

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again on behalf of residents of my hometown of Swift Current who are very concerned about the state of the hospital in that community. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to commit its share of funding for a new regional hospital in Swift Current.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners again today are all from the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the crop insurance rates. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from Spiritwood.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in view of the government's unwillingness to renew a lot of the land leases that have come up for renewal in the Southwest, constituents there have asked that this petition be presented on their behalf:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by producers from Gull Lake, Webb, Tompkins, Maple Creek, and Eastend.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 4, 10, and 12.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Learning: how much funding did pre-kindergarten programs receive in the fiscal year 1998 to 1999?

I also have similar questions for the fiscal years 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 12 ask the government the following question:

To the Agriculture minister: what is the total amount of money deducted from the 2002 farmer claims regarding the grasshopper control penalty; further to that, how many producers were assessed a penalty in 2002; also, what was the criteria for assessing grasshopper penalties 2002; and were these grasshopper control penalties assessed to organic grain growers last year?

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House, three guests who are seated in the west gallery. They are Gord Gunoff, the business manager, Ron Hitchcock, the assistant business manager, and Mike Kator, the assistant business manager, of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Saskatchewan Local 2067.

I would ask all members to join me in extending them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to members of the Assembly a constituent of mine from Saskatoon Greystone constituency, Margaret Woloshyn. Margaret is a long-time friend and is involved in many, many community organizations in Saskatoon.

Margaret, I'm sorry that I don't know the name of the person who is accompanying you, but I want to welcome your guest as well. I'm being helped out here because I understand your sister is also visiting. So it's lovely to have you both here.

And would all members join me in welcoming Margaret and

her sister to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the government in welcoming the member from the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) to the Assembly today. I hope you enjoy the proceedings and the questions that will be coming forward. So enjoy the session.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this legislature, one Tanner Morrison, seated in the western gallery. Tanner is no stranger to this place. His name sits on a couple of the debating trophies down the hallway in the library, and he's a champion debater, and a good person, and a student of this institution of ours. So I'd urge all members to please give Tanner a warm welcome to this place.

Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

War in Iraq

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the American ambassador to Canada, Mr. Paul Cellucci, yesterday addressed the economic club of Canada, where he expressed his dismay over the Canadian government abandoning the Americans in these troubled times. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, he was right. What is even more troubling is the statement Mr. Cellucci made regarding the United States' commitment to Canada. And I quote:

There is no security threat to Canada that the United States would not be ready, willing and able to help with.

Mr. Speaker, the war is now on. The decision or process of how to go to war has been made and is now over. What matters now, Mr. Speaker, is that either we are with our allies or against them. The ancestral and historic ties that we share with the United States, Great Britain, and Australia leaves the position of our federal and provincial governments to be questioned.

Mr. Speaker, we all pray and hope for the swift resolution of this conflict. Our prayers are with the families of those who have men and women serving in the coalition. Mr. Speaker, our prayers are also with Alexis Dustyhorn and her friends and family. Alexis was born in Saskatchewan and is now serving in the United States Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 74, Charlie Company.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to say that it is in times of crisis that families stick together. They don't run and hide or point fingers. Great Britain, Australia, and the United States are family . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Car Thefts in Regina

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to inform the House that car thefts in Regina have dropped off dramatically since this government, in co-operation with the Regina city police, implemented an anti-crime strategy last year. Mr. Speaker, auto thefts were down 46 per cent in January and February of 2003. That's compared to the same period last year. And, Mr. Speaker, overall in 2002 auto thefts declined 28.5 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy that has effected this change relies on the resources of the city police and the departments of Social Services, Justice, Corrections and Public Safety. It emphasizes early intervention for first-time offenders, stricter supervision of repeat offenders, more youth workers, and providing the courts with information about youths who will appear before them.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the opposition believes that the only solution to young offenders is so-called boot camp. They would have us lock these children up, Mr. Speaker. That will teach them a great deal, Mr. Speaker. And that is absolutely right, Mr. Speaker, it will teach them — it will teach these kids to be criminals and it will teach them how to be better at it.

Mr. Speaker, it is usually the case . . . we believe there are solutions to complex problems other than the extreme, angry, knee-jerk, and simplistic solutions of the members opposite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Achievements of Moosomin Moose Hockey Team

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, the Moosomin community and area have been actively raising funds to build a new hospital and long-term care centre.

Last year the local Moosomin Moose rec hockey team began asking themselves, what could they do to assist in this very worthwhile project? The idea they came up with was setting a new Guinness book world record for the longest hockey game played, and in the process raising some funds for the project.

In January '02, Mr. Speaker, the Moose put their skates on, hit the ice, and 26 hours later set a new record for the longest game played, at the time, while raising over \$125,000 for the building project.

Mr. Speaker, this year the Moose decided to again respond to the challenge placed before them by two other communities who bettered their record. In January the Moose again hit the ice, played 62 hours of hockey, raising more than \$205,000 for the health project.

On April 19, the community will be hosting a community dinner to say thank you to the Moose for their efforts. I look forward to attending this event and extend an invitation to the Premier and the Minister of Health to join with us in not only saying thank you to the Moose but as well to give official approval and commitment, allowing construction to begin on a very worthwhile and necessary health project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Additional Seats for Northern Nursing Program

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, I have good news for First Nations, Métis people, northerners, and nursing education.

Mr. Speaker, this government is funding 40 additional nursing seats as part of a new northern nursing degree program. The program is being offered through the Saskatchewan Indian Federated campus in Prince Albert with 37 students currently taking nursing classes. Since 1999, the number of nursing seats in the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan has increased by 65 per cent to a total of 300.

The initiative will help to address the need for more health professionals in northern Saskatchewan and for greater Aboriginal and northern representation in the health care system. Through these programs we are creating education opportunities for Aboriginal and northern students in Prince Albert, often closer to their homes and communities and family support.

Graduates from this nursing program will be well positioned to work in northern Saskatchewan or anywhere else in the province with their skills which will be in high demand.

Keeping and attracting key health providers are top priorities of our government. Our Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care recommends finding ways to increase Aboriginal participation in the health workforce. The nursing program in this case will be an important step towards this.

Mr. Speaker, recruiting, training and retaining front line health professionals are among the top priorities of this government. This will be a significant contribution . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North Saskatoon Business Association Honours Businesses

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night myself, along with my colleague, the member from Rosthern, had the privilege of attending the North Saskatoon Business Association sixth annual business awards dinner. It was a fun time and I'd like to share with the Assembly the winners from that last evening and hope all members join me in congratulating them on their success.

Mr. Speaker, Wayne Wilson of Business Furnishings Ltd. won the prestigious Business Builder Award. And the Member of the Year is Jim Nowakowski, principal of JNE Welding.

Other winners, Mr. Speaker, were Healthserv Ltd., radio station grouping CJWW, Hot 93/Magic 98.3, Ecol Laser Services, Sawyers Tree and Landscapes.

Management Quality Award was won by North Ridge Development Corp. and Nu-Fab Burton LP was also a winner.

Mr. Speaker, the small business is the economic driver for jobs in Saskatchewan — and not the government. And our government is very excited and encouraged by such private business success. We must create an economic climate where other small businesses can thrive and not have to compete against the NDP (New Democratic Party) government and the business-oppressive record.

So, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to these, winners all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Balfour Senior Girls Basketball Team Captures Sixth City Title

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take this opportunity to tell my colleagues about the success of the Balfour Redmen senior girls basketball team. Mr. Speaker, this season the Balfour senior girls went undefeated for their entire season — 35 straight games beginning with the exhibition season, through the regular season to capturing the Regina Intercollegiate Basketball League title, to winning the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association 5A senior girls final.

And that's not all, Mr. Speaker. In the last six years the Balfour senior girls have won a record six straight Regina Intercollegiate Basketball League titles, they have won two provincial titles, and they have been provincial runners-up the last three years in a row.

Mr. Speaker, Wendy Bileski has been the coach at Balfour throughout their amazing six-year run, and if her winning record does not speak for itself one of her opposing coaches had this to say of her team: they've got a really positive outlook and a strong vision; they set their goals high and they accomplish them. Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that the girls she has coached have enjoyed such success.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all the members of this House will join me in congratulating the Balfour Redmen senior girls basketball team.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Katimavik Project at Eastend

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 22 this year the first group of 11 young people from across Canada, all members of the organization Katimavik under the leadership of project co-ordinator, Steve Slood, arrived in the community of Eastend for a 10-week work program with local non-profit organizations.

Katimavik is a nationally recognized organization for Canadian youth between the ages of 17 and 21 with the purpose of encouraging personal development through volunteer community service, training, and group interaction.

For seven months, three separate groups of remarkable young people will each spend 10 weeks working within selected communities, such as Eastend, learning leadership skills by completing projects for local organizations. It's been described as a program that helps people learn how to make compromises, to help, assist, and respect others.

The 11 young people who have become a part of our community will soon be leaving for Alexandria, Ontario, for 10 weeks and then on to St. Stephens, New Brunswick before returning to their respective provinces and homes.

They have indeed benefited from the experiences that they encountered in southwest Saskatchewan, but so too have the volunteer organizations that were the recipients of this groups' skills and abilities. They have contributed many hours of volunteer service to Eastend already and will continue to play host to two more Katimavik groups over the next five months.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join with me in wishing each member of this Katimavik group, who have been visiting Eastend, a hearty Saskatchewan farewell and the best of luck in their future endeavours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Population Decline

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the best ways to evaluate, perhaps the very best way to evaluate the performance of a government is to ask the question, are more people moving in or moving out? In spite of the NDP's \$3 million advertising campaign the government is still driving people out of Saskatchewan.

Statistics Canada released it's year-end population figures and they show that Saskatchewan's population decreased in the year 2002 by over 5,000 people. Mr. Speaker, in fact 7,600 more people moved out of Saskatchewan than moved into Saskatchewan. That's 7,600 people — most of them under 35 years of age — who decided that their future was wide open outside Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that we need more than an advertising campaign to keep Saskatchewan people here. Why is the NDP driving so many people out of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in his usual gloom and doom manner, the Leader of the Opposition wants to tell us all the bad news. Nobody likes it, Mr. Speaker, when people move out of our province. But what the Leader of the Opposition did not tell the people is that these numbers show that out-migration is at its lowest level in the last four years, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I want to say to the leader, I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, that things are turning around, Mr. Speaker. Things are turning around . . .

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

Order. I recognize the . . . Order, please. Order.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Things are turning around, Mr. Speaker. There are 10,000 more people working in Saskatchewan today than there were a year ago, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And yes, yes, there has been a slight fluctuation in the population in the last quarter, Mr. Speaker, but this province is on a roll. We're on a roll in oil and gas; we're on a roll in mining; we're on a roll in forestry; we're on a roll across the piece, Mr. Speaker.

There's good news out there and the only ones that don't recognize it are sitting right there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is correct, the people of Saskatchewan are on a roll — they're rolling right out of the province in the tune of 7,600 people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the old minister of Industry said it was good that people were leaving Saskatchewan. He said there'd be more left for the rest of us. Now the new minister says it's good that people are leaving because not quite as many people left this year as last year. But 5,000 people, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of people.

So what did the NDP do? What are they doing about the problem? Well, Mr. Speaker, are they doing anything to attract more investment? No. Are they doing anything to make Saskatchewan more business friendly? No, not at all. Instead, they spend millions on an empty advertising slogan.

Mr. Speaker, the result is 5,000 fewer people in our province. Mr. Speaker, we need more than an empty slogan and some fancy commercials. We need a little bit more than this positive thinking and these shallow motivational speeches by the Premier. Why is the NDP driving so many people out of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, just to point out how wrong the Leader of the Opposition is, he gets up and he says in this House, we can't attract investment in Saskatchewan. We pick up the newspaper today, what does it say? Venture capital triples in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — What does it say? He likes to talk about his right-wing cousins in British Columbia and Alberta, but it says here Saskatchewan was the only Western Canadian province to see growth in venture capital investment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, there's 10,000 more people working in the province this year; oil and gas drilling up 80 per cent; youth employment up thousands over last year, Mr.

Speaker. And what do we hear from the Leader of the Opposition? Doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, doom and gloom.

Well I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that not everybody shares his gloomy view of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, if the NDP raises the bar from 1 inch to 3 inches, even the most incompetent backbencher will still be able to get over the hurdle.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers, these numbers are staggering because each one of these numbers represents a real person. Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, it's our friends, it's our families, it's our neighbours that are leaving. And about two-thirds of the people who leave are young people. Mr. Speaker, they are between the ages of 15 and 35. They are our sons and our daughters and that, quite frankly, bothers me a lot.

Mr. Speaker, everywhere that I go when I talk to young people in Saskatchewan, they tell me they'd like to stay. And when I talk to former young Saskatchewan residents outside of the province, they tell me they'd like to come back. But, Mr. Speaker, they're saying either the NDP's got to go or we can't come back because there's no opportunities under an NDP government. Mr. Speaker, the solution starts with getting rid of the NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — The evidence speaks for its itself. Why does the NDP have no plan to grow Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again we have the Leader of the Opposition getting up and saying young people can't find jobs. But we look in the media, the *Regina Leader-Post*, January 25, what does it say? It says this, Mr. Speaker: "More youth finding jobs." That's the truth, Mr. Speaker. That's the truth.

And I want to quote to the Leader of the Opposition something that a couple who moved here from BC (British Columbia) are saying, Dick and Diane Coombs who say this:

. . . they are trying to convince everyone in B.C. to join them (in moving to Saskatchewan).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And Dick Coombs has this to say to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. He says:

I can't imagine how much money we'd have if we came here 20 years ago . . .

And they'd started an organization called the Last Cattle Frontier, a group dedicated to luring more immigrant farmers to Saskatchewan, which they consider the new promised land. And that's a testimonial, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that a real plan works. A phoney slogan doesn't work, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are outraged at the flagrant abuse of public money by Dutch Lerat — luxury vehicles, trips around the world — over \$800,000 in spending. But the Saskatchewan people are even more outraged at the government for allowing this to happen and for refusing to take responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, Dutch Lerat did nothing to hide his extravagant spending. That means someone in the NDP government must have known this was going on and if they did not know, they should have known.

