

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition signed by citizens of the province of Saskatchewan about the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation's announcement that 2003 premiums charged to farmers will increase by up to 52 per cent and further. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Dinsmore, Lucky Lake, Watson, Rosetown, and Beechy.

And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand today again and read a petition on behalf of people who are very frustrated with the high cost of education on property:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause the reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

The people that have signed this petition are all from Wadena.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon on behalf of the citizens of Moose Jaw concerned about their lack of dialysis services. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take necessary action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

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

And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned with the destruction of the province's architectural heritage. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Minister of Highways preserve the old bridges over the North Saskatchewan River between Battleford and North Battleford.

Your petitioners come from Battleford and North Battleford.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with citizens who are concerned about the education portion of the property tax. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause the reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Wadena and Kuroki.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action to make the necessary repairs to Highway 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by residents of Estevan, Tribune, and Saskatoon.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of residents of the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the state of the highways in our constituency. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highways 13, 35, 18, 28, 6, 34, 334, and 36 in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn, Trossachs, Yellow Grass, and Creelman.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise again with a petition from residents of rural Saskatchewan in my constituency who are extremely concerned about health care services. 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 proper steps to cause adequate medical services,

including a physician, be provided in Rockglen and to cause the Five Hills Health Region provide better information to the citizens of Rockglen.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Rockglen and Scout Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine concerned with health care and in particular a hospital, hospital closures, and the current facility in Kindersley. 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 ensure continuation of the current level of services available at the Kindersley Hospital and to ensure that current specialty services are sustained to better the people of west central Saskatchewan.

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by the good folks from Flaxcombe, Kindersley, Hoosier, and Coleville, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with citizens opposed to the premium increases to farmers.

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Bladworth, Girvin, and Davidson.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have yet another petition to present on behalf of constituents who are concerned with the condition of Highway 22. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Earl Grey, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Southey.

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 premium increases to crop insurance. And as in duty bound . . . Or, pardon me, 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 from Glenbush, Medstead, Leoville, and Spiritwood.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received:

A petition concerning a reversal of government's position on isolated school grants; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 12, 18, 27, 35, 36, and 90.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 33 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs: how many immigrants, including dependants, were admitted to live in Saskatchewan under the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, formerly the provincial nominee program, in the fiscal year 1999-2000?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003. Thank you.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 33 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Labour: how much money did the Department of Labour give the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour in the year 1999, and for what purpose?

Mr. Speaker, these questions not only are for 1999 but the year 2000, 2001, 2002. And they're not only for the Minister of Labour, they're also for the Minister of Learning, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister of Government Relations, and the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I

shall on day no. 28 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: in what country was the software developed by Wascana Gaming for use in mega bingo developed; (2) in what year's annual report for SLGA and on what page and under what heading were SLGA's costs associated with the development of software and hardware for mega bingo listed; (3) what is the Prism project, its mandate, its annual budget, and the total cost as of this date; (4) what is the Lines B project, its mandate, its annual budget, and total cost of this date; (5) what is the licensing division project, its mandate, its annual budget, and total cost as of this date; and (6) what is the Orion project, its mandate, its annual budget, and total cost as of this date?

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 33 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: with reference to the 6.8 per cent nominal growth in GDP forecast in the 2003-2004 budget and the related revenue estimates, and utilizing the large-scale econometric model with 404 variables and 333 equations, what would be the revenues generated based on the 2.8 per cent nominal GDP growth rate projected by the Finance department of the Government of Canada?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I also wish to give notice that I shall on day no. 33 ask the government the following question:

To the minister in charge of SaskTel: how much and to whom was paid for backhoe services in the North Battleford region in fiscal year 2002-2003?

I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Yom haShoah

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, today is Yom haShoah V'Gevurah, what we in Saskatchewan have designated as Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Hebrew name for this day translates into English as the day of catastrophe and strength. Catastrophe because how else can you describe the murder of 6 million, including one and a half million children, all because they were Jewish?

But Gevurah, or strength, is also part of this day because the Jewish people survived the onslaught of the Nazis. And in some cases, despite facing overwhelming odds and horrendous oppression, Jewish people summoned the strength to resist and to fight the Nazis.

