corporations Committee last year well how is this investment doing. Making any money here? Well no, our share of the losses are about \$265,000 — Saskatchewan's share, the NDP's share on behalf of the taxpayers.

So I guess we haven't gave an opportunity for the minister to stand in his place and tell us how much more money they've made in the months that have passed since then. Apparently it hasn't made any money either, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't made any money.

How many jobs did it create in the province, we asked. None. It

created a job for a Saskatchewan person in Atlanta but it created nothing for the province of Saskatchewan. So then in trying to be constructive about the whole mess — and that's what we consider it — we suggested to the government that since it's a dot-com, since it's Internet-based and its location is not that crucial, would the government use its 60 per cent majority position and relocate the company to Saskatchewan? You know what the minister said? The minister said, that's ridiculous. That's a ridiculous suggestion. He said it in here and apparently he said it out there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, through you and to that minister, maybe he lacks the confidence to be able to sell the benefits of this province. Maybe he lacks the ability to go down there and tell them about a 60-cent dollar they can take benefit from. Maybe he lacks the ability to go down and talk to them about our burgeoning IT (information technology) industry and how there would be some synergies between that sector and this new company. Maybe he lacks the zeal or the will to do it but we don't, Mr. Speaker. We are prepared. We would be prepared and we will be prepared to go out and attract companies back here and sell the assets, not just simply give up . . . the minister, the member for Regina Victoria said. Not just simply give up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that we raised last week with regard to Crowns was the government's involvement with Great West Brewery and my colleague, the member for Indian Head-Milestone, asked some questions, some very reasonable questions. He didn't argue with the actions of the government in '95, but in light of the fact . . . but in light of the fact that the employee shareholders and the other shareholders of Great West Brewery didn't ask for the government to convert its debenture into equity . . . Nobody asked the government to do that, Mr. Speaker. From what we can gather the brewery didn't phone up the minister and say, would you please convert your debenture into equity and become an 80 per cent shareholder in a brewery. Nobody asked that. They just did it anyway.

And so the member for Indian Head-Milestone stood in his place and said, well fair enough; we can't figure that out but won't you at least commit to an exit strategy? When are you going to get the taxpayers out, ensuring the stability of that company? But apparently they're going to just stay in it I guess, Mr. Speaker — I'm not sure.

Mr. Speaker, when the business community from across Canada looks in on our province, when they read in the newspapers and on the national wire services about these sorts of measures — the government investing \$20 million in an Atlanta-based dot-com; the government converting a debenture to equity so it owns 80 per cent of a brewery, even though no one asked it to; the government, Mr. Speaker, offering itself as the one true solution for what ails our economy and our province — what do they see when they look in at our province? These are people who potentially could invest. These are venture capitalists who are always looking for opportunities.

What do they see when they look across the way and they see their actions? Watching the government spout 1970s, left-wing, blindly ideological rhetoric — rhetoric — and then putting that rhetoric to action in terms of the government getting in the way of business and putting more barriers in that stream of venture

capital.

That's what they see. See a government sitting at its desk, probably working diligently on two inches of shag rug by the light of lava lamps I'm sure they have from the 1970s. But, Mr. Speaker, we need to send a signal — not just to our business community in the province, but to entrepreneurs and investors and venture capitalists from across Canada and around the world — we need to send them a signal that Saskatchewan gets it. Finally after 60 years they've changed the government, they've got someone running the show that gets it, that understands that government doesn't create jobs but that business creates jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And so, Mr. Speaker, and so we've mapped out a non-ideological position as it relates to the Crown corporations. That's pretty clear.

We've said, Mr. Speaker, as regards the four major Crowns in the province, we've said look, we can't afford to be ideological about it. We can't afford any particular party or government that says government ownership is bad so we have to sell them. But neither can we afford any ideology that says government ownership is good, so the status quo must remain forever. We can't afford either. We need to be pragmatic, Mr. Speaker.

If, for example . . . If, for example . . . If, for example, a business from elsewhere in Canada recognizes the strength and the ability of one of our major Crowns and they approach the Government of Saskatchewan and say, you know we have a lot of respect for what that Crown corporation is doing and we think we could do a lot more together; there's some specific developments we could pursue. And we think we can strengthen and protect head office jobs, maybe add to head office jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. We think we can do that and all you need to do, and all the government needs to do, is consider a joint venture, maybe 51 per cent of their equity — maybe 51 per cent of their equity. And in this new joint venture that would be located in the province, that would employ people of the province, that would protect head office jobs, that would add to economic development of the province.