Mr. Speaker, SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) had a legal responsibility to oversee spending practices at SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority). Who in this government is responsible and who failed to do their job?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, no question, there were issues that have been addressed. Let me just explain once again to the opposition what's taken place, Mr. Speaker.

SLGA, when the issue was brought to their attention, ordered a special audit with comprehensive review of SIGA — number one. Number two, the Provincial Auditor has conducted his report on this file and reported in November 2000. Number three, Mr. Speaker, somebody that they obviously don't have any respect for — the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and the criminal justice system — had investigated this file. The Department of Justice reviewed the file and made its decision, Mr. Speaker.

We've got everything in place now to try our very best to ensure that this does not happen again and it will not happen again, Mr. Speaker.

Instead of being critical, I think that member should celebrate with the Leader of the Opposition, who said in a Saskatoon article and I quote:

Hermanson praised the FSIN for running a successful gaming business . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, if it is possible, the government is even worse than Dutch Lerat because . . .

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it's possible, Mr. Speaker, the government is even worse than Dutch Lerat because they are the regulator and they allowed this to happen.

They chose to turn a blind eye.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Provincial Auditor, SIGA financed . . .

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, according to the Provincial Auditor, SIGA financed Lerat's lifestyle and violated the terms of the casino operating agreement. But this government signed the casino operating agreement and this government is responsible for ensuring SIGA lives up to the terms of this agreement. Clearly the government failed to do its job.

Eight hundred thousand dollars of public money gone forever and the NDP tells us everything is just fine. No wonder the public is outraged.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, the minister either can't or won't tell us who was responsible for SIGA's spending. If the minister won't answer this question, will he order a public inquiry so the people of Saskatchewan can have an answer to this question?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And with all due respect, the gentleman's name is Lerat — Mr. Dutch Lerat — for the member opposite, with all due respect.

Now I just pointed out the four independent audits and investigations that were carried out. Is that opposition suggesting that we go to an additional public expense? Mr. Speaker, we've already carried out due diligence through these four independent reviews and investigations, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of that, we did suspend the negotiations for the new agreement until the new SIGA board, the new CEO (chief executive officer), and the new people both at SLGA and SIGA agreed that they had met certain benchmarks that the auditor of the day had put forward.

Now the province . . . And this is some other information. That opposition is misleading the public, Mr. Speaker, by telling them that they've lost millions of dollars. We recovered the \$1.36 million of the taxpayers' money.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP does not want to say who is responsible and they do not want a public inquiry to find out who is responsible. Then at the very least will they allow the members of this Assembly to look into who was responsible?

Mr. Speaker, for over two years the NDP has refused to allow any discussion of SIGA in Public Accounts Committee because of the ongoing investigation. Now the investigation is over. Will the government allow a special investigation by the Public Accounts Committee to determine who was responsible for overseeing SIGA's spending and how they allowed this blatant abuse to happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I regret that the opposition refuses to see the progress that has — serious progress — that has been made. The costs of operating SIGA has been reduced significantly. The profits have almost doubled. And those profits go to all the people of this province, the communities where those casinos are located, Mr. Speaker.

I want to quote my good friend, Chief Perry Bellegarde, by saying to these members something he said to the people of the province, and I quote from Saskatoon, *StarPhoenix*:

“We've already streamlined our operations. We've learned what to do and what not to do. We've separated the politics from the management and administration. There are proper financial policies and procedures in place. We just want to move forward now, creating more jobs and more wealth.”

And I still insist they should join the Leader of the Opposition over there if he is sincere, if he's sincere in what he says about the success . . . running a successful gaming business and complimented it for addressing government challenges.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agricultural Policy Framework Agreement

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has finally signed the first stage of agriculture policy framework agreement which is only an expression of the intent to participate in the new safety net programming offered by Ottawa. This allows the provincial government to have a seat at the table where the new agriculture risk-management program is being designed.

Typical of this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, is that we're attempting to get aboard the ship once it's already sailed. And the farm families are going to be faced with yet another program that has primarily been designed by the bureaucrats in Ottawa, simply because our government missed the boat. Now the federal government is urging the provinces, Mr. Speaker, to sign the agreement of implementation for the new program.

Mr. Speaker, since the province has only recently indicated their intent to participate in the APF (agricultural policy framework), has the minister already decided that he will sign on to the agreement of implementation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, the member has obviously shown her true colours and lack of understanding of what's happening in agricultural policy . . . (inaudible) . . . absolutely.

We're the last province in Canada to sign the agreement, Mr. Speaker. Why, Mr. Speaker? We're the last province in Canada to sign the agreement, Mr. Speaker, because we said that we wanted to make amendments and adjustments to the program.

The member from Watrous, Mr. Speaker, this past summer, when everybody in Canada was saying do not sign the agreement, what did the member from Watrous say, Mr. Speaker? What did she say? She said that the Saskatchewan government should be signing the agricultural policy framework, Mr. Speaker, and get in . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker. Back last summer, Mr. Speaker, when everybody else is saying we shouldn't sign the agreement, the member from Watrous said we should be signing the agriculture policy framework. So out of touch, Mr. Speaker, with agricultural farm policy that she should resign her seat, Mr. Speaker, and let somebody else do the job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I find it appalling that the minister doesn't understand that there's more than one stage of signatures for that agreement. First is the . . . a signature for the agreement of intent which allows you, at the table, in helping with the designing, and then there is a signature for the implementation. And this province, that government, has typically sat back, not been involved in the designing, and then they sign intent, say it's Ottawa's fault we got a crappy program. It's time to change and time to be at that table, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a number of provinces who many months ago did sign the agreement of intent to participate in the APF and have been at that table all along through the early designing stages are saying that they will not be signing the agreement of implementation. They say the program's not ready to be implemented and there will be considerable improvements that need to be made and a lot of questions that need to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister support the other provinces in their request to extend the existing programs for one year, and will he consider to do . . . to commit to doing an independent assessment using actual Saskatchewan farm scenarios to see if this program will work?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, this is an incredible position for the member from Watrous to be taking and it shows her total, her total disrespect for the process that's happened across the country and her lack of knowledge about what happened, Mr. Speaker, over the past year and a half.

The minister from Alberta, Mr. Speaker, in *The Western Producer* — and I wish I had the article here — this past week is quoted as saying that they have signed not only the implementation agreement, they've signed the agricultural policy framework agreement, Mr. Speaker, is what she said. A Conservative friend from across the way, next door, have already signed not only the implementation agreement but also the agricultural policy framework agreement, Mr. Speaker.

And all provinces at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, will sign the implementation agreements.

And we said we're not signing the implementation agreement yet or the agricultural policy framework because there's not enough money in the contract, Mr. Speaker.

And the member for Watrous said — past June — sign the agreement; farmers will be happy. Totally out of touch, Mr. Speaker, with what's happening in agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Genetically Modified Potatoes

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a result of an article that appeared in today's daily newspapers, we know that not only did the NDP not tell the truth about their level of investment in SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) or their attempts to avoid their own union tendering agreement, or we also know that they didn't tell the truth about a test which showed our potatoes fried up black. And now we know, Mr. Speaker, that they didn't tell Saskatchewan people, nor did they tell other local potato farmers, perhaps even potato buyers, that they were producing — the NDP government was producing — GMO (genetically modified organisms) potatoes.

Mr. Speaker, a former employee of SPUDCO who spoke to a reporter with the Saskatchewan News Network says, the potatoes were grown and shipped to buyers without being identified as genetically modified product.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), why did SPUDCO misrepresent their product and deceive the companies who purchased their potatoes? Did the minister approve of that strategy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the members opposite today and to the member from Swift Current that I had a wonderful experience today touring the potato sheds and meeting with the industry in the home of the Leader of the Opposition.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, today, first and foremost, Mr. Speaker — and I say to the member from Swift Current — there was absolutely no requirement, no requirement in 1998 to label potatoes, Mr. Speaker, in Canada. There was none. To label them, Mr. Speaker, as genetically modified, there was no restrictions, Mr. Speaker.

That didn't happen, Mr. Speaker, until the spring of 2000. And why did it happen in the spring of 2000, Mr. Speaker? Because the population of Canada said, we want to see some segregation here of the GM (genetically modified) potatoes, led by McDonald's in the year 2000.

The federal government today, Mr. Speaker, has yet today . . . yet has today, Mr. Speaker . . . The CFIA (Canada Food Inspection Agency) has not required any labelling to occur today in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, apparently everything's okay. Everything's fine again, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't matter that they could have taken the extra effort . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't matter that they could have taken the extra effort to tell the truth, but that is too much of an extra effort for this government. They've avoided the truth for six long years and that's why they're going to face the wrath of the voters in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder when the Deputy Premier was down at the potato sheds if he actually took the minister in charge of this file who made these decisions with him. And if he did, I wonder if he talked to Tom Dolman of Outlook who is quoted in this story. Mr. Speaker, he grew GMO potatoes for SPUDCO and was never fully compensated for any of the potatoes he grew for the company. And he has been driven into bankruptcy. I wonder if that's the kind of economic development the Deputy Premier's been talking about.

Mr. Speaker, what does that Deputy Premier, what does the minister have to say to Mr. Dolman and the other people — the farm families and the businesses in the area who suffered huge losses because of the failure of SPUDCO?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the member from Swift Current has an opportunity to be out in the area where the potato sheds are or not. I don't know if he's ever been there. And I don't know how many members of the opposition have been there, Mr. Speaker, to take a look at what we have, Mr. Speaker.

But I hear the member from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, for the last four months standing up on his feet and I hear members from across the House, Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatchewan Party berating the work that's been done on that part of the province in growing the potato industry, Mr. Speaker.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the people whom I met with today, 14 strong from the . . . who are representatives of the member from Rosetown, Mr. Speaker, and they said to me, what's happening in Saskatchewan today is a shame as to how they're putting down the potato industry, Mr. Speaker. It's a shame because they're driving investment . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as far back as April 2000 members of that government were very concerned about this issue. Here's what the member for Regina South said April 11, 2000. He said, and I quote:

There is a huge concern, particularly in Europe, that GMOs and GM foods are in fact going to be . . . are not . . . (they) are going to be a harm.

He says, the member goes on to say:

Now (he says) for those members opposite who are farmers, they will know the problems that you have (been when you combined) . . . these two sets of seeds.

So the member for Regina South understood the issue.

And the question to the Deputy Premier and the minister is this.

Is the Deputy Premier and the minister confirming for the House that they knew all along that the SPUDCO was growing GMO potatoes and then that they wilfully withheld that information from the farmers and from the companies? Is that what he's telling the Legislative Assembly today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Today, Mr. Speaker, as I visited the potato sheds today and the people who are growing potatoes and growing the irrigation industry in that part of the world, that's what I want . . . that's what I'm sharing, Mr. Speaker.

Number one, producers in that part of the province are saying it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the consumers in Saskatchewan, in Canada today, Mr. Speaker, do not want GM potatoes because producers in that part of the province, Mr. Speaker, and in Canada, wish that they could still grow GM potatoes, Mr. Speaker. Because we grow 400,000 acres of potatoes in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and 4 per cent of the industry was growing GM potatoes. And in that part of the province, Mr. Speaker, of which the Leader of the Opposition comes from, they wish they could still grow GM potatoes, Mr. Speaker, because that's what the country would like to see, but we don't have it today, Mr. Speaker.

(14:15)

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that today on this side of the House, with the members from the . . . with the people who are growing potatoes in Saskatchewan are working to make a difference, Mr. Speaker, in growing the industry in spite of what they're saying, Mr. Speaker, about making a difference with the industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 6 — The Podiatry Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, The Podiatry Act be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — Order, please.

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

Bill No. 7 — The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 7, The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act, 2003 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 1.

The Speaker: — Response to no. 1 has been tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER**ADJOURNED DEBATES****ADDRESS IN REPLY**

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

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly was looking forward to entering this debate and for a while it was questionable whether I'd be able to enter it, but I thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before I make my remarks about the Speech from the Throne, I would like to also extend my welcome to the two newly elected members of this Legislative Assembly — the member from Saskatoon Fairview and the member from Battleford-Cut Knife.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — I can just imagine what their life has been like in the last couple of months here with hastily called by-elections and then right after the by-election the start of the new session.

And I can remember back in 1999 when I was nominated late in the process and I was busy with our farming operation and trying to campaign and all those sorts of things. And then of course the election was called in the middle of harvest and we all know what type of stress that put on those of us that represent rural constituencies.

And these two new members, I'm sure they have things like organizing constituency offices and for both members finding appropriate accommodations here in Regina and so on. And I wish them the best in their efforts. And a word of advice is, take your time and things will wait until tomorrow if you don't get them done today. And the constituents, at least from my experience, have been very understanding; I'm sure your constituents will be also.

Mr. Speaker, with the change proposed . . . changes that will come in effect to the constituencies on the call of the next election, Last Mountain-Touchwood was one of those constituencies that will undergo significant changes in boundaries. We will . . . Presently the boundaries of Last Mountain-Touchwood start at the Qu'Appelle River and go north to the Quill Lakes. That will change significantly. We'll

lose the whole northern half of the constituency and we will get pushed over east, Mr. Speaker.

And I would like to say, take this time to say a few words about these changes and about my experience in having served the constituents in the northern part of Last Mountain-Touchwood. There's a number of towns like Duval and Raymore and Quinton and Govan and Wynyard and Elfros and so on that we'll be losing. And I certainly have mixed emotions about losing some of those communities. I have got to know a lot of good people in those constituencies. I've worked with them and enjoyed attending functions and events in those various towns and around that part of the constituency.

And I would just like to say at this time that I'm sure they will be ably represented by a new Saskatchewan MLA after the next election because they will become . . . Most of those towns will become part of the Arm River-Watrous, Mr. Speaker.