Yom haShoah was chosen for the 27th of Nisan in the Jewish calendar, the day in 1943 that a remarkable group of Jews rose up in the Warsaw Ghetto to fight the concentrated might of the Nazis for almost a month. The horrible struggle of the ghetto fighters stands as an incredible symbol of resistance. It stands as

an awesome example of the triumph of the human will.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago I was living on Kibbutz Hazorea in the state of Israel. I had the honour of participating in memorial services on Erev Yom haShoah with people whose entire extended families had been murdered by the Nazis. On Yom haShoah I stood in silence with the whole of the country as the sirens wailed and a moment of silence was observed.

I visited the Ghetto Fighters' Museum founded by the survivors from Warsaw and paid my respects at Yad Vashem, and at each of these places I was struck by the immense sadness at the almost incomprehensible evidence of the depths of human depravity. But I was equally struck by the determination of the Jewish people to survive or as Emile Fackenheim put it, to not hand Hitler any posthumous victories.

Never again, Mr. Speaker, never again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is a sombre anniversary and I join with the member from Elphinstone in marking April 29 as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

It's been more than 50 years since the end of the Second World War and the revelations of the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. Six million persons of predominately Jewish descent were murdered over the course of the reign of the Third Reich. We shall never forget.

Canada was one of the countries that bravely fought to see the liberation of Germany and much of Europe and ensure that this sort of thing never occurs again.

Mr. Speaker, family members of mine, whom I met as a boy, were survivors of the death camps like Auschwitz. My grandmother's cousin, Hayla, visited Canada when I was younger. Her families were professors at the University of Warsaw and were among those interned by the Nazis. Mr. Speaker, Hayla had a tattoo placed on her arm designating her as a number, not a person. Fortunately the war ended before she faced death. Her mother, however, was not as fortunate.

Although the anniversary is over 50 years, our world still sees incidents of ethnic cleansing and state-sponsored murder. It is my hope that Canada will continue to ensure that this type of atrocity is eradicated for the good of all humankind.

I ask the members of this Assembly to take some time today to reflect upon the events of the Second World War, and of those they have known that have survived or did not survive the death camps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Exemplary Corrections Service Honoured

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise in this House and congratulate 40 men and women who

have been recognized for career achievements in the provincial and federal correctional services. Mr. Speaker, these people serve and protect our province and its citizens.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, yesterday at a service at Government House, Lieutenant Governor Lynda Haverstock and the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety presented these 40 individuals with the Corrections Exemplary Service Award. Recipients of this award must have demonstrated exemplary conduct and displayed excellence and devotion to duty.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's recipients that received the Exemplary Service medals had at least 20 years of distinguished service with the corrections division of Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety or with the correctional service of Canada. Mr. Speaker, these people make important contributions to our province and communities. Corrections staff help keep our communities safe and deliver effective programming for offenders that help them to reintegrate successfully back into our communities.

I'm sure all the members of this Assembly will join me in thanking and congratulating the recipients of the Corrections Exemplary Service Award and their contributions to our communities, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Davidson and District Economic Development Board

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to recognize the efforts of the business community in the town of Davidson.

Earlier this year the Davidson and District Economic Development Board was formed, consisting of members of the Davidson Business Association and Davidson town council. The mandate of this new community board is to attract new business, manufacturing, and new families to Davidson area by promoting what the community has to offer, while encouraging its citizens to promote the town on an active basis.

The formation of this board represents a major step forward in realizing the town of Davidson's potential towards growing its economic base. Davidson location on the four-lane highway, No. 11, enhances that potential especially given that Davidson has always been considered the halfway point between the major centres of Regina and Saskatoon. This would make it the ideal location for new manufacturing companies as well as the expansion of existing businesses.

The focus on community involvement by promoting the town as a great place for new families as well as the overall benefits of living in a growing rural community are just some of the ideas that the board has developed.

Additional incentives include a business incentive, review the development of a new Web site, also new highway signage, and an ongoing report of the advantages of rural community living, a land and facilities report, a comprehensive information package development, a tourism strategy combined with a

tourism booth, a community welcome group, plus ongoing educational programs.