Mr. Speaker, do you want the kind of government, do you want the kind of government that would just say no to that deal, based on ideology? Do you want the kind of government that said know what, you know what, we checked the manifesto from nineteen tickety-two, and it says that the government has got to retain 100 per cent? Is that what the city of Regina wants? Is that what the province of Saskatchewan wants? Is that the kind of government we want? Or do we want a government that says look, let's put down the ideological textbooks for just a second and consider what's best for the province of Saskatchewan. Let's do that. How about that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And that is the difference between our policy and their policy. They have ruled out anything but the status quo. They've ruled it out. And we, Mr. Speaker, have said look, we need to review the Crowns so that we can ensure that they are still providing a service, that they return to the taxpayers what

they should return, that they continue to employ as many Saskatchewan people as they can. But outside of that, let's review the Crowns, let's review them with a view to doing what's right for the province of Saskatchewan.

We would do a couple of other things. Pending this review, we would put a moratorium on all out-of-province investments by the Crown corporations. And, Mr. Speaker, we would put an end, an unequivocal and absolute end to the amazing practice of this government of using the Crown corporations to compete with small-business men and women.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — You bet we would do that. You bet we would do that.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right about one thing in terms of this session. He was right about one thing, that this session in the months that will follow will clearly demonstrate the difference between the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP. It'll clearly demonstrate the different approach. It'll clearly demonstrate the vision that this side of the House has compared to the complete lack of vision on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It will clearly demonstrate that the Saskatchewan Party is interested in growing Nipawin, and the NDP would like to grow Newcastle, Australia; that the Saskatchewan Party is interested in growing Moose Jaw, and the NDP are interested in growing Mexico; that the Saskatchewan Party would like to grow Alida, and the NDP would like to grow Atlanta. Those are the differences in the next election, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Because there's absolutely nothing in this Throne Speech that would send a signal to anybody here or to the people of Swift Current or southwest Saskatchewan that a change is coming, that there's a government in Regina that understands that we need to do things differently. I will not be supporting the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it certainly is my pleasure to enter into the debate for the Throne Speech of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature.

But before I get into making some comments with regard to some of the rhetoric we heard from the members opposite, I think it's important to point out to the people of Saskatchewan who may be viewing this evening that the Throne Speech debate is part of our parliamentary tradition where members can get up and discuss philosophy and programs about government.

And I must say right off the top, Mr. Speaker, that I support this Throne Speech. I believe in this Throne Speech. I believe in the opportunity that it talks about, and I do not believe in the negativity of the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — When they talk about the doom and

gloom scenario which they've been talking about for years, what does this Throne Speech talk about? It talks about province of opportunity, Mr. Speaker, province of opportunity.

It talks about what we've done, what this coalition government has done over the past several years in moving forward opportunity in the province of Saskatchewan, and it makes a promise to do better with an action plan that makes sense, Mr. Speaker.

Now the members opposite have had a chance to talk with regard and debate this Throne Speech, and the member from Swift Current was just on his feet, and he talked about Crown corporations, and he said a moratorium on investments outside of the province of Saskatchewan.

(21:45)

But, Mr. Speaker, that member was a member of a government. He worked for the Devine government in the '80s. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? He worked in Economic Development, and what were they able to do other than to run up deficits of between 500 million and \$1 billion every year? And while they were running up those deficits, Mr. Speaker, to the GRF (General Revenue Fund), what was he doing? Investing Crown corporation money outside of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Joytec, Supercart International, GigaText, Promavia — they were the worst offenders of bad investments that this province has ever seen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — He's got the gall, the gall to get on his feet and say, we wouldn't do that any more. Well once you've got a pattern of behaviour, Mr. Speaker, you continue that pattern of behaviour and you cannot trust what the members opposite say because they have no track record of positive investment in the provinces, in Saskatchewan, or outside of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — And they have this philosophy that if you invest outside of the province and that investment makes money and that money comes back to Saskatchewan where it is spent 100 per cent here in this province, that that's a problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — What's the problem, Mr. Speaker? That is not a problem. What that means is that you have money from investments coming back to Saskatchewan, going into the General Revenue Fund and keeping taxes lower and keeping services higher, and guess what? It's from investments and the rate of return on investments for our Crown Investments Corporation, Mr. Speaker, average between 10 and 15 per cent — 10 and 15 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

So you take investment money and you have some winners and losers, but the winners are seven to one, Mr. Speaker. And that

money comes back to Saskatchewan and every single dime is spent here, Mr. Speaker — every single dime.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — And you know, they had this discussion earlier. They're talking about crop insurance and they were saying, you're sending money back to the federal government. And they talk about contracts and they say you're sending money back to the federal government.