Now when I looked at the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I noticed that it was an interesting document in that it stated . . . Mostly what it did is it stated the obvious, Mr. Speaker, and it really didn't mention any new initiatives or any new plans that this government may have. And to me, that tells me that this government is out of new ideas and new initiatives.

A small example, Mr. Speaker. There was, I believe, about a sentence and a half mentioned of the Canadian Light Source, the synchrotron, that's nearing completion at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan). And, Mr. Speaker, this . . . And I've said this in the House before that that scientific project, it's the largest scientific project undertaken in Canada, not alone Saskatchewan, in the last 30 years.

And what do we see in this Speech from the Throne? One or two sentences. There's no mention, Mr. Speaker, of any innovation that could develop around this scientific project, Mr. Speaker. There's no mention of some of the initiatives and some of the things that have happened in other areas in this country and in our neighbours to the south, in the US (United States) and, in fact, in other countries around the world.

When a major scientific project is built in a province and in a city, quite often there . . . research parks spring up, Mr. Speaker, around those facilities and economic activity develops, Mr. Speaker. None of that is mentioned in the Speech from the Throne; none of that is mentioned in anything from this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll give you an example of some of the things that this government isn't doing. Last fall the president of the U of S, Dr. Peter MacKinnon, along with some other folks in Saskatoon, organized a conference, a seminar on innovation. And they brought in speakers from all across North America who are . . . who have some very good expertise in this whole area. Myself and my colleague, the member from Lloydminster, attended that seminar. Was there any members from the opposite side of this House at that seminar, Mr. Speaker? No, not a one — not a one. It's not on their radar screen.

You know what? When you talk to them about the synchrotron, the light . . . you know what they'll tell you? Well we finally got the Sask Synchrotron Institute up and running — about a

year and a half or two years later after Alberta got theirs up and running, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, those are some of the things that weren't mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. That's just some examples of some of the things that weren't mentioned.

In the area of health care, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne stated the obvious — we now have 12 regional health authorities. Well I guess we have 12 regional health authorities. We passed, in the evening, legislation in the last session, Mr. Speaker. But it didn't mention anything about any plans or initiatives to address the long surgical waiting lists. It didn't mention anything or any plans or initiatives to address the increased demand on long-term health care.

As I said, it states some of the obvious, some of the simple things but no new plans, no new initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

And there are a number of things, Mr. Speaker, that can be done in some of these areas that don't cost a lot of money, that would improve the system, and yet we don't hear these initiatives coming forth from that side of the House.

Long-term care, for instance, Mr. Speaker. There are some things happening between our health regions that cause the people that need to use the services great problems like . . . I'll give you an example.

I had a constituent who was moving her parents from the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority to the Regina Regional Health Authority. And this constituent had had her parents assessed in Saskatoon, and then she moved them to Regina and asked the Regina Regional Health Authority to look at the assessment that was done in Saskatoon.

Do you know what she was told, Mr. Speaker? We don't recognize Saskatoon's assessments; we do our own. I ask the question, why, Mr. Speaker. We are living in the same province. We've got 12 . . . now 12 regional health authorities. Certainly can we not have a standard assessment procedure that we don't have to repeat this process, Mr. Speaker?

That's just one small example of some of the things that could be done to make our system more efficient and make the lives of the people that need to use the system a whole lot easier, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at what was said in the Speech from the Throne with regards to highways and transportation, there was a small . . . some lip service paid I guess to that area at the very most, Mr. Speaker. When you stop to think of it, highways and transportation affect every social and economic . . . almost every social and economic activity in the province. It's fundamental. We are a large province spread over a large area where people need to get from one point to the other. We need to have the infrastructure in place, Mr. Speaker, and we have very little mention of the . . . of that particular activity of government.

There was small mention of . . . that this government will be able to increase the rate of twinning of our two national highways in the province and that's due to some modest help

that they received recently from the federal government, Mr. Speaker. And that's a good thing that we increase our . . . the rate of our twinning and so on. But it's not going to happen overnight. I'm told that with a little bit more effort there are more federal dollars that this government could have accessed, but at least we've got some additional new dollars and I do acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker.

Again as I said, there was . . . the Speech from the Throne was interesting for the things it didn't mention, and I think that's something that we've heard from various sources including other members of this House. When we look, there was no mention of long-term planning in highways and transportation. In fact the assistant deputy minister's position of policy and planning has been vacant for some months. So that sort of tells you something that . . . as to what's happening as far as planning and that sort of thing.

There's no mention of any type of plan or initiative to address some of the problems in transportation in our urban centres. For example, the traffic congestion that the city of Regina has on the east side of the city dealing with the Victoria bypass and those sorts of things, there's no mention of anything to deal with that, with those sorts of problems.

There's no mention of a common sense approach to paving and reconstruction. It seems like . . . And I'm not the only one who's observed this. A number of people, citizens of this province, observed that it seems like there's no plan as far as repaving and reconstruction. Quite often we'll have a section of highway which is paved on either end and will leave a section in the middle that's almost impassable, and that situation is allowed to continue over a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

(14:30)

I have a situation in my constituency which probably illustrates this more so than anything. About a year and a half ago Pioneer Grain opened up a brand new cement terminal about 7 kilometres to the west of Southey, and located on No. 22 Highway. Well No. 22 Highway is a secondary highway and that particular stretch of highway has been in need of repair for quite some time.

Now this grain terminal has been built and put in place for the purpose of taking grain off of our highways and putting it onto the railway tracks so that it can be shipped to the ports and on to the markets and so on. Now you would think with a common sense approach, you would provide at least some access to that plant at least from one direction. There's a primary highway 7 kilometres to the east of that particular plant and you would think that at least those 7 kilometres could be put in such condition that customers of that particular plant could access that grain terminal. But no, that's not the plan.

In fact, I talked to the Minister of Highways about this situation in last session during estimates. I asked him where that section of highway was in terms of their long-term plans. Well it's not even on the radar screen, Mr. Speaker. And that's just one small example. I'm sure there's other examples across the province where that same situation exists.

There was no mention about dealing with the whole area of

rolling budgets within the Department of Highways. What we have now, it's a spend-it-or-lose-it situation, Mr. Speaker. Surely this government must have . . . they've been in power for some 10, 12 years. They must have some idea of how to address this problem.

We have the situation in this last calendar year where we had an early fall, an early freeze-up; there was numerous highway construction projects that were unable to be completed. Then what happens is that the deputy minister in charge of construction and that whole area has to scramble to see how he can use the money before the end of the fiscal year. Well I don't think that's a very efficient and effective way of using taxpayers' money, and we need to find a mechanism, Mr. Speaker, where we can roll some of those funds forward into the following year to get efficiencies in construction and efficiencies of scale, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that wasn't in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, there was no plan and there was no mention of developing trade corridors. Most of our trade now, Mr. Speaker, is on a north-south axis. And we need to develop plans as to how to get our products to the markets that exist on the north-south axis, Mr. Speaker.

And there are people south of the border who feel that they would like to work with us and put a plan together so we have a continuous flow of goods both coming up from the south and going south from the north across the border, Mr. Speaker. Well I don't see any plans and even any initiatives to start developing plans, Mr. Speaker.

Also short-line railroads, it doesn't seem to be on the radar screen, Mr. Speaker, with this government. And with the rationalization that has been taken in the grain transportation and handling system, we need to look at that option and there are some challenges there that need to be addressed, Mr. Speaker. And we need to get on with that and again, with this government we don't see any initiatives dealing with that particular area.

And I would like to state, Mr. Speaker, that a Saskatchewan Party government would address all of those issues. We hear from that side of the House that we have a slogan and no plan. Well we do have a plan. We have a plan in . . . to highways and transportation to address those issues.

And when they screw up their courage to call the election, we will roll out the full plan. We rolled part of it out and we'll roll out the rest of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I listened closely today to the answers that the Minister of Agriculture gave to the question asked by my colleague, the member from Watrous, with regards to the agricultural policy framework. And I will . . . I will . . .

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

Mr. Hart: — What I would like to say before I get to that part of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, is that I was pleased to see the comment or the statement made in the Speech from the Throne dealing with carbon sinks. This is an issue that some of us on

this side of the House have raised with the Minister of Agriculture in the last two sessions. And at least I was pleased to see that there's a recognition of the importance of this issue.

Now having . . . It's easy to talk the talk, Mr. Speaker, but it's more difficult to walk the walk, Mr. Speaker. And I am quite concerned as to the resources that have been committed by this government to deal with that whole area of negotiating a program and a plan that will, that will allow the farmers of Saskatchewan to receive the benefits of the carbon sinks under this whole Kyoto implementation plan, Mr. Speaker.

But as I said a few moments ago, I listened very carefully to the answers that the minister gave to my colleague from Watrous during question period. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I was . . . well I was not impressed as I heard from that side of the House — I'm actually searching for the word, Mr. Speaker. Disappointed, I might describe. Disgusted, perhaps. Bewildered, is probably . . . probably more accurately describes my reaction to his answers, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture in this NDP government is playing games with the farmers of this province, Mr. Speaker. He's saying that, oh no we couldn't sign the initial framework agreement because it wasn't a good thing to do; there wasn't enough money in the program — a whole host of reasons, Mr. Speaker.

But there are two . . . As my colleague said, there are two parts to this whole APF as far as agreements between the two levels of government. One is the framework agreement and one is the implementation agreement. Well if you don't sign the framework agreement, how do you become part of the program design? You don't.

So what had happened here in the last number of months when this program was being designed by the federal government and the other provinces that did sign earlier on, is that when it takes . . . there was general discussions and then when it came down to talking about specifics as far as program design, Saskatchewan had to leave because they didn't sign. If you don't sign, you don't sit at the table, Mr. Speaker.

So this reminds me very much of what happened back in 1999 when we had a crisis here in agriculture. The then minister of . . . Ag minister, Eric Upshall, went down . . . said to Ottawa, it's your problem; you figure it out; I'm going on holidays to Mexico. Well we know what the results were, Mr. Speaker. We ended up with AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance), a program that was designed to deal with the hog farms in Central Canada and it was applied to Western Canada and it just didn't work.

And I'm afraid we're heading down that same path now. We keep hearing from this Minister of Agriculture that in the areas of business risk management which is one envelope of a five-envelope policy, framework, that the two main programs are crop insurance and NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account). Well we've seen . . . Well I guess we haven't seen what this year's crop insurance program is going to look like because this minister didn't sign. He said he wasn't able to get the federal government's money until he finally signed that here earlier on this month.

So now farmers in this province are waiting for their details of crop insurance, so we really don't know what it looks like. The province of Alberta, they announced their program back in January. It has all the enhancements, all the things that Saskatchewan farmers would like to have but never will have.

Then he says . . . keeps telling us that the other mainstay of this area is NISA. Well, Mr. Speaker — and he says it's going to be a super NISA — well, Mr. Speaker, it's not a super NISA. It has no resemblance to NISA. You know what it is? It's AIDA with a premium, Mr. Speaker.

I attended a workshop that SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) had at their annual convention earlier this month and they brought out officials from Ag Canada to explain this super NISA. Well the reaction of the delegates and the farm members at that workshop, it was total, total disgust, Mr. Speaker. They rolled their eyes; they had no use; they didn't understand it.

And now what we're hearing from this minister, Mr. Speaker, is that, well it's a done deal; let's get on with it, let's explain the program to our producers, and we'll just have to live with it.

Well I . . . Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, there's one thing, one . . . a couple of things that I would like to read into the record. And I should just also say before I do that, is that the minister today said, well all the other ministers are saying we should sign it. Well that's not in fact true, Mr. Speaker.

In the recent article in *The Western Producer*, the Minister of Agriculture from Ontario said that she definitely is calling for this implementation to be delayed for a year. She says:

By pushing (all) on this date (. . . agriculture minister Lyle Vanclief) will bring turmoil into the agriculture community and I don't think that's (a) good (thing).

So we know where the minister from Ontario stands on this situation.

I received an e-mail, Mr. Speaker, as other members of our caucus did yesterday, from a producer who was very concerned that this government takes their time to develop the plan properly, to explain it to the farmers of Saskatchewan, because it's a long-term plan and we need to know what it's about. And therefore it shouldn't be rushed. In fact what he was saying is, delay it for a year.

Now I think probably what sums it up the best, is this whole APF, and the feelings of Saskatchewan farmers is probably summarized in an article on March 12, in *The StarPhoenix* by Kevin Hursh. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of times when I certainly don't agree with everything that Kevin Hursh has to say or writes about, but this is one time I think he's definitely right on.

And I will quote what he said. He said and he's referring to . . . His article was, "New farm safety net won't be popular." And his final two paragraphs, he says:

As one farmer suggested this week, Saskatchewan should apply for the call centre that will handle all the questions

from farmers and accountants once this wonderful expanded NISA is foisted upon us.

And I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker:

Vanclief and Serby may get lucky. Perhaps by the time this all gets ugly, they will no longer be our ministers of agriculture.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that sums it up as to the way this Minister of Agriculture's handling this program.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I will definitely be voting for the amendment and opposing the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly my pleasure to enter into this Throne Speech debate on behalf of the constituents of Regina Northeast. And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you will agree with me, it doesn't matter where you travel in Saskatchewan or what communities you may stop in, you meet nothing but fine, great people in Saskatchewan.

But I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, there are no finer nor better people, nor greater people, than the people in Regina Northeast. And I believe I can say that with a degree of authority because I like to spend much of my summers out door knocking in my constituency, on the doorstep, visiting with my constituents. And I'm very pleased to say that I always get greeted so very warmly and very appreciative by the folks there. So I really appreciate having the opportunity to represent the fine people of Regina Northeast.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to welcome the new members to the legislature, the member from Saskatoon Fairview and the member from Battleford-Cut Knife. I'm sure that they will find this experience quite interesting, and I'm sure quite enjoyable. And I know that they will work very hard on behalf of their constituents representing them here in the legislature and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. So I want to welcome them and congratulate them on their victories, and we're looking forward to having their input into the process of the elected Assembly here.