I would like to ask that the members join me in congratulating the board's chairperson, Connie Townsend; secretary, Shelley Cross; treasurer, Gary Edom; and many of the other residents for extraordinary efforts in making the Davidson and District Economic Development Board a reality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Theatre Fest 2003

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to say a few words about the Theatre Fest 2003 held recently at the new E. A. Rawlinson Centre of the Arts in Prince Albert.

This was the 70th anniversary of Theatre Saskatchewan's Full Length Play Festival and by all accounts it was a very huge success with over 400 people in attendance for each of the seven nightly performances.

The Prince Albert Community Players volunteered countless hours to ensure the success, as did the Theatre Saskatchewan president, Suzanne Malo-Miller of La Loche, and vice-president, Larry Schlosser of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, participants in this year's full-length theatre festival were the Prince Albert Community Players, the Battlefords Community Players, the Chocolate Moose Theatre, the Meadow Lake Community Theatre, the Regina Little Theatre Society, the Milestone Prairie Players and the Swift Current Little Theatre.

This year's winning play was *The Foursome* performed by the Swift Current Little Theatre and written by Norm Foster. The runner-up to the winner was *The Cemetery Club* performed by the Battlefords Community Players and written by Ivan Menchell.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all members of this Assembly will join me in congratulating the prize winners at Theatre Fest 2003, as well as all of those who helped to put this great event together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Biggar Volunteer Wins Queen's Jubilee Medal

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently Biggar resident Barbara-Ann de Haan was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee Medal for volunteer work with the Canadian Celiac Association. de Haan, programs coordinator with Biggar Home Care, received the recognition recently in Saskatoon.

The Canadian Celiac Association nominated de Haan for the Golden Jubilee Medal for volunteer efforts at both the national and local levels. She was awarded this honour in recognition of her lead role on the Education Committee of the Canadian Celiac Association. de Haan was instrumental in helping develop a national standard new information kit for people newly diagnosed with the celiac disease.

As Chair of a national task force for the Canadian Celiac Association, de Haan, who also suffers from the disease, was instrumental in improving new member resources, education, peer counsellors from across Canada. She also helped in standardizing chapter teaching materials for the Canadian Celiac Association.

de Haan's sincere commitment to improving the lives of those with celiac disease and the valuable contribution she has made of her time makes her a worthy recipient of the Golden Jubilee Medal. Please join me in congratulating Barbara-Ann de Haan for receiving this very worthy award.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon Company Wins Award

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Cronus Technologies Inc., a software development company at Innovation Place in Saskatoon, was recently presented with a Human Resource Technology Excellence Award at a conference in Chicago.

Mr. Speaker, the award was given in recognition of the Cronus company's innovative Web-based portal software program called cfactor. This program has been used extensively by the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations. Various agencies within the province's health regions use cfactor in a secure Web environment to provide management and fiscal accountability tools.

Mr. Speaker, Cronus Technologies, founded by brothers Rod, Cary, and Shaun Schuler, has its head office in Saskatoon and offices in Calgary and Geneva, and is just one example of the competitiveness and excellence of Saskatchewan-based companies.

I ask all hon. members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating those associated with the Cronus company on their recent achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mega Bingo

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP (New Democratic Party) has now admitted to losing nearly \$8 million on mega bingo, without a business plan and without cabinet approval. The problem is the people who came up with the \$8 million figure are the same people who told us \$6.2 million just a month ago.

Now we're being asked to trust the same NDP minister who gave us the wrong information in the first place. Mr. Speaker, how do we know the total cost isn't more? Why should we trust this minister when he's the one who gave us the wrong figure in the first place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I feel confident that with the report, the document I tabled yesterday, Mr. Speaker — which, by the way, once I made it public I also forwarded to the Provincial Auditor, who has been auditing the books and the annual reports and the financial statements from the beginning of this entire project, Mr. Speaker — nothing's been hidden from the public.