Well, guess what? Provincial Crown corporations do not pay federal tax. And that means that every dollar stays in the province of Saskatchewan. They've forgotten that, Mr. Speaker. They're not interested in knowing that. If you privatize all those Crown corporations and all those utilities and they're fully deregulated, prices are going to soar, Mr. Speaker, and the federal government will take its share, Mr. Speaker, and that means less money for the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — When we talk . . . when we talk . . . when we talk about our approach, Mr. Speaker, and we talk about our action plan, we've heard lots from the members opposite about what they say they would do. Well, this is what they said they would do, Mr. Speaker, in the last election. That's their platform. It's called *The Way Up*. And guess what? In *The Way Up* . . . in *The Way Up*, they said what? This is what they said. They said . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Members will come to order. Members on both sides will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — It's . . . it's amazing, Mr. Speaker, how animated the members opposite get when we pull out their platform. This is . . . this is what they went to the people of Saskatchewan with in the last election. They had all of their heads together, and they came up with this platform, and this platform is what they all agreed on, and guess what? What did they agree on, Mr. Speaker?

They said they were going to cut taxes 20 per cent, and they were going to put a little teeny bit into Highways, and they were going to freeze everything else in government. Everything else in government was frozen, Mr. Speaker. That meant no new money for health care; no new money for education; no new money for revenue sharing.

A plan that would have increased property taxes like this, Mr. Speaker, and you know what? Now they get on their feet and they say, put more money into crop insurance; demand this from the federal government; put more money into education. And you know what? You're not putting enough into health care because people are still having problems accessing health care. A 40 per cent increase in the last three years. Sixteen per cent in Education. And they would have frozen it, Mr. Speaker. They would have frozen it.

You know, I sometimes wonder if it shouldn't have been called *The Way Up* but perhaps the frozen plan from the Popsicle party, Mr. Speaker — the frozen plan from the Popsicle party — because they have no plan. They have no plan today and

they have no plan for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm just going to talk a little bit now, Mr. Speaker, about health care. We heard one of the members opposite talking about . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Let's try again. Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — I just wanted to talk a little bit about health care, Mr. Speaker. One of the members opposite was talking about someone who had broken their arm. I think it was the member from Indian Head-Milestone. And any time that there's a delay in treatment I think every one of us agree that that shouldn't happen in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

But I think you have to recognize that in this province we have over 30,000 patient contacts with some part of the system every day; 210,000 contacts a week; that's 12 million contacts by patients each year, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? You know what the satisfaction ratings for that system are perennial when they're measured by health districts and hospitals? Over 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker, over 90 per cent. And in corporate America the highest ratings for satisfaction, things like Wal-Mart, 63, 65 per cent. So we have a health care system in this province that is rated one of the highest in terms of service of any service anywhere.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We have some problems. We have some problems with accessibility. But you know what? This system compared to what they have in the United States is light-years ahead, Mr. Speaker, light-years ahead.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — And to just give you a recent example of a positive response from a patient, I'll just give you this example. A patient saw his family physician, was referred to a specialist for chronic sinus problems. He saw the specialist within two weeks, saw the specialist on a Monday. The specialist booked him for a CT (computerized tomography) scan which was done on the Friday. He got the results from the CT scan the Monday and started treatment the Tuesday.

That happened here in Saskatchewan; that happened here two weeks ago. And you know what the cost to that patient was? Not one dime, Mr. Speaker, not one dime. And these sorts of positive examples happen every day in this province, but the members opposite don't want to hear about the positive examples. They always want to do . . . is bring up the doom and gloom scenarios, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I could go on about what we're doing in health care. I can go on about how we had the Fyke Commission bring forward its proposals. I can go on about how we had to drag the opposition party into the standing all-party committee on health care. They didn't want to participate. They had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, Mr. Speaker.