I too, Mr. Speaker, want to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague from Cumberland who was the mover of the Throne Speech. I am always impressed when I hear my colleague speak. This speech was no less impressive. I think it clearly demonstrated his deep passion not only for the people of his constituency and for the people of northern Saskatchewan, but for Saskatchewan people as a whole.

And I've gained, by watching him and listening to him and learning from him, an even deeper respect for his deep commitment to the democratic and the political process of this House. And I really appreciate that.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate my seatmate, the member from Regina Wascana Plains. She seconded the Throne Speech. She too showed very clearly her compassion and her conviction to the political process and the democratic

process of this House. And as the Chair of the Regina caucus committee, I know that she clearly demonstrates on a regular basis her commitment to the city of Regina. And I know that, Mr. Speaker, because she's forever scheduling meetings with the Regina caucus with various groups from the city of Regina here, and I much appreciate that.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, I think this Throne Speech clearly, clearly sets out the very distinct difference between the opposition Sask Party and the NDP government on this side of the House.

That difference, when you boil it all down, that difference is quite simple. The government on this side of the House has a proven plan to build and move Saskatchewan forward, but the Sask Party only has an unbelievable slogan. And, Mr. Speaker, our Throne Speech clearly outlines what this government sees for Saskatchewan — that is a vision of this province, a province where the opportunity is there for those who want to work hard, dream big, plan well, and succeed.

And, Mr. Speaker, as the Government Co-Chair of the Saskatchewan Construction Panel, a couple of months ago I had the opportunity to have a conversation with one of the road builders in our province, a gentleman who has been in this province for a number of years now and a very successful road contractor. And he tells me that he was born in this province and as a young lad after receiving his high school education he decided he would try his opportunities, as they so may be, in Alberta.

And he left Saskatchewan and went to Alberta and he spent six years there. And then he moved back here to Saskatchewan soon after he was married because he knew Saskatchewan was the best place in Canada to raise a family, the best place in Saskatchewan to start a business. He has done so and has a very successful road construction business.

It was his suggestion that everybody, everybody inside Saskatchewan should be asked to look at the opportunities outside of Saskatchewan because they would appreciate Saskatchewan opportunities that much more.

Mr. Speaker, our budget . . . our Throne Speech clearly outlined a vision of the expanding economy where no one is excluded, everyone is included, where everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy the opportunities and the prosperity of Saskatchewan. It's a vision where the province . . . the children of our province will have the opportunity to grow up in healthy, safe, and secure communities and receive the very best of education and training and to be encouraged in turn to build successful families and careers right here at home.

And, Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the opposition says on an almost monotonous basis about young people leaving Saskatchewan, that is not true. And I can attest to that, Mr. Speaker, because I have two adult children and both of them have stayed here in Saskatchewan, are making their lives in Saskatchewan, and are building . . . raising their families right here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — The Saskatchewan economy is strong and it is expanding. It's expanding through diversification. When we became government in this province in 1991, Mr. Speaker, much of the province's economy was tied directly to agriculture. I believe somewhere in around at 60 per cent of our economy was a direct tie to agriculture.

Through our efforts as the government of this province, we have moved the diversification framework of this province to where, today, 60 per cent of the economy is non-agriculture and 40 per cent of the economy is agriculture. So we've moved that file a long way, Mr. Speaker, to the point where the employment in Saskatchewan has grown for the last 10 consecutive months. Employment records have been set in six of those same months. Moving forward progressively in a positive way. That, Mr. Speaker, doesn't happen; that only happens when you have a plan.

The retail sales, business, and corporations, have both increased more than 7 per cent in the last year here in Saskatchewan. Growth has occurred in the potash sales, in the value of manufactured goods, and in the value of residential building permits, and in the average weekly earnings. Progress, Mr. Speaker. But that doesn't just happen; it only happens with a plan.

Capital investment in our province continues to grow. And in question period, our Minister of Justice answered that question very distinctly when he said Saskatchewan leads the way this year in capital investment in Canada. And we have done this, Mr. Speaker, all of this, in spite of experiencing two years of drought in Saskatchewan — two consecutive years of droughts. But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we have every reason and every confidence in our future to develop our rural economy.

And last spring sitting of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, I had the honour and the opportunity to chair the Standing Committee on Agriculture and to sit in this very Assembly and receive the ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) report. And that ACRE report simply was a blueprint for the modernization of our agricultural economy in Saskatchewan and to create even greater benefits there within.

Part of that strategy is the development of value-added industry here. And part of that, Mr. Speaker, is to make our farm land ownership more attractive to people from outside of Saskatchewan, and our government moved forward in the last session making those changes to The Farm Land Security Act to make all Canadian people eligible to buy Saskatchewan farm land.

And interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, how things happen in one's life. This January, when I had the opportunity to attend the Presiding Officers Conference in Toronto with yourself and the Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to have a conversation with Speaker Kowalski from Alberta. That's the Alberta Kowalskis, Mr. Speaker.

And it was interesting because just very soon after we shook hands and reacquainted ourselves, he says to me, what are you doing in Saskatchewan? And I said well, why? He said, because as you know, Ron, I represent a rural constituency in Alberta and he said I have lost a number of my constituents to

Saskatchewan. They're young families who have taken the opportunity to look at Saskatchewan to expand their livestock operations. Some of them have sold out in Alberta and moved to Saskatchewan; others have expanded their operation here in Saskatchewan.

I personally know of two of those families, Mr. Speaker, two young families that have moved from Alberta. They were involved in a ranching business industry there and have been for some time — I believe they were third or fourth generation, perhaps in there. They were prohibited because of land costs to be able to expand their ranching opportunities in Alberta. They looked at Saskatchewan, saw the Saskatchewan advantage. Two of those young families sold out their holdings in Alberta, moved lock, stock, and barrel with their families to Saskatchewan, and re-established themselves here in this province.

Another case that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker, is a three-brother operation that is experiencing the same difficulties in Alberta. They could not expand their operations. They were looking at the expansion obviously not available to them in Alberta. They looked at the Saskatchewan advantage and they have purchased land in the Endeavour area. And one brother and his family have moved here to run the operation in Saskatchewan, while two brothers stay in Alberta and run that operation. They're now expanding their operations and they're expanding it into Saskatchewan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, last fall — I can't remember exactly which month it was — but I remember reading an article that was published in the Saskatchewan Hereford digest. There was an article about a young farm family that had moved from Alberta, and if I remember right they were a young family, had three children. They moved from Alberta. They moved to Saltcoats, Saskatchewan because of the Saskatchewan advantage. They sold off their farming operation in Alberta, moved to Saltcoats, bought farm land, moved much of their livestock herd, their cow ... basic cow herd to Saltcoats and expanding that operation there.

And the interesting part of the article, Mr. Speaker, and the writer of the article whose name escapes me ... but what I really found interesting there was that as the author of the article was summing up the story, the author wrote the following, and I quote:

Grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. And in this case Saskatchewan is the other side of the fence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the home for 25 per cent of Canada's beef herd and this year our government is moving forward to expand that by releasing a 10-year beef production strategy. There is opportunity in our province to grow our beef herd. Our government has recognized that and our government is working hand in hand with the producers and producer organizations to see to it that it happens.

Signs are already there, Mr. Speaker, that these things are happening. And if you ever have the opportunity to talk to hardware owners or hardware operators and hardware store

managers, across the parkland area of Saskatchewan in particular, they will identify this.

I had the opportunity here a few weeks ago to meet up with and discuss some of the issues in the area with some of the co-op hardware managers in the Canora, Sturgis, Norquay, Preeceville areas.

And something that they indicated to me was that over the last five years they've noticed a progressive increase in sales of hardware for livestock — and that is barbed wire, fence posts, corral panellings, and so on and so forth — simply because they've recognized that the livestock, the basic livestock, basic cow herd in that area has been on the grow for the last four or five years.

With that, Mr. Speaker, comes the opportunity — and our government has recognized that and has moved forthright on that — the opportunity to establish an ethanol industry here in this province. Ethanol, which certainly has its direct benefits to the rural economy, but also contributes not only in a direct way, but has the opportunity to contribute in spin-off opportunities and that is the by-product from the ethanol plants can be used in feedlots, feedlots that would support then the expansion of our basic cow herd in this province.

And that's just the industry spin-offs, Mr. Speaker. With that, of course, will come other spin-offs such as with a feedlot industry, of not only the direct jobs in the feedlot industry, but there will be the spin-off jobs in corral cleaning and silage production and jobs that will result as a result of the ethanol investment. So I think, Mr. Speaker, we're well placed to move our economy very much forward in a long way.

And I think also, Mr. Speaker, that this opportunity to build the industrial base of our province is also an opportunity for us to be able to expand the unionized part of our provincial workforce. Growth and the expansion of unionized part of our workforce has a very positive effect on our economy. It ensures that our working men and women of our province have the ability to earn a reasonable living.

And I know that the opposition believes that unions are job killers, but that's simply not true. When we look around our province, look around our country, across North America as a whole, you will see that those communities that have a strong union workforce also enjoy a strong, prosperous community. Unions are not job killers; unions are community builders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, small- and medium-sized business plays a major, major role and contributes in a major way to the expansion of the Saskatchewan economy. They provide goods and services; they foster the growth of tourism.

Tourism is a real opportunity in this province. As those across this nation get to see our Saskatchewan wide open campaign, they start to recognize the quality of tourism, the beauty that we have in this province — not just the flat prairie land which has its own beauty, but it has the lakes and the forests and a certain attraction, Mr. Speaker. And there certainly is the opportunity to expand our tourism, and there certainly is the opportunity to

expand hunting and bringing in foreigners to enjoy not only our beauty, but to enjoy some of the sports of our wildlife hunting.

Manufacturing has improved in this province, Mr. Speaker, and value-added products has been improving over a regular basis. And I just want to share with you, Mr. Speaker, one little example of what I think is a success story in value-added industries.

There's a little alfalfa plant called Western Alfalfa Milling Limited of Norquay, Saskatchewan. That plant started approximately 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker, and it started as a community initiative, and it has had some difficult times, this is true. But at the end of the day, the plant is there — physically there. Where 10 years ago there was nothing, today there's an alfalfa processing plant there.

Last year . . . and I had the opportunity this morning to speak to the general manager of that plant, and this is what he told me. He says, what that plant does for the area and for those communities within that area, it provides farmers the opportunity to produce an alternate cash crop. It creates jobs for the area, and all the product, all the product is exported outside the boundaries of Canada. So it brings in foreign currency.

Last year that little plant there, Mr. Speaker, harvested between 25 and 30,000 acres of alfalfa. It created 16 full-time jobs, another 65 seasonal jobs, which in other words, Mr. Speaker, gave the opportunity for many farmers in that area to enjoy some off-farm income, allowing them the ability to enjoy a proper and meaningful lifestyle while farming and working off the farm.

That little plant, Mr. Speaker, had a payroll last year of a little over \$1 million, and returned to producers in that area \$1.3 million.

(15:00)

That little operation, Mr. Speaker, plowed back into the Saskatchewan economy between 7 and \$8 million and all of that money was generated by foreign currency, by export sales to lands other than Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — In order to enjoy and continue to enjoy the growth that we have in our economy, we have to continue to expand the infrastructure to maintain the ability for our industries to grow and to expand and to export their products internationally.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, we have done that. Saskatchewan's massive highway improvement program will continue to be a part of a three-year program — \$900 million committed in support of that program, in support of paving and reconstructing over some 150 kilometres of highways in Saskatchewan including accelerating the twinning of No. 1 and No. 16 Highways.

Mr. Speaker, there is just a number of things that one could highlight in this budget but time wouldn't permit for me to do that because I'm sure some of my other colleagues want to get

in on this debate and I may cut them out of it and then they won't talk to me or buy me coffee or anything like that.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of difference between the opposition and the government. We on this side, on the government side, have a tried and proven plan to support Saskatchewan and to continue to move Saskatchewan forward on the road of opportunity and prosperity.

When I look at what the Sask Party is saying, I am reminded, Mr. Speaker, of a former colleague of mine who used to have a saying: if you don't know where you're going, you won't know when you get there. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me, that on this side of the House — and the people of Saskatchewan — that the Sask Party has no plan to grow Saskatchewan. Their policies would only gut Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Regina Northeast, I will not be voting for the amendment but I will be voting for the main motion. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to enter the debate today on the Speech from the Throne. If I recall correctly, this is the fourth one that I've had the privilege of participating in and I want to comment right off the top, Mr. Speaker, that the first one was rather exciting in some ways because it was a new venture for me. It was, you know, quite an exciting activity, an opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills for the very first time in the legislature. And I remember that episode quite vividly. I recall also that I read the entire speech and I was complimented by so many members on the government side on what a fine job I did, and I hope they feel that way by the time I'm done this afternoon.

I do know, Mr. Speaker, that in the intervening years, however, the quality of the Throne Speech has diminished considerably, whereas today we're at a point where the Throne Speech said virtually nothing at all. And I hope that my response won't be nearly as insipid as the Throne Speech itself.

Mr. Speaker, the first order of business today, I believe, should be to congratulate the two new members that have joined the House as a result of by-elections that happened just the day before the House reconvened. I'd like to congratulate and welcome to the House the new member for Fairview that is sitting on the government side and of course our own member from Battleford-Cut Knife who joined us with an overwhelming response from the elector . . . the electors of his constituency, and we're glad to have him here as well.

Mr. Speaker, I looked at quite a bit of the material. I've read the Throne Speech actually a couple of times; I sat through it. And I wanted to highlight some of the areas that I thought would be particularly impressive and areas that would show the vision and creativity of this government for the upcoming year and maybe into the years beyond as we start a whole new millennium. But, Mr. Speaker, I didn't find that.

And I searched for words that might best describe this particular speech. And if I was putting a title to it, Mr. Speaker, I think the

best title that I could possibly give it would be — and this is generous, Mr. Speaker — the title I would give this speech is, a longing, backward glance.

Mr. Speaker, you don't have to take my word for it. The members of the government don't have to take my word for it. But I think we could look at the public record and some of the responses to this particular speech that showed up in the provincial media. And if I may be so indulged, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just refer to a couple of those articles that showed up shortly after the Throne Speech was given.