And I understand that member only today corresponded with the Provincial Auditor. She will have the responses she's asked for, Mr. Speaker. They will be accurate unless she chooses then again to question the auditor as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister said that Wascana Gaming received the mega bingo contract because they were the low bidder. However he has never told us what the amount of that bid was. In fact, yesterday's report suggests that Wascana Gaming ultimately received a lot more money than they had originally bid on the project. In total, Wascana Gaming was paid \$1.7 million.

Can the minister tell us, what was Wascana Gaming's original bid to develop the mega bingo?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — The costs . . . The questions to date have focused among costs for development and implementation. The officials advised the Crown Corporations Committee of this Assembly that the linked bingo software development costs were approximately 1.2 for Wascana Gaming — more precisely they were 1.3.

Nevertheless, nevertheless it was the Western Canada Lottery Corporation who acted on behalf of SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) as their agent to look at the request for proposals which I tabled earlier and the member had an opportunity to review. There's nothing hidden here, Mr. Speaker. And when it came to the point, Wascana Gaming was subsequently asked through the contract, through WCLC (Western Canada Lottery Corporation) as well, asked to assess the viability of another linked game that the bingo industry was proposing, and paid additional money for that and development of software, Mr. Speaker. It's all accounted for and the Provincial Auditor will confirm that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps telling us that Wascana Gaming won the contract because they were the low bidder. But that doesn't mean much if we do not know how much that low bid was. Mr. Speaker, Wascana Gaming is a company that has strong ties with the NDP. They received \$1.7 million to work on mega bingo.

To the minister: what was the amount of the original bid on this project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, in the business world when

there are fees and tenders and contracts entered into, there are provisions for any additional work that is done that needs to be paid for, Mr. Speaker. That's in the business world.

When the mega bingo game was shut down, Wascana Gaming was asked to help assess the viability of another linked game that the bingo industry was proposing. And I can, I can . . . Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the member opposite that obviously doesn't believe anything that's said in this legislature, I will table this document to show the exercise that was gone through in order to assess that potential for another linked bingo game.

In addition, as the request for proposal states, Wascana Gaming was contracted to develop and deliver both a cash and paper management system and a linked bingo game, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Party as the official opposition is to ask questions of this government and to get answers for the people of Saskatchewan. But what do we see day after day in this legislature? We see a government that is totally unaccountable and has total disregard for the taxpayers' dollars of this province.

Mr. Speaker, again I ask the member . . .

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, again I ask the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming: how much was Wascana Gaming's original bid on the mega bingo project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out when these questions are raised . . . Well first of all, through Public Accounts, through Crown Corporations, the opposition can ask all the questions they want, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing hidden. There's nothing to hide. The reports every year — financial reports, statements, annual reports — report on all the activities of government.

Mr. Speaker, the request for proposal was \$1.2 million. With the additional work that was done at the request of WCLC, that contract to Wascana Gaming was \$1.7 million, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to point out that after the initial questioning from the opposition subsided, I continued to ask questions, Mr. Speaker, of my officials, in order that we could answer to this House and to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this is why the people of Saskatchewan do not trust this NDP government. They will not give us straight answers. The NDP misled us about SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company). They misled us about their Palm Springs venture. They misled us about their dealings in Atlanta. They misled us now about mega bingo.

Mr. Speaker, this is the NDP's pattern — lose millions of dollars and then cover it up. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people do not trust the NDP's numbers. That is why today I have written the Provincial Auditor asking him to do a special investigation into mega bingo; asking him to figure out how much the NDP really lost on mega bingo.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister support a special investigation into mega bingo?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — I guess the question here, Mr. Speaker, at this point, is who misled whom about Palm Springs? Nevertheless, the project — the mega bingo project, Mr. Speaker — was identified and referenced in several SLGA annual reports and the costs for the programs have been reflected in SLGA's financial statements as required. SLGA's officials, Mr. Speaker, have provided information in response to questions, various questions, from members opposite.

(14:00)

And those forums, those public forums through our Public Accounts and our Crown Corporations Committees, are the forum to question each and every official about all the activities of any organization.

Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, that member now tells us she's written a letter to the auditor. Well the auditor yesterday received a copy of my report that I tabled in this House, and it will be up to him to determine who is telling what appropriately in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ethanol Industry

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan).

In February the minister told the media that if Broe industries didn't have its financing in place for its portion of the ethanol deal by the end of March, he'd be worried. But by the end of March Broe still didn't have its financing in place, Mr. Speaker. Yet the minister claimed things were still on track and the construction of the Broe . . . the Belle Plaine project would begin in May.

Now it's the end of April, Mr. Speaker. The minister admits that Broe still doesn't have its financing in place and he said, and I quote:

I'm concerned about that. That's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister come clean with the people of Saskatchewan? Will he explain why Broe industries is two months behind arranging finances to support its end of the ethanol deal? And due to the delay, what is the exact date that the construction is now expected to take place at Belle Plaine?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well what I said and what other ministers before me said well before February, Mr. Speaker, was that what we would be most concerned about and what we were most concerned about was that Sask Party opposition, Mr. Speaker, who kept interfering all the way through, causing all kinds of problems, Mr. Speaker. That's what we said was our greatest concern. That was our biggest concern.

Mr. Speaker, they have ethanol development in areas that they represent, but what do they do on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, but attack it. This is jobs in rural Saskatchewan, partnering with the communities, and working with producers in our areas, Mr. Speaker. They should just get on board, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has presented this deal with Broe industries as a public-private partnership and they've stated that Broe is responsible for financing 60 per cent of the three ethanol plants that are part of the package. But in response to a question about the financing Broe is trying to arrange for their share of the deal, the minister told the media yesterday, and I quote:

We are trying to negotiate the best deal that we possibly can negotiate for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Broe is a private company and according to the information presented to the public by this NDP government so far, Broe is supposed to finance their part of the deal without other government assistance. So why is the NDP government part of Broe's financing arrangements?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain this and assure the Saskatchewan taxpayers that the NDP government will not be helping Broe secure financing by providing Broe with loans or equity investment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm not sure exactly what perspective that member was asking that question from because it was from all over the place.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say this again and let me be absolutely clear, Mr. Speaker, that we will not — I repeat, not — move ahead until we feel we have the best deal in place for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what it sounds like they now want.

They want us just to leap into the deal and start construction, Mr. Speaker. We will not do that, Mr. Speaker. We've laid out the rules, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly what we'll do. We'll get the best deal we can possibly get for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, what the Saskatchewan Party wants is they want that government to come clean and tell the truth for once.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, after the SPUDCO fiasco revealed the government mired in deceit and in betrayal for six years, this NDP government — and specifically this Premier — claimed that he would be forthcoming and accountable with the taxpayers about their business deals. Yet we have a new deal the NDP has signed with Broe industries to develop three plants in Saskatchewan and the NDP government is refusing to come clean on the details.

Mr. Speaker, there must have been some initial costs incurred by CIC to launch the deal, secure the site, and begin initial work on the project, yet there's absolutely no mention of the ethanol deal with Broe in CIC's annual report which was tabled just this week, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister explain why the ethanol project was not mentioned in that report if they're so accountable and how much CIC has already spent on any costs related to the launch or the start up of the Belle Plaine plant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I guess the reason there's nothing in there is I drove past there not too long ago and I didn't see anything built there yet, Mr. Speaker. So I think when something takes place then it will be reported in the annual statement.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that the deal said there would be a 60/40 equity partnership, Mr. Speaker. That stands. We will get the best deal that we can for the people of Saskatchewan, for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, people across our province are supportive of the ethanol industry. They want it to move ahead. But we're going to get the best deal, unlike what it sounds like those members in the Sask Party now want us to do — to just jump into the deal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Investments

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can you believe this? Can you believe this? The minister is saying that the opposition wants them to jump into a deal that's not ready yet. It's this government that had the big revival meeting in Belle Plaine a few months ago — the deal was done. They bused in school kids; the Premier bused in school kids to announce this deal. They gave the impression that this deal was done, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the minister is not being square with this legislature or the people of the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, to that same minister with respect to the investment they have made in agdealer.com, we have a few more questions. In 2001-2002 the NDP paid \$8.1 million for agdealer.com. Will the minister tell the legislature how much money Ag Dealer has lost in 2001 and 2002, and what was the net value of agdealer.com's assets when they were transferred to SaskTel's subsidiary, DirectWest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm going to ask . . . answer his first question first. Please tell me and this Assembly, anybody, what that party would have said if we wouldn't have had a public announcement announcing the details of the ethanol deal, Mr. Speaker. Please tell me what they would say then. They'd say we were hiding something.