This is the same party . . . This is the same party that said, we want to have free votes; we want to have more all-party

committees. And when they have the chance they have to be dragged kicking and screaming into that process. You know, Mr. Speaker, we already know they're the Popsicle party, but do we also know they're the party of shifting principles and flexible policies, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — You know, Mr. Speaker, we've heard the doom and gloom. We've heard the doom and gloom from the members opposite. We've heard what they've said and how they flip-flopped back and forth, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? When you talk about philosophies, as the member of Swift Current talked about, when you talk about, what do parties mean, and we talk about the New Democratic Party, and we talk about the Liberal Party, and we talk about the Conservative Party on the national scene, and you can talk about libertarian conservatives, and you can talk about red Tories. But nobody talks about the Saskatchewan Party having any philosophy. They don't know what they stand for, Mr. Speaker. They don't have a philosophy. They have no program. They have no principles. They have no philosophy, Mr. Speaker.

So what are the people of Saskatchewan going to expect from the members opposite? Well guess what? It's a cloud. It's a fog. They're the sultans of doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker.

So when you sort of shift through what they've been saying, you can come up with a few things, Mr. Speaker. They want to privatize Crown corporations — willy-nilly sell-off, Mr. Speaker. They want to gut health care and privatize that too. They want to privatize the bus corporation. They want to privatize the liquor stores. It's all obvious what their plan is. They want to privatize everything because guess what? Government is no good.

Well I don't believe in that. The members of this party and this coalition don't believe in that. We believe that governments are there to serve the people of this province. They don't believe in that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — And, Mr. Speaker, we all know that their platform, we all know that their platform, you know, really didn't say too much other than tax cuts and everything else frozen.

So they go out and they've got this new program called Grow Saskatchewan. Well is it Grow Saskatchewan or gut Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because that's exactly what *The Wilkie Press* says here. They talk about growing Saskatchewan. They have their little meetings, 44 communities. And I mean they are little meetings, three or four or five people in some of them. And I think they're trying to increase their popularity, but when you come into a community and you have a meeting and the report in the local paper says, what are they growing, I think they're going to gut Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And you know one of the most irritating, one of the most irritating things that I find from the members opposite in their

rhetoric is their policy on agriculture because their very leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, what did he say in 1998, right after he was elected? You know what he said?

He said he didn't believe in subsidies for agriculture. He said he didn't believe in any subsidies; he believed in a level playing field.

And you know what? Day in after day out we have the members opposite say, more for crop insurance, more for AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance), more for CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program); while their leader sits there saying, I don't believe in subsidies.

Well you either believe in tax cuts or you believe in services or you believe in helping the people of Saskatchewan. You have to believe in something, Mr. Speaker, and guess what? I cannot find anything that those members opposite believe in, Mr. Speaker, because they change their minds every other day. There's no consistency.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — They're flip-flop, flip-flop all the time. And I can see why that happens, Mr. Speaker, because when you have a coalition of Liberals, of Tories, of Reformers, of Alliance, of whatever, an alliance of malcontents, Mr. Speaker, you're not going to get consensus on anything.

And I'm very glad to have participated in this speech tonight.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(22:00)

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Members, it now being one-half hour before closing time on the sixth day of the resumption of debate on the motion to the . . . to be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, it is incumbent upon me at this time to call the vote.

The motion before the Assembly is the one moved by the member from Saskatoon Greystone and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Lynda M. Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The division bells rang from 22:02 until 22:03.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 30

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Calvert | Addley | Atkinson |
| Hagel | Lautermilch | Serby |
| Melenchuk | Cline | Sonntag |
| Osika | Lorjé | Kasperski |
| Goulet | Van Mulligen | Prebble |
| Belanger | Crofford | Axworthy |
| Nilson | Junor | Hamilton |
| Harper | Forbes | Jones |
| Higgins | Trew | Wartman |
| Thomson | Yates | McCall |

Nays — 25

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Hermanson | Elhard | Heppner |
| Julé | Krawetz | Draude |
| Boyd | Gantefoer | Toth |
| Wakefield | Stewart | Eagles |
| McMorris | D'Autremont | Bakken |
| Wall | Kwiatkowski | Brkich |
| Wiberg | Weekes | Harpauer |
| Hart | Allchurch | Huyghebaert |
| Hillson | | |

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTIONS

Address be Engrossed and Presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That the said address be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are of the Executive Council.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

Ways and Means

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That this Assembly, pursuant to rule 92, hereby appoints the Committee of Finance to consider the supply to be granted to Her Majesty, and to consider the ways and means of raising the supply.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 22:07.