On Wednesday, March 19, in the *Leader-Post*, there's a headline that reads, "Government outlines its plans." And if I may, I'll just read the first couple of paragraphs out of this story. It says here:

The provincial government's roadmap for the upcoming session looked more like a retrospective when Lt.-Gov. Lynda Haverstock read Tuesday's speech from the throne.

While the 55-minute speech was dominated by past accomplishments of the coalition government, mixed with already announced projects to be done in conjunction with the federal government ... (it wasn't much of a presentation.)

Mr. Speaker, I looked at the *Leader-Post* in the editorial section and without going into a lot of detail here, it says as a heading, "Government lacks vision." And just the final paragraph is rather telling, Mr. Speaker. It says:

The throne speech is fiscally cautious, to be sure, but so much looking backward and reflecting on past initiatives suggests a kind of policy poverty. Is this really the kind of Throne Speech on which the government wants to fight an election?

Mr. Speaker, *The StarPhoenix* was less complimentary, if I might put it that way. They say:

Even by the milquetoast standards of throne speeches, anyone who bothers to look at the government's offering would be disheartened by its vacuity. This isn't a course of action; mostly it's a rehash of existing programs, with what little it promises by way of a legislative agenda (it's) so meaningless as to be laughable.

The utter banality of the government's plans outlined in Tuesday's throne speech ... leaves a distinct impression of a government that has run out of gas and doesn't have the bodies or cash to refuel.

Mr. Speaker, I don't regularly quote Murray Mandryk and I won't go into any lengthy quote in this particular piece that he offered in the *Leader-Post* of March 19 but the heading here is, "Uninspired throne speech was a missed opportunity."

For Premier Lorne Calvert's political sake, there better be something new in Finance Minister Jim Melenchuk's budget speech. There sure hasn't been much to inspire the voters of this province in what we've seen so far.

I underlined a considerable amount of this particular piece by Murray Mandryk. And as I said, I'm not prone to quoting him and I won't do that here today, but you know if the camera can move in on this particular paper I'm sure they'll see the underlining at length in this particular editorial.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter to the government what I think. You know the nature of our adversarial type of government, frankly, is that the government has their ideas and their agenda. The opposition have an agenda of its own and we have our ideas. And virtually, never the twain shall meet is the standard of the adversarial type of government we operate. That's not necessarily the best way to operate but it's the rules we're given and the game we play in this particular House.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think it behooves the government to consider a little more seriously the comments of people who have written for the public record, the public response, the editorial response to the government's Throne Speech this year. I think if they were serious about, about their plan and their objectives and their determination to rule interminably in this province, they really should come up with something of substance and this Throne Speech failed to deliver in that count.

Mr. Speaker, not only were the editorialists unimpressed; so was the Premier himself. You know I watched as he sat on the floor of the House while the Throne Speech was delivered. And even though the Lieutenant Governor did an admirable job of reading that very lengthy document, as I watched the Premier, I watched the countenance on his face. I watched the look of despair come over him. I watched him fidget and twist and turn in his chair. Mr. Speaker, that was not the countenance, that was not the posture of a man who was convinced that the speech he was hearing — the speech that had been written on behalf of his government — was one of conviction, one of promise, and one of vision. There was a man who looked defeated by his own speech.

And I understand that the very next morning he walked into the cabinet room and slammed down his books on the table — that big oak table in the Premier's office there — and laid down the law. And he said, look, if that's the best my caucus and my cabinet can offer in terms of vision, we're in trouble. And, Mr. Speaker, I concur. This government is in serious trouble.

Mr. Speaker, you know normally on an auspicious occasion such as the Speech from the Throne, this Chamber is filled to the rafters with people, with friends, with invited guests. Mr. Speaker, an indication of how little respect and little future this government has is the fact that we could have gone out on the highways and byways and invited people to come in and we wouldn't have filled this place. There were more empty seats than I've seen at most hockey teams that have a losing streak going on. This was a situation that was embarrassing, frankly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm on the opposite side of the House. I'm supposed to exalt in the foibles and the failures of this government. I was embarrassed for this government, frankly. They haven't got enough friends to fill this Chamber.

And it was so patently obvious that people have abandoned this government. They think there's no future in this government,

and they're heading for the door. They certainly won't come through these doors to hear another Throne Speech like that.

Mr. Speaker, in the last few days we've been listening to speeches in support or in opposition to the Throne Speech. And I really found it interesting that so many of the government members spent their 20 minutes, or allotted time, not to address the Throne Speech, not to talk about the wonderful program that it had laid out and that they were going to advance as a government over the next 12 months or so. We didn't hear any of that from the members on the government side. But we did hear a lot of time used to try and tie the opposition to a government that's a couple of decades old.

We had a modest recitation of poor statistics. We've had attacks on our members as though some small arrangement, some previous work experience, some tie with a government that's 20 years old might be an impediment to governance. But, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, I listened to the minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs. He took 20 minutes . . . Mr. Speaker, the minister of GRAA (Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs) took 20 minutes . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the point I'm trying to make is the minister took 20 minutes to try and tie eight people on this side to a two-decade-old government. What about the other 18 members on this side? What about the members on this side who have had no previous government experience, who've had no necessarily political ties previously? Does that not count for something?

What about the people who came to the political process because they were offended by some of the excesses of the previous administration? What about those of us who felt that it was time for us to put our names forward to provide a service to our constituents, to provide public service without the baggage that the government wants to continually associate with us?

Mr. Speaker, you know, if I recall correctly, in the 1990 general election the then premier of the province, the leader of the government, Mr. Roy Romanow, at that time spent three-quarters of the election campaign calling this side of the House and the members on this side of the House Sask-a-Tories. Do you know when he quit, Mr. Speaker? When he found out the people of the province resented that. They were beyond that. That was the kind of political trash that the people of this province were not interested in hearing any more.

And do you know, if the premier had persisted in that technique one more week, the NDP would have lost that election. Fortunately the premier had the sense to back off in the last week of the election and he quit using that term.

You know the problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the people on the government side are very slow learners because they almost lost the election in 1999 by that technique. Today, they're trying to do the same thing over again. The vast majority of voters in this province don't care. They don't care a fig about whose political history is what.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually glad that they're doing

this. I'm very happy they're doing it because it only gives more credibility to our campaign of good governance. That is seen as old-style politics. We need good governance in this province and the Saskatchewan Party is prepared to give it.

Mr. Speaker, while the minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs spent his 20 minutes doing that, the Minister of Social Services was trying to give us a lesson in democracy. Now I find that very interesting, Mr. Speaker, as though we could learn something about democracy from this party.

Mr. Speaker, let me just . . . let me quote again from the *Leader-Post*. This headline talks about Lorne Nystrom's son seeking the NDP Party's support in a newly constituted constituency. Let me quote from this, Mr. Speaker. Jason Nystrom is the 29-year-old son of Lorne Nystrom. He is an SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) employee and he thinks that it's time for him to put his name forward for public service.

(15:15)

You know, if he represents . . . if what this quote here that I'm about to read represents the changing mentality in the younger NDP, I will welcome it, Mr. Speaker. Let me quote from this story:

More will be expected of us (that's the NDP) than . . . (tried) cries of indignation, shallow personal attacks, or trotting out bogeymen from the 1980s . . .

That is a statement directly from Jason Nystrom's letter to people who he's asking to support him in the possible nomination race.

And if it's necessary, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the members opposite that lessons in democracy are learned by all sides of the House. And I refer to a 1999 episode that the governing party saw themselves embroiled in. I won't use the name of the candidate, but I'm sure they will have their memories prodded when I mention that this individual beat prominent city councillor Kate Waygood and the NDP hierarchy has been agonizing over whether to let it stand for the past three weeks.

That situation was resolved, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP executive confirmed a recommendation to the premier not to sign the candidate's nomination papers for Saskatoon Meewasin. I believe we have a member in this House sitting, representing the constituency of Meewasin, who benefited from the NDP Executive Council's decision not to allow this individual to run even though he had successfully and democratically won the nomination. This group of people, Mr. Speaker, cannot teach the opposition any lessons about democracy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — I don't think, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that this particularly is a situation that enhances anybody's image. But I don't think anything is served by one party trying to do upmanship when it concerns another party's problems.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the member opposite asking what charges

did Grant Schmidt face, whether he's found guilty or not. Mr. Speaker, that's not a road that I'm sure the government wants to go. Because I think with very little research we could probably find instances where people who wanted to run for the NDP were discouraged because of rumours and hearsay alleging illegal and/or immoral activities. And those rumours were completely unfounded, were unjustified, and yet the NDP insisted that the candidate not run just because of the rumours. We can't learn anything about justice from these people either. They have their own skeletons in the closet.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we have a number of other things that we need to dwell on today. Mr. Speaker, surely the government of the day really must have something positive to . . .

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, surely, surely instead of wasting so much time talking about ancient history, trying to teach us lessons that they have no right to teach us, surely this government must have had something positive to sell to the people of Saskatchewan, a real vision perhaps or a dream to help develop the vast human and social potential of this great province. Or maybe, just maybe the government had a plan.

I wish they had had a plan because we haven't seen any sign of it yet. To this day, Mr. Speaker, there's been no evidence of a plan. And we certainly didn't see any evidence of a plan in the Speech from the Throne in this particular session.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party does have a plan. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, our party has a goal. Mr. Speaker, I spent . . . I spent I'd say 25 or 30 years as a salesman. Most of my career was predicated on establishing a goal, working toward that goal, meeting that goal, and succeeding.

Mr. Speaker, I think you're aware of the statement that, if you fail to plan you plan to fail. If you don't have a goal you'll never achieve anything. Mr. Speaker, real success begins with establishing a goal. A goal is something we have enunciated clearly.

Now because we've talked about our goal repeatedly and tried to make the public aware that the Official Opposition has a goal that we plan to achieve does not mean that we do not have a plan. But I'll tell you what it does mean, Mr. Speaker. We're not prepared to discuss our plan in public any longer. And I'll tell you why.

I have a list here of some of the things that we have talked about as part of our plan over the last three or four years. And I wonder if these things will sound familiar to the members of the government, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party plan included the development of an ethanol strategy. The Sask Party plan included tax reform, lowering personal income taxes.

The Saskatchewan Party's plan included extra spending for highway rejuvenation and a much reduced timetable for the twinning of the No. 1 Highway and the No. 16 Highway.

The Saskatchewan Party plan included extending PST (Provincial Sales Tax) to off-reserve Aboriginal purchases. It

included a reduction in small business income tax. It included the creation of a utility rate review committee. It included reducing the corporate capital tax. It included a call for the sex registry, which was mocked, Mr. Speaker, by this government, until last year when they finally endorsed it.

Mr. Speaker, there's at least 10 points here that the Saskatchewan Party put forward as part of our plan. Guess who borrowed it? Guess who took it?

Mr. Speaker, this government is so bereft of their own ideas that they wait for the Saskatchewan Party to bring out a plan so they can use it. Mr. Speaker, what they have done in these areas has been insufficient. But I will give them credit for trying.

Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party becomes the next government of this province, we will implement our plan and the people of this province will benefit from it.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment; I will be voting against the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Before I start, I'd like to add my welcome to the two new members from Fairview and Battleford-Cut Knife.

And I'd also like to take a moment to recognize those people in my life who have supported me throughout my career. Mr. Speaker, other members have spoken already about the unique duties of elected officials. I've always considered it a privilege and an honour to serve the people of Saskatchewan in this House. And I'd likewise always depended on the support of my family: my husband, Don, my parents, my sisters, and our many family and friends who . . . as I've carried out that service.

Ours is not an easy job, Mr. Speaker, and it's not one I would ever accomplish alone. My son, Sean, and my daughter, Heather, have also been a major source of support to me. But more than that, they are my inspiration. It's for their future and the future of all young people that I continue to strive toward a better society for all.

Finally, I'd like to compliment my constituency assistant, April Anderson. April is well known to the people of Saskatoon Eastview for her tireless efforts on their behalf. Her hard work and genuine care for the people of our neighbourhood are demonstrated every day in the excellent quality of her work. April is perhaps my greatest asset in meeting the needs of my constituents, and I thank you, April.

It is with great pride that I rise today to address the 2003 Speech from the Throne. I can think of no better title for this speech than the one that it was given: "A Vision. A Plan. A Future Wide Open." I know that the vision contained within this speech will have a terrific effect on my constituents, the people of Eastview.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon Eastview is a healthy constituency with many exciting new developments. Housing developments like our new condominiums and the addition to Ilarion seniors' centre. Commercial developments like the addition to the STF

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) Building, expansions in Eastview mall, the auto mall, and many new small businesses. And community developments like our innovative primary health centre at Scott/Forget Towers. The RCMP complex. And of special interest to me, 12 schools.

It is from a first-hand experience with vibrant, diverse schools like those in Eastview that have strengthened my passionate interest in education. Each of these schools provides unique and vital services to the students they educate and to our community. I'm always pleased to see the students of Hugh Cairns in our gallery, and the members present will know that they are regular visitors. The Remembrance Day ceremonies at John Lake and Holy Cross are always a valuable if solemn occasion. And of course I have a special place in my heart for George Vanier, my own alma mater.

But like our beautiful province, the constituency of Saskatoon Eastview is changing and the constituents have come to rely on this NDP government to change with them, meeting their diverse needs in new and innovative ways.

Saskatoon Eastview is a community with deep roots, a fact to which our significant population of seniors can attest. Our plan recognizes the changing needs of these individuals and establishes the resources we need to meet those needs.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors in Saskatoon Eastview know that only the NDP can be trusted to safeguard medicare. Our Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care will ensure that seniors have access to quality health services. We are innovators in health care reform, as evidenced by Canada's first Health Quality Council. We are making money available to reduce waiting lists and this summer we will make access to vital health information even easier with the launch of a 24-hour advice line.

Following through on our plan, we have established the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network to better manage the surgical system. This network includes a province-wide registry and a surgical Web site, all designed to provide the best patient care possible.