So what do we do? We have a very public announcement, Mr. Speaker, outlining the details of the project, exactly what we were going to do step by step by step.

Now I'd said yesterday very publicly, Mr. Speaker, that I had hoped that financing would be in place by now. It's not in place yet, Mr. Speaker. We're hopeful and we're optimistic, Mr. Speaker, but we will not get into a deal until we think we have the best deal in place for the people of Saskatchewan, for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister tell the legislature how much money agdealer.com lost for SaskTel in 2001-2002, and what was the net value of the assets of agdealer.com when it was transferred over to SaskTel's subsidiary, DirectWest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, we disclosed yesterday — because we took over ownership of Ag Dealer in 2002 and we own 100 per cent of it — and we disclosed yesterday publicly exactly what the losses were in 2001, Mr. Speaker. In 2001 that company was rolled into DirectWest.

Mr. Speaker, this party, the Sask Party, continually criticizes all of the investments that we've made. Mr. Speaker, they refer to and don't even seem to understand what book value means. Mr. Speaker, the value of that company, if we use the model that Bell Canada does, if we use the value, the model that Bell Canada does, based on revenues of the company, it's probably worth somewhere between 130 and \$150 million.

Mr. Speaker, they would say, don't get into the deal; don't get into the deal.

We've got something that's worth something for the people of Saskatchewan that can provide great service to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, SaskTel paid \$8.1 million for 100 per cent of this company in 2001. Now we know also, Mr. Speaker, that the assets of this company were transferred to DirectWest in the year under review, in 2002.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question is pretty simple. We want the minister to confirm . . . Will the minister confirm that SaskTel did pay \$8.1 million for agdealer.com but then transferred it — transferred the net assets of the company — to DirectWest for a grand total of \$227,000?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I want to

speak briefly on the issue of disclosure because they say we haven't disclosed the information. Mr. Speaker, I want to read to you from the auditor's report. It says this:

In my opinion, because the accounting principles used to prepare these financial statements are inappropriate, these combined financial statements do not represent fairly the financial position of the government of the province of Saskatchewan as at (guess when?) March 31, 1991, and the results of its operations and the changes in its financial position for the year then ended.

Mr. Speaker, that's when they were in government, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what the auditor says now. Here's what the auditor says now. He says, about SaskTel:

In our opinion, these consolidated financial statements present fairly . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, here's what the Provincial Auditor says about SaskTel now. It says:

In our opinion, these consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the corporation as at December 31, 2002 and the results of the operations and its cash flows for the year then ended (Mr. Speaker).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was simple. The NDP paid 8.1 million for agdealer.com, but they recorded it in the consolidated statements of DirectWest . . . They recorded the assets now worth \$227,000 in two short years. That's what the taxpayers lost, Mr. Speaker, almost \$8 million. We shouldn't expect, though, that the minister would answer the question, or anyone on that side would. This is the government that decided to hold back information from the people in terms of SPUDCO and the bingo scandal, Mr. Speaker.

So let's try one more. Let's try another investment the NDP made through SaskTel in a Vancouver-based telco called Navigata. In 2001, Mr. Speaker, they bought this particular company for 34 and they've invested 34 million taxpayer dollars.

Will the minister tell us how much money the NDP has lost on Navigata since SaskTel bought this Vancouver telco in 2001?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, you know, this is almost laughable. On a daily basis they say, you don't disclose anything, and on a daily basis they recite from our documents details, details that we have provided for the public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They say we don't provide information, Mr. Speaker.

We provide now, Mr. Speaker, semi-annual reports, Mr.