And through extensive recruitment and retention initiatives we are making sure that Saskatchewan has the best people providing that care — 40 new nursing seats announced in March, bringing our total seats up 65 per cent since 1999, with 400 bursaries to students in various health disciplines.

The NDP invented medicare, Mr. Speaker, and only this government can be trusted not to play games with the health of our citizens.

As they move into a new phase in their lives, these few seniors can rest assured that the community around them will continue to blossom. They can enjoy these years, confident in the knowledge that the NDP is helping open opportunities for their children, their grandchildren, and their great grandchildren. Indeed, many of their children and grandchildren are already realizing these opportunities in this diverse constituency.

I am proud to see new young families moving into my constituency, Mr. Speaker. They are choosing to start their

careers in Saskatchewan because of the many advantages our province has to offer. We have a lot to brag about here in Saskatchewan — record job growth, increases in retail sales, business incorporations, and average weekly earnings, capital investment growth.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but I know the Sask Party tends to get a little tired when we in the NDP talk about all the good news we have here in Saskatchewan. Suffice it to say that the young people in my constituency realize all the great things that this province has to offer and are putting down roots, buying homes, and starting their families. And as they pursue their career dreams, they can feel confident that we in the NDP have not forgotten the children of this province.

This Throne Speech establishes our plan to protect Saskatchewan for our children and for those children not yet born, because we know that a strong economy and a secure future depend on protecting our delicate natural environment.

It is for these people, Mr. Speaker, that we are addressing environmental hazards. We are undertaking a massive expansion in wind power generation; we are planting trees and watching them grow to a massive carbon sequestering project; and we are pioneering new techniques that will protect and enhance our economy and environment. And with a plan like this one, I know the people of Saskatoon Eastview can expect even more success.

Mr. Speaker, last week's Throne Speech was about vision. Saskatchewan and her people have many natural advantages which combine to create a bright future. But if we are to realize that future we must equip ourselves with the tools for success. Education is one of those tools; for many it is the most important tool.

They say, Mr. Speaker, that education is not like filling a pail, it is rather like lighting a fire. I'm proud to say that our plan for education is lighting the fires of learning in minds across Saskatchewan, in people of all ages, of all backgrounds and aspirations, in cities, towns, and farms, and everywhere in between.

Our innovative Kids First strategy targets the services like prenatal care, parental support, and at-home visits to vulnerable children and families. And in 2003 an additional 120 children will have advantage of this program.

In the last year and a half we have almost doubled the number of pre-kindergarten classes in this province, and as the Throne Speech correctly points out, we're not done yet. We've doubled the number of community schools. We're pioneering the School^{PLUS} plan, an exciting approach that recognizes schools as the heart of the community where children learn. We're forging new partnerships like the one I recently signed with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), the first of its kind in Canada and a partnership with great potential for all Saskatchewan students.

In the past five years, our K to 12 investment has risen by an average of 42 per cent per student and it's paying off in indicators like the lowest high school dropout rate in Canada. Indicators like a recent study that showed Saskatchewan

students are first in the world in education equity. Indicators like our October public opinion poll in which the people of Saskatchewan overwhelmingly supported what we are doing in education.

And after our students graduate from grade 12, the NDP plan will ensure they can pursue post-secondary training that will open even more doors of opportunity. Already 90,000 students are taking advantage of our network of universities, colleges, and technical institutes. They know education is a priority and this Throne Speech sets out a plan for post-secondary education.

We are strengthening what is already North America's greatest network of regional colleges. We are strengthening our technical institutes and universities by working with our post-secondary partners on growth and renewal.

(15:30)

At the University of Regina new construction includes the \$30 million Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, a \$35 million student residence, a \$31 million centre for kinesiology, health, and sport, and a \$6 million greenhouse gas technology research centre.

At the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon the work includes the \$173 million synchrotron project, the largest science project in Canada in more than 30 years, which I've visited several times during the progress of its development, a \$13 million chemical engineering extension, and a new \$33 million home for the College of Kinesiology.

By working in partnership with industry and labour we are helping Saskatchewan's adult learners get the skills they need to find and secure meaningful employment. The Throne Speech sets out our plan for students. We will ensure that our students, that more of them can access quality programs offered at our institutions.

We will enhance student loans, provide training and apprenticeship bursaries, encourage the expansion of scholarships, develop new job opportunities for students during and after their education, and help more of our brightest and our best stay, build their careers, and realize their futures in this province of almost limitless opportunity.

This is a vision that encompasses the whole learner from early childhood to adulthood. This is a plan that focuses on the needs of the learner and meets them in innovative achievable ways. Ours is a future that burns with the fire of education, lit in schools, in colleges, and on-line across Saskatchewan — a future that truly is wide open.

Mr. Speaker, one of the great things about this job is witnessing the joy of learning burn in the eyes of our students. That joy was evident earlier in March when 240 mathletes in grades 8 to 10 came from 22 towns and cities to compete in a mathematics or a math counts competition at the U of R (University of Regina).

Looking at the Saskatchewan Party proposal so far, Mr. Speaker, I think some of the mathletes across the floor should

consider some better training because even our grade 8 students could tell them that a 10 cent slogan and a billion dollar deficit add up not only to bad news for education in our province, but for all of our programs.

That's exactly what the Sask Party's proposing. I was anxious to see the Sask Party plan for education, but at this rate I'll probably be waiting a very long time. That's because they don't have a plan, Mr. Speaker, but a bunch of half-baked ideas.

Like following the B.C. (British Columbia) model for education — black days for education according to the B.C. Teachers' Federation. Like an extreme tax cut. How can we not expect this cut to be taken from our students when education is such a large part of the provincial budget? Like a bunch of hasty promises made without any thought to their cost, to implementation, or to consequence. They'll say just about anything to get elected.

Luckily, thanks in part to our great education system, Saskatchewan residents are some pretty smart people, and I know they'll see the empty promises and rhetoric that we hear from the Sask Party for what it is — nothing but a desperate grab for power. And then, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province will send the members opposite right back to school.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition say they're ready to govern. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are governing and we have 12 years of solid accomplishments — accomplishments in fiscal management, in social development, and of innovative programming — to prove it. We're showing the Saskatchewan Party what governing is all about and maybe they should make like some of our bright young students and start taking notes.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech represents a realistic vision, an attainable plan, and a wide open future — not only in education but across all government sectors, including the economy, the environment, health care, and our communities. This is a plan the people of Saskatchewan can trust. Not like the hasty promises from the Saskatchewan Party, promises that change depending on who they're speaking to. This is a plan that builds on our strengths and focuses on our future.

I will be voting against the amendment and in support of the Throne Speech on behalf of my constituents in Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset of my intervention in the Throne Speech debate, I'd like to thank the constituents of Swift Current for again another . . . the honour of another year of representing them in this legislature, and actually more specifically, Mr. Speaker, Swift Current and area, as my constituency includes the rural area to the south and to the north.

This'll be . . . may be the last session I have the good fortune to represent the area south of Swift Current. And that's bittersweet. I do gain an area to the north and to the west, but the area that I lose to the south includes the community of Rhineland, which is a small Mennonite hamlet, really just a village now, that was where my father was born. So it's a bit of

a hometown, I guess, for our Wall family and that area of the constituency will now go to Wood River, where I know my colleague and friend, the member for Wood River, will enjoy their support and input as well.

And I'd also, Mr. Speaker, like to welcome the new members to the Assembly, from Saskatoon Fairview and our own new member from Battleford-Cut Knife.

At the outset too, Mr. Speaker, before I get specifically into the Throne Speech and into hopefully outlining the Crown corporation policy of the Saskatchewan Party, I would like to talk a little bit about the international events that are ongoing. I've heard other members talk about those events here in the Throne Speech debate and I too would like to . . . I too would like to add a few comments.

The Premier stood in this Assembly not long ago and indicated that it was the position of the NDP government that they support the Prime Minister. They support the Prime Minister of Canada in his position that Canada should, in fact, not support the coalition allies — the United States, Australia, and Great Britain, to name three of the more active participants — rather that Canada would not participate in the war at all and join with its allies.

And I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the concern that many of us have on this side of the House is the policy . . . is that the policy of the federal Government of Canada, and the policy of our provincial government is based on the proviso that the UN (United Nations) did not support . . . or rather a UN resolution was not passed to support the war.

And as my colleagues have already said in the legislature here in the debate, and my friend from Cypress Hills has said as we've talked about this privately, and quite compellingly so, they've indicated that that perhaps is not the best way to arrive at foreign policy in Canada, to worry about whether the UN is providing cover for our position.

A position is either just or it is not just. It's either ethical or it's not ethical. It's either the right thing to do or not the right thing to do. And to base our foreign policy and the Premier's position on what the UN may or may not have to say about any foreign affairs matter is an abdication of our responsibility as Canadians to make decisions on foreign policy based on what is right.

And so all of us have to come to our conclusions, then, in that regard. If we think, for example, Mr. Speaker, that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, that he's used them in the past and would use them again, if we believe that they have terrorist training camps in Iraq — as we now know they do, based on the military events of just the last couple of days — if those are the things we believe, then the war to depose this Saddam Hussein and to get rid of that threat to world peace and to that terrorist threat to innocent people all over the world, then the war against that is compelling and is just.

And more importantly, regardless of that question, we also have to wrestle with the fact that our closest ally, that our best friend in international relations, the United States of America, and Great Britain and Australia, have taken the measures they've taken. They've committed to the war.

And so for those reasons, for those reasons many, many people in Swift Current who are talking about this war are very discouraged by the position that has been taken by not only the federal Liberals, but by the NDP here in the province of Saskatchewan on this international incident.

And I would also say this. I think it's certainly fair and reasonable that members of the House have brought to the Legislative Assembly's attention the plight of innocents in Iraq who have been harmed by collateral damage or by any other indirect or direct activity of the war. That's reasonable and that's fair and that's compelling.

But so too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the plight of 3 to 5,000 Kurds and their family who were gassed by their own leader, by Mr. Hussein. And I don't hear anybody, I haven't heard anybody in this Legislative Assembly speak to their cause and speak to the fact that they were butchered by this Saddam Hussein. I haven't heard a word about them.

Where is the outrage about the rape and the torture by this leader of Iraq? Where is the outrage about the fact that yesterday the British reported that Iraqi troops were firing on their own people to put down an uprising in Basra? Where is the outrage about the Iraqi paramilitary feigning surrender, only to attack coalition troops, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And where is the outrage by the Canadian Left and by the Saskatchewan NDP that American soldiers were apparently killed, execution style, in attack just a few days ago?

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple of days ago I, like many other people were . . . I'm sure were watching CNN's (Cable News Network) coverage of the war and there was one embedded reporter with the United States Marine Corps Marine Expeditionary Unit and the 15th Artillery and his name was Jason Bellini I believe and he was at Umm Qasr and detailing some of the activities that had happened there. And he detailed an event that happened there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's very disturbing, where Marines and the 15th Artillery unit were taking fire from a building. And they returned that fire, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And soon after they had returned the fire, an ambulance pulled up and several men got into the ambulance. And it seemed to me from the coverage that the Marine Corps was concerned that the men that were getting into the ambulance were the ones that had been firing. But the ambulance left and the Marine Corps did not fire on the ambulance; it left. And out from the building under a white flag came women and children, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the reporter reported that the Marine Corps troops were . . . knew for a fact it had not been the women and children that had been firing on them but rather the men who had escaped the building, perhaps in the ambulance, perhaps otherwise.

Where is the outrage of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? If we are going to have solid foreign policy in our country, we must do so based on the merits of each particular issue. And we haven't done that in this case in this country. We've abdicated our authority in this regard to the United Nations of all organizations, whose record, frankly, recently is not that good. And you only need to look at Rwanda to find proof of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I listened to the Throne Speech presented here a few days ago, I tried to listen to it from the perspective of one of my constituents, someone from Swift Current and area. And I wondered what they would think as they heard the Throne Speech. Because Swift Current, like many other communities on the west side of the province, have suffered greatly under the policies of this government and they've suffered especially from out-migration.

We're about an hour and 50 minutes, if you drive the speed limit marginally, from Medicine Hat. And members will know that I've said on several occasions that Medicine Hat provides a great deal of pressure on our economy and contributes to the out-migration of our young people in our area.

And certainly that's got to be their number one priority in Swift Current. Certainly the input I get from constituents is that is the number one priority — out-migration and the economy.

So I listened carefully to the Throne Speech to find out what this government was prepared to do about it. And what I heard was a sad recitation of past policies of the government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people in Swift Current will be very, very disappointed by the fact that the Throne Speech, which should map out a broad and general vision for the future, rather focused on the past.

The past policies, by the way, which have in fact caused the problem — the out-migration and the economic damage to southwest Saskatchewan — that's what they heard. Far from a new vision for the province that would give them some hope, they simply heard a tired, old recitation of policies past.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think specifically what they were . . . what Swift Current people would be looking for was a solid plan, a detailed plan that would map out the road to growth, that would send a signal to Swift Current and the entire province that our government understands that out-migration — that quarter after quarter after quarter of record out-migration — is unacceptable and that the government was prepared to do something about it. But they heard nothing of the sort in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker; they heard nothing of the sort.

They did hear a little bit about health care perhaps, some general statements about health care. And I wonder how that would resonate with the constituents of Swift Current based on the fact that for these last four years they have been begging — and longer, arguably — they have been begging this government to ensure that Swift Current has a truly regional health care facility.

That they would have a regional health care facility in which the sewer system doesn't back up as regularly as it does. That they could have a regional hospital in Swift Current whose ceiling parts don't fall on patients, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you can believe it. That they could have a regional hospital facility in Swift Current, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that isn't filled with mould; so much mould that they had to close down an entire floor of the hospital this summer; so much mould that I think there's over 11 workers' compensation cases of front line health care workers who have mould-related health care problems that they got — where? — from the hospital that they work in. From

the regional hospital that the NDP expect front line workers, nurses and doctors, to provide health care to patients. They're getting sick from the facility, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(15:45)

The budget is going to be announced this week and I know that the people of Swift Current and area will be holding this government to account because they have been forced to beg, to line up their share of the funding and then, cap in hand, beg for the government for what should be a slam dunk — the most compelling case that could possibly be made for a new regional health care facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you've heard from several of my colleagues who have taken the opportunity to highlight the fact that the Throne Speech was really devoid of any new ideas, but then to go on and in detail explain the Saskatchewan Party's plan to grow the province by 100,000 people in 10 years. And I'd like to do that as well in my own critic area if I may, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the critic area of Crown corporations.

You know, unfortunately over the last couple of years since I was afforded this . . . these critic opportunities, I've been just too busy. And the reason I've been too busy is because of the ubiquitous nature of the Crown sector in our economy. And that is obviously . . . that's one of the problems. That's one of the problems with our economy.

You can't swing a dead cat in the economy without hitting either a Crown corporation or a Crown investment, one that's either competing with existing business men and women in the province of Saskatchewan, or perhaps losing millions of dollars in places like Atlanta, Georgia or Newcastle, Australia or Nashville, Tennessee or Chile or Mexico — or right here in the province through things like SPUDCO.

And so it's been far too busy. I mean there just . . . there simply shouldn't be this much work for . . . in the year 2003, for anybody in politics charged with Crown corporation critic duties. And the reason is that this is . . . there shouldn't be as many Crown corporations as there are, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 80-plus — 80-plus Crown corporation and Crown investments. That's how many there are, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so a year ago in a meeting with the Regina Chamber of Commerce we were able to detail our Crown corporation policy and I'd like to highlight some of that if I can in the minutes remaining. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we've said is that we need to focus our major Crown corporations on the task at hand. Let's focus them on their core competencies and on their market here at home.

And we have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the record, that when the Crowns do this they're quite successful. And SaskTel may be the best example. I remember last year prior to the annual report from SaskTel being tabled, the president, the hand-picked NDP president of SaskTel, clearly indicated that the only reason they were able to hand over such a substantial dividend to the Minister of Finance was because of their core function. In fact, had they not been involved in all these other international schemes, they would have been able to hand over a lot more. And that forms the basis for our position that we

want to focus our Crowns on Saskatchewan.

We've said we'd place a moratorium on all international investments by the major Crowns in Saskatchewan, pending a review of those investments. And we have said unequivocally that we will put an end — an absolute end — to the practice of Crown corporations competing with Saskatchewan business men and women with their own tax dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we've also said quite clearly that we think the process for appointing the board members of Crown corporations should change, that those candidates should come to the Crown Corporations Committee, or whatever might follow that committee, for approval so that the legislature has some say. And that too is a pragmatic change in the board and in the governance of Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, we've also been pretty clear about what we are terming non-core Crown investments. And what we mean by those are the investments under the portfolio called CIC III (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan Industrial Interests Inc.), and this is everything from meat plants to swine genetics companies to you name it. Not the major Crowns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but all these other investments that the government has made that have in fact chased away private venture capital in the province, and for the most part, lost money. And we've been quite clear about that.

We have said we're going to get the taxpayers out of those deals for the best possible value we can. We're going to get the taxpayers out of those deals, take the proceeds and apply them to the debt that has grown under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. The debt of the province has grown under this government and we have said that the proceeds from those sales should be applied to the debt.

There's one exception in that group. STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) is in that group, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have said quite clearly that we also would like to get the taxpayers out of that money-losing proposition, but only when we can be assured that the private sector or community-based initiatives can replace the service.

That brings us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the major Crowns. And in addition to focusing them on their core function here in the province, in addition to a moratorium on these wild international investments, and in addition to stopping them from competing with Saskatchewan businesses, we said they ought to be reviewed. That there ought to be a terms of reference for this review, and the terms of reference for this review would include the service that those Crowns provide in the province of Saskatchewan, the return on investment that taxpayers should be expecting from those huge investments, as well as the economic impact of any changes, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what we have also clearly said is that this side of the Assembly is not ideologically bound either way. We're not opposed to continued government ownership and neither, neither are we opposed to changes. Neither are we opposed, for example, to partnerships.

Now we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government had an opportunity for a joint venture with one of its Crowns, a joint venture that would have resulted in a brand new company, head officed here in Regina and some attendant west side development. We know this. We sent a message last April to the government that if the deal was as we thought it was, as was explained to us, we would support it.

But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the deal involved a joint venture and a partnership, and that's a form of privatization. Even though the joint venture would result in a new head office here in Regina, it's a form of privatization.

And we knew that this proposal was going forward on the government's side and we encouraged them. We said, if it makes sense, if it helps grow the province, then put the *Regina Manifesto* down for just a second and approve the deal. Do the right thing.

It looks like that deal is dead, Mr. Speaker. It looks like ideology took primacy and priority over what could help grow our economy. We know that, Mr. Speaker, now because it hasn't come forward.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are interested first and foremost in growing the province of Saskatchewan. That's our goal. That's our plan. And if we can pursue arrangements with the Crown corporations — partnerships, continued government ownership, whatever it may be — to help facilitate that growth, that is exactly what we intend to do when we take the seats on that side of the House after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, in the next election campaign the NDP are going to be no doubt making up the position of the Saskatchewan Party as it relates to Crowns. They've already done it now — spreading misinformation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it used to be, it used to be that the big scare was medicare. Remember that, Mr. Speaker? That's what they used to scare people with — senior citizens — that any other party other than the NDP would gut health care in the province of Saskatchewan. Well they won't be using that tactic any more, Mr. Speaker, because the people of the province understand completely that it is this NDP socialist government that has gutted health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So the new scare, the new scare will be about Crown corporations. And we welcome the debate. We welcome the debate because they will come into the campaign with a tired, old ideology that's been rejected worldwide. They'll come to the campaign armed only with that.

And we're going to come to the campaign with ideas for growing the province of Saskatchewan. We already have. We're going to come to the campaign with an open mind and the priority of increasing our population, so places like Swift Current can start to win the battle against Medicine Hat. You know there's only an imaginary line that separate the two. Both have a powerful oil and gas sector waiting to grow — Medicine Hat's developed more. Both have a strong agricultural base —

Medicine Hat a little more cattle and Swift Current a little more grain perhaps but still only an imaginary line separates them. And only a few decades ago the cities were the same size and now Medicine Hat is three or fourfold times the size of Swift Current.

So we'll go to the campaign armed with the plan that says to the people of Swift Current we know that you can compete with Medicine Hat if a government in Regina finally understands what it is we need to do in the province of Saskatchewan to grow it. And we look forward to that campaign, not only in Swift Current but in Regina and Saskatoon and across the province.

And so for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker, and voting against the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly a pleasure and an honour to rise in support of the motion of the member for Cumberland and against the amendment put forth by the short-sighted Leader of the Opposition. Now, Mr. Speaker, I say short-sighted because following the re-election of a New Democratic Party government, the Leader of the Opposition is bound to change. By his wishful thinking and urging an early election, I'm afraid that he's just cutting his own career quite short.

In the short time that each of us has to rise in the Throne Speech debate, I want to take a little bit of time to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Meewasin for their continuing support, for their ideas and their suggestions, and for the opportunity to be of assistance to them as they go about their daily lives and when they encounter occasional problems.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the most gratifying part of being elected as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) is the opportunity to serve and the opportunity to influence, if even in only some small way, the development and the implementation of public policy.

And for the information of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that's what governments do. We don't skate back and forth across the centre line with a stick whacking away at those who don't quite fit the mold as they did with their duly nominated candidate and former Tory, Grant Schmidt. A government's job of course is to design and implement public policy and programs and to deliver them in the very best interests of all of the people of this great province.

On the government side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we have done this, and we will continue to do this. And we will be continuing to do this long, long past the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I want to restate the vision which is so clearly laid out in the Speech from the Throne. And it says:

Our government's vision is a province of opportunity, where the future is wide open to all those prepared to dream big, plan well and work hard.

It is a vision of an expanding economy from which no one is excluded.

It is a vision of a province where all children will have the opportunity to grow up healthy, in safe secure communities, receive the very best in education and training, and be encouraged in turn, to build successful families and careers here at home.

(It's) a vision of a *green* Saskatchewan, where exciting new breakthroughs in renewable energy, environmental technology and energy conservation support a growing economy in harmony with our natural environment.

Mr. Speaker, when our government talks about expanding the economy, we do it in a very inclusive way — ensuring that business interests are in balance with those of workers; ensuring that adequate risk management measures are in place to provide stability for agricultural producers; ensuring that all small- and medium-sized businesses, the energy sector, forestry, mining, oil and gas, and tourism, and arts all have the opportunity to thrive in this wonderful province that we live in.

Now the Sask Party has one answer, possibly two, well maybe even three. And it goes like this — cut taxes, gut labour legislation, and sell the Crowns. And in spite of the recent speech, there is plenty in writing and plenty in the policy manual to show us and to show the people of Saskatchewan what the plans of the Sask Party are for our Crown corporations in this province.

They have no strategy for increasing the involvement of Métis and First Nations. There is no strategy on their side for investing in infrastructure. No investment in IT (information technology) expansion, which is the lifeblood of growing industry and learning opportunities for Saskatchewan children and businesses. They have no plans for health and investment in health and education. In fact, as we've heard in their . . . other previous sessions that we've had here in our legislature, they advocated spending all of . . . or freezing all of their spending at zero in those fields.

(16:00)

They have no plan for investing in training and employment opportunities that would help people to move to productive and satisfying lives. And our government has a very, very proud record of moving people off of social assistance and into satisfying jobs — many months of straight decreases in the number of people on social assistance and the very . . . nine very impressive, impressive months of job gains in our province.

Their motto is, just leave it alone. Leave it alone, they say, and it will all turn out and everything will be fine. However when it comes to the balance between business and labour, then they say, they say, and I quote the member for Indian Head-Milestone and now the newly minted opposition Labour critic, who I quote from *Hansard*, July 12, 2000, where he says, quote:

. . . I really think that a fair labour policy is letting the market take care of itself . . .

On March 24 this year he confirms, he confirms the Sask Party agenda to change labour legislation. He talks about democratic unionism. And as the Minister of Labour and I were discussing earlier, who from your . . . who from their party, the Sask Party, can claim the talk . . . the right to talk about democratic anything?

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's not like the Sask Party Labour critic is alone in his views. To quote some of his colleagues, on June 14, 2000 in *Hansard*, the member for Kelvington-Wadena just heaped praise on the success of right-to-work states, but failed to mention that Saskatchewan's growth in the non-agricultural sector exceeded that of the right-to-work states.

The former Labour critic for the Sask Party, the member for Redberry Lake who was even more critical of organized labour when he stated, and I quote:

I'd like to remind the minister that the alliance (which is the Saskatchewan Alliance for Economic Growth) represents three-quarters of all businesses in Saskatchewan. They are . . . job creators. Why don't you pick up the phone and talk to them instead of your union leader friends who are job killers.

That was in *Hansard*, June 12 of 2000. And then he said that he wouldn't apologize, and his leader said that he shouldn't have to say that he's sorry. And I find that really, really shameful that you would call union leaders job killers.

The Sask Party leader was anxious to jump on the anti-labour bandwagon when he asked in *Hansard* on May 30 of 2000, and I quote:

Why are you trying to turn Saskatchewan into Cuba North, a labour dictatorship?

The Sask Party member for Humboldt advocated for no minimum wage on June 26, 2000.

The Sask Party member for Watrous and the one for Wood River were very opposed to bringing the employees of the hog industry under the minimum standards of The Labour Standards Act. Mr. Speaker, these are minimum standards — the very bottom that everybody in this province should be entitled to — and they opposed that. And their statements that I just referred to can be found in *Hansard* of June 13, 2002 and July 3, 2002, respectively.

Mr. Speaker, they may have changed the face of the critic to a prettier one, but the message is as ugly as ever.

Mr. Speaker, I come to this House with a proud record of working to advance the rights and lives of working people. I dedicated myself to the labour movement for 23 years in volunteer, paid, elected, and appointed positions. And I'm proud of my efforts on behalf of working people. There is much to be gained as a society when governments advance the position of all members of that society.

I would ask the Sask Party this: if they . . . and I'm using you, Mr. Speaker, but I'm saying if you have two equal people in equal circumstances and you reduce the position of one, does

that improve the position of the other? No, Mr. Speaker, the other is no better off than he was, but the first is worse off.

We have to move forward together, Mr. Speaker. It's not helpful to advance the interests of business at the expense of workers or at the expense of the environment or at the expense of First Nations, but nor is the opposite true. We can only thrive if all interests are advanced at the same time. That is the sign of a just and civilized society.

And, Mr. Speaker, speaking of just and civilized societies, I want to comment on the current war in Iraq. No nation can claim to be just and civilized if they're not prepared to be bound by international law. And I join with those who condemn unilateral action against a nation in the absence of a United Nations resolution.

And I make this observation for the benefit of those who take the position of the member for Kindersley and others that we've heard today, Mr. Speaker, who support unilateral action of the US, Great Britain, and Australia. If you are not prepared to abide by the law, how can you ever hope to be trusted to make the laws?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to all people involved in this war. I fervently hope that they will be spared from loss of life and that peace will be restored as soon as possible.

The Speech from the Throne details a vision, a plan, and a future wide open. It has been criticized for its length and its detail. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is because we have a plan and it's working. The Sask Party has no plan; they have a slogan. And if they do have a plan, they're afraid to reveal it because it would destroy this province.

Compare the Speech from the Throne to the comments of the Sask Party member for Wood River, who said on March 21, in response to the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety who said it would be very helpful if the opposition would state what their policy is, and I quote:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the member . . . if the minister would like to know our policy, it's very simple. Call an election and you'll find out.

So what are they hiding, Mr. Speaker? They refused to share their policy with the electors. Why? Because it would destroy this province.