Speaker, out of Crown Investments Corporation. We disclose through significant transactions, Mr. Speaker, through Crown Corporations Committee, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a whole host of venues, Mr. Speaker, and avenues where there are, Mr. Speaker — is, I should say — information provided about our Crowns and subsidiaries to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

They couldn't even ask these questions if we didn't provide that level of detail. And we should and will do more, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well then, Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister answer the questions? Why won't he answer any of these questions for the House? It shouldn't shock anybody. This same minister, along with the Premier and the former minister of SPUDCO, travelled out to Belle Plaine a few months ago and left a clear impression with Saskatchewan people that these ethanol deals were done. They're not done, Mr. Speaker.

This is the same government that said they had a public-private partnership on SPUDCO, and blew \$28 million. Did they have a partnership? No, they didn't.

This is the same government that said, we lost only 6.2 million in bingo, when they actually lost \$8 million, Mr. Speaker.

It's the same government that wouldn't give us the facts on Retx until the information was dragged out of them.

And now on Navigata, the same tactics are being used by the NDP. Mr. Speaker, will the minister please confirm for the House that 34 million taxpayers' dollars have poured into this company? What is the status of the investment and how much has been lost?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, that member attacked me, Mr. Speaker, a few short days ago, Mr. Speaker. That member stood in this House and launched into a tirade, Mr. Speaker, about SaskTel International's investment in Honolulu, Mr. Speaker. Wasn't even close to the truth, Mr. Speaker, wasn't even close. And today and yesterday, he refers to investments in Palm Springs . . . (inaudible) . . . out in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, that there was never any investment in Palm Springs. And I'll say it again publicly — no investment. Well they yell from their seats, Mr. Speaker.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, when SaskTel first invested in Craig Wireless, it was contemplated — I say contemplated — by the parent company an investment in Palm Springs. You know what they did? They decided that the investment was better in Canada. They never did one bit of business. They moved it all back to Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Now, Mr. Speaker, earlier last week, earlier last week the minister confirmed that taxpayers have taken it on the

chin . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the minister confirmed for taxpayers that thanks to the NDP's ingenious business acumen, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers had lost \$85 million in out-of-province investments — when he confirmed that — you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? He said, well the reason for that is that most of these investments are start-up ventures, Mr. Speaker. That's what he said.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we go through the annual report, we see that this investment, Navigata — Navigata — is marked, is asterisked in the 2002 annual report as a current start-up venture. But, Mr. Speaker, on page 1 of Navigata's actual annual report, here's what the president of the company says, and I quote. An established . . . Navigata is, I quote:

. . . an established entity that has operated a telecommunications business in Canada for 40 years.

Forty years. So who is right? Is it the SaskTel annual report that asterisked this as a start-up venture and the minister highlighting this as a start-up venture, or is the president of this money-losing adventure actually right when he says it's a 40-year business? Will the minister tell the House which it is?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, that member knows — and all he's doing is attacking our Crowns again, Mr. Speaker — that member knows that Navigata has fundamentally been completely restructured. And for all intents and purposes, it is a new company starting business in Alberta, Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, and continues on in BC (British Columbia). It's a fundamentally new company, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to go back, Mr. Speaker, though, again, and I'm going to close with this, Mr. Speaker. When they continue to attack our Crowns, I refer to the auditor's statement, Mr. Speaker, of 1991 where he says that you essentially cannot — and he cannot, Mr. Speaker — account for the statements. They are absolutely inappropriate, Mr. Speaker.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I close by saying this, Mr. Speaker. He says in January 28, 2003: in our opinion these consolidated financial statements present fairly in all material respects the financial position of the corporation as at December 31, 2002.

I ask the people of Saskatchewan to contrast, Mr. Speaker, what they did in the 1980s and early 1990s compared to what we've done, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm extremely pleased to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 150.