I imagine what their Throne Speech would look like if they ever formed government, which they won't. You could write it on one square of a certain tissue that comes on a roll — cut taxes, gut labour laws, sell the Crowns. A short and simple recipe for disaster.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion in favour of the Speech from the Throne. and opposing the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise today and to speak on behalf of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy. Weyburn-Big Muddy is a great constituency. And sadly though, with the boundary changes, the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy is losing the great constituency . . . or the great town of Radville and the RM (rural municipality) of Laurier and part of the RM of Griffin and the town of Griffin. But I am confident that the member from Estevan and the member from Cannington will serve these constituents very well after the next election.

And I'm very happy to have added to the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy, parts of RMs along the northern part of the constituency and also on the west side, including Coronach and Willow Bunch and the town of Yellow Grass. So I'm looking forward to working with these people in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome the new members from Battleford-Cut Knife and Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Speaker, there's been extensive reference to the war in Iraq in the last few days since we've been in the legislature, and I would just like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to lend my support to the United States of America, a country that is standing for freedom in a world that is threatened by the terrorist regime of Saddam Hussein.

Throughout my life, Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to travel to the United States and I have numerous friends and relatives also that live in the United States, and I count the United States of America and the people of the United States of America as my friend.

What other country in the world, other than Canada, would not be more than happy and count themselves blessed to have United States as their first neighbour and friend and share a border with them?

And yet we find ourselves in a most unique situation, Mr. Speaker — in actually an unbelievable situation — where we have the Government of Canada and the NDP government in Saskatchewan that are turning their backs on the United States.

As the Ambassador from the United States said, Mr. Speaker, if Canada needed us to come alongside of them we would be there for them in a minute. And as the President of the United States said some time ago, if you are not with us then you are against us. So I ask the Government of Saskatchewan and I ask the Government of Canada, if you're not with the United States then do you support Iraq? Mr. Speaker, quite frankly I'm embarrassed by the stand of the federal government and by the Government of Saskatchewan that they have turned their backs on our friend and neighbours, the United States.

Mr. Speaker, once again in the Throne Speech from the NDP government that we heard last week, we have seen that they are devoid of any new ideas and answers for the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and for the province, and they have once again chosen to turn their backs on rural Saskatchewan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, not only have they turned their back on rural Saskatchewan, they've actually attacked rural Saskatchewan. We've seen another huge announcement of an

increase in crop insurance premiums, something that the farmers of Saskatchewan simply cannot afford. We have heard from the NDP that they're going to hike the phone rates in rural Saskatchewan for rural businesses. We've heard that they've announced that they are asking for an increase in SaskEnergy fees. They've also, Mr. Speaker, continued to not show that there is a great need in rural Saskatchewan for adequate cell coverage. Mr. Speaker, in my constituency there are many, many areas where we do not have adequate cell coverage. And where do we need it more, Mr. Speaker, than in rural Saskatchewan?

In fact this government has chosen in many areas to overlay where they had analog cell coverage already. They've chosen to overlay it with digital where in other parts of the province — and especially in Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency — we do not have any type of cell coverage.

Mr. Speaker, you can drive 20 miles south of Regina and there is a gap where there isn't any cell coverage. You can go east, Mr. Speaker, between here and Sedley and Francis and down that line, and it's often before you're within 10 . . . it's 10 miles before you get to Weyburn before you have any cell coverage. Mr. Speaker, down in the Big Muddy area just recently the NDP put up four new towers. I wonder what kind of frequency they put on those towers because there still is not adequate cell coverage.

I was in Bengough about a month ago, Mr. Speaker, and when I arrived in Bengough I had cell coverage, spent the day out in the constituency, went to Big Beaver, to Coronach, to Willow Bunch, and back to Bengough and did not have cell coverage till I was back in Bengough. And yet the NDP and SaskTel have told us that they have put in new towers throughout that region, and yet there still isn't any better cell coverage. So, Mr. Speaker, I really question where the NDP's concerns are.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also have a huge concern about the lack of high-speed Internet in rural Saskatchewan. I've recently been approached by the town of Yellow Grass which is in the Indian Head-Milestone constituency — which will be in Weyburn-Big Muddy following the next election — that they are concerned because they do not have high-speed Internet.

Mr. Speaker, the town of Ogema — one of the towns in this province that is moving ahead — they have taken the initiative and they have said, in spite of this government, in spite of all the things that have been thrown at us in rural Saskatchewan, we are going to move ahead in our community. And they are moving ahead, Mr. Speaker.

But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? They have applied over and over and over again to this government to have high-speed Internet, and they have been ignored. They are touted as one of the best and the brightest growing communities in Saskatchewan, and they don't have high-speed Internet. They need high-speed Internet to compete.

Mr. Speaker, we've also in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy have highways that are deplorable. Last year the NDP government made a commitment to fix the highway, Highway 13 west of Ogema. After one delay after another after another, it never did happen. They have been promised

this. This highway is not safe. I've had people that live in Ogema that tell me that when tourists come to Ogema and they're planning on going further west, that they discourage them from doing so because of the condition of the highway. That is absolutely unacceptable.

(16:15)

There is unlimited opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in the south part of my constituency, in the Weyburn . . . in the Big Muddy area. Mr. Speaker, there is a tourism mecca there that is what I often refer to as the best-kept secret in Saskatchewan. But there is no way that the people in that area are going to be able to develop the tourism industry in the Big Muddy until the highways are improved in that area.

Mr. Speaker, we've also experienced in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, the threat of school closure in the last year. And thankfully, because of Pangman and the community and their determination to keep their school open — and they fought hard for that, Mr. Speaker — they showed where there was a need for that school. And they also showed that if we are going to revitalize our communities, if we're going to revitalize rural Saskatchewan, we must have a school. We must have those important infrastructures in our communities.

And through hard work and resilience and determination, they put forth their message to the district school board and they convinced them that we need the school, and we will do what we have to to make our community vibrant.

And actually, Mr. Speaker, to show you the seriousness of the issue around schools and keeping them open and the threat of closure, just because of the threat of the closure of the Pangman school, three families chose to leave that community because they did not want to be in a community that did not have a school. So we need to seriously look at this whole issue and realize the importance of keeping schools in communities in Saskatchewan.

On Monday night I attended a meeting in Ogema where they're talking about the amalgamation of schools. Again, Mr. Speaker, there is serious concern around this whole issue of amalgamation and what it's going to mean to smaller schools and mean to rural Saskatchewan.

But the most disappointing thing about the meeting that I was at in Ogema the other night was that the consultants that came — and speaking on behalf of the numbers from the Government of Saskatchewan — told the people in that community that they had to plan for a decline in their enrolment. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that in the town of Ogema they actually have an increase in their population in their school because they have things happening in their community.

And yet we have a provincial government that is running around and telling local school boards and district boards that you have to manage to decline . . . for the decline in enrolment. You have to manage and you have to figure out how you're going to either support the schools you have with less students or what you're going to have to do, if you're going to have to close schools.

I find this deplorable, Mr. Speaker, that there is no enthusiasm coming from this government but yet they're talking about how we're going to manage the decline in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I'd like to speak about is the whole issue of health care in rural Saskatchewan. And yesterday the member from Melfort-Tisdale spoke at great length about the health issues in Saskatchewan and how they are failing the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy, we now only have 30 acute care beds in the whole constituency because the NDP chose to close the other hospitals. They closed Bengough; they closed Radville; they closed Pangman.

And, Mr. Speaker, today in the town of Radville we have two excellent doctors, doctors that could do far more than they are able . . . or far more than they are allowed to do by this government. They would like to be able to provide palliative care; they would like to be able to deliver children in the hospital. In fact this winter, Mr. Speaker, they actually had a delivery in their hospital because the mother could not make it to Regina.

This doctor — it's a man and a wife — they love Radville, they're great in the community, they want to stay there, but they want to be able to provide more services so that people can stay in their local town and provide the services there.

And it only makes common sense, Mr. Speaker, because then it would free up beds in Regina and Saskatoon that could be used for more specialized care. It's also very important in smaller communities to have access to a doctor and have access to being able to go into the hospital for minor issues because it keeps our seniors in their local community. If they do not have access to health care then they have to look at moving elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen this government that has committed more and more money to health care but we have the worst health care that we have ever had in this province. So my question is and has been for five years, where is the money going? What is this government doing with \$2.4 billion and yet at the same time we have the longest waiting lists in Canada?

Mr. Speaker, it is deplorable and what we need is a Saskatchewan Party government that's going to take control of this issue, find out where the problems are, manage this system, and give the people of Saskatchewan the excellence in health care that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to speak for a moment about agriculture and the way the government has turned their back on agriculture in this province. And you know the farmers of this province ask for very little.

I was recently on a talk show in Weyburn and the host of the show said, you know, I'm sure you get a lot of calls to your office about agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, I had to say to the host, actually no, I don't; farmers do not phone and complain to my office. All farmers ask is a fair price for their product, something that this Government of Saskatchewan has failed to negotiate on their behalf. They've failed them over and over

and over again by not being at the table and not speaking on their behalf when federal programs are being put in place.

And, Mr. Speaker, the sad part about all the things that I've talked about today is that we continue to lose people from our communities and people from this province. Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy has seen a decline of population of 1,200 people since the 1999 election. Mr. Speaker, these people are leaving our province because they are fed up with the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, when I was in Kayville about a month ago — just to give you an example of a small town in Saskatchewan and how the people are leaving and how the Government of Saskatchewan has isolated them by turning their back on them because of the lack of services — Mr. Speaker, in the town of Kayville they only have five street lights left in the town because that is all that they can afford to turn on because of the fee that they have to pay to SaskPower.

They do not have a public phone in Kayville, Mr. Speaker, because they cannot afford the rent. They do not have one in their town hall. They do not have one in their senior centre. Mr. Speaker, they do not have any cell coverage in Kayville. Although they're supposed to have, they don't have any cell coverage in Kayville. And the 911 service is very, very poor, and they live in an area where they have to drive on Highway 334, which is absolutely deplorable.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party is committed to change and to improving this province of Saskatchewan. And one of the ways that we plan to do that is by first and foremost looking at all departments and avenues of government and all Crowns of government.

And one of the Crowns of government is Liquor and Gaming. And, Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to look at the whole issue of liquor and gaming and with a full efficiency review because the people of Saskatchewan are demanding that liquor and gaming — whether it be on the gaming side or the liquor side — that it be accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, and that they are ensured that the dollars that are flowing from gaming actually are going to where they're supposed to be.

Mr. Speaker, we've been talking in the last few days about Dutch Lerat and SIGA and that whole issue. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are outraged. The First Nations people especially are outraged and they have every right to be because the dollars that flow from gaming in this province are dollars that belong to them and are to be used for programs for them. And they want to know where the \$800,000 went to; they want to know who is accountable for that, who allowed it to happen. And so, Mr. Speaker, we are calling on the government to allow us to go into Public Accounts and ask these questions of the officials and of the minister so we can get answers for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, another issue around . . . that is involved with liquor and gaming is the whole issue of addictions. And although it is administrated under the Health department, it certainly does pertain to liquor and gaming. And, Mr. Speaker, last year there was \$320 million generated through liquor and gaming in this province, and yet only \$2.5 million was actually

spent towards addictions.

Mr. Speaker, we have the whole study that came out about addictions in Saskatchewan, about gambling addictions. And in that study it showed that VLTs (video lottery terminal) were the most addictive form of gambling that we have in Saskatchewan. And yet this government within two weeks of the study coming out decided, they made the decision to add — to add, Mr. Speaker — 400 more VLTs, 10 per cent more VLTs, right after they had received the study that they commissioned that told them that VLTs were the most addictive form of gambling.

And just to put this in a little bit of perspective, Mr. Speaker. In the province of Alberta there are 3-million-plus people and they have 6,000 VLTs. In the province of Saskatchewan we have just around 1 million people but we have 4,000 VLTs. Mr. Speaker, we have far more percentage of VLTs in relation to population than any other province that I'm aware of, in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we need to address these issues. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this Throne Speech that will reverse the trend of the last 12 years. We continue to see people leaving, farm families facing hardships, longest waiting lists in the country, we have a government that has totally lost its way.

And I would just like to say in closing, Mr. Speaker, that about a year ago I had a meeting and there was a gentleman there from Indian Head-Milestone, and we were talking to him about people coming back to Saskatchewan. And so I said to him, would you . . . you've lived in Alberta and you're from Saskatchewan originally; you came back here. Is it true that people that live in Alberta would really like to come back here if they had a reason? If there was a change in government and they had a reason to come back here, they could see a future, would they want to come back?

And he said, I'll tell you what. If you took all the ex-Saskies that live in Alberta and put them in McMahon Stadium and said to them, who wants to go home, that 90 per cent of the people in the stadium would stand up and say, me.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's what the Saskatchewan Party is all about. We are going to turn this province around. We are going to give the people that have left this province a reason to come home. We're going to give the people that live here a reason to stay here. And we are going to be number one in Canada because that is where the Saskatchewan Party's direction is, and that's what we are going to do for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Throne Speech. I will be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 16:29 until 16:39.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 22

Hermanson
Krawetz

Toth
Gantefoer

Heppner
Bjornerud

Elhard

Wakefield

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask all members to not interfere with the voting process so, with all members, votes can be clearly heard.

Harpauer

Eagles

McMorris

D'Autremont

Bakken

Wall

Huyghebaert

Dearborn

Brkich

Weekes

Lorenz

Hart

Allchurch

Hillson

Nays — 29

Addley

Crofford

Hagel

Lautermilch

Serby

Melenchuk

Cline

Sonntag

Osika

Lorjé

Kasperski

Goulet

Van Mulligen

Prebble

Belanger

Thomson

Junor

Nilson

Atkinson

Hamilton

Harper

Forbes

Jones

Higgins

Trew

Wartman

Yates

McCall

Iwanchuk

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Goulet, seconded by Ms. Hamilton.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to join debate on the Speech from the Throne.

I'd first off like to welcome the new members from Saskatoon Fairview and Battleford-Cut Knife to the Assembly. I'm sure they will make some wonderful contributions over this next session.

Mr. Speaker, as I see time is drawing late and I have a fair number of comments to make on the Speech from the Throne, I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:44.

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SPECIAL ORDER

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