The Speaker: — Response to 150 has been submitted.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Public Ownership of Electrical Utilities

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks I will be moving a motion to the effect that we in this Assembly recognize it is in the best interests — and sometimes as an Assembly and as members we purport to speak in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan — that we believe it's in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan to have continued public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, and electrical retail markets, and thereby and in this way limit the negative impacts of uncertain supply and higher prices that can result from electrical deregulation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might try — try is the right word — to explain deregulation if I can in the few minutes that I have here. But in doing so I might begin or take it from the perspective of explaining the system that we have in Saskatchewan now, where we have a regulated public system, Mr. Speaker.

What we have is a publicly owned company, a utility, SaskPower, which can be described as a vertically integrated company — a company that does a number of things in the area of electrical production, transmission, and supply. It is one company that purports to do everything in the area of electricity.

It produces power, it generates power, Mr. Speaker, from a number of different sites. SaskPower operates three coal-fired power stations. They have seven hydroelectric stations, four natural gas stations, and nine wind turbines, Mr. Speaker, at Cypress. And in this way they have a capacity of 3,051 megawatts of electricity and it has a further 221 megawatts of contracted capacity from the cogeneration plant that's located at the upgrader in Lloydminster and also coming to us from the SunBridge wind power project near Cypress Hills.

SaskPower also maintains more than 152 kilometres of power lines.

So SaskPower produces almost all of the power that is used in Saskatchewan from its own plants. It's part of one company, publicly owned company.

Then that power is then transmitted and distributed to customers throughout Saskatchewan, large customers — to wholesale customers in the city of Saskatoon and the city of Swift Current and other large industrial customers throughout Saskatchewan — and then to retail customers throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. So that's another aspect of the company, that it transmits and distributes this power that it, the company, produces, Mr. Speaker.

Finally SaskPower sells the power it has to retail customers — whether again it's large industrial customers or whether it's individual homeowners. SaskPower is the visible face of electricity in Saskatchewan. For most people it sells the power. That's its retail arm.

So there are, if you like, three aspects — some might say four aspects — of SaskPower's operation, which is a publicly owned

company.

One is electrical production, Mr. Speaker, which is almost exclusively produced by publicly owned facilities. The other — we have transmission to distribute this power from the power plants to the marketplace, and that transmission, those transmission lines, those distribution lines are also owned by the company, are part of public ownership. And finally, the sale to customers; the retail arm is again a publicly owned company.

So I wanted to lay that out because when you start to talk about deregulation, then you start to talk about production on the one hand, transmission on the other hand, retail sales on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to lay that out.

I also wanted to point out that when a company such as SaskPower, a publicly owned company, produces power and sells power it has to justify its prices to the people. In a complete competitive market prices are set by the competition in the marketplace. But because SaskPower doesn't have competition then there's a question of how do you set the prices, how will you know whether those prices are realistic prices that should be charged to its customers?

The process that we have, and it's a similar process in most jurisdictions, is that we have public control over the prices. The prices at the end of the day have to be set by the cabinet. Now the cabinet could I suppose set prices that are grossly unrealistic. They could set them very, very high. But at the end of the day the cabinet, the government has to justify that to the people of the province. They could also set the prices unrealistically low and thereby affect the bottom line, but again they would have to justify that to the people of the province.

But there is a process when SaskPower wants to have an increase, and I realize that the members of the opposition are ideologically predisposed to a different system, Mr. Speaker, which is a complete and total competitive market. But the system that we have here is a system whereby SaskPower has to justify the prices that it wants for its electricity to the people of Saskatchewan.

In recent years we've added another layer of review, which is the rate review panel, Mr. Speaker, so that the public hopefully can have greater confidence in the prices when they do come down and that are set by the government.

That's not to say that the government can control all of the factors that influence prices. For example, I point out again that we have seven hydroelectric generating stations. In a year where there might be low water flow and we cannot obtain as much hydroelectric power as we would like and we need to rely more on coal or natural gas — and the prices of those commodities tend to be high because we don't own those commodities — then the price that needs to be charged to customers might increase.

Now those are not factors that the government can control. There might have been a day when we could control those things, Mr. Speaker, because there was a time when we actually owned the coal that we used for our plants. There was a time when SaskPower owned vast natural gas reserves that could be tapped for its production. But we don't and so the government

really can't control those prices.

But we can again . . . or we do demand that any increases in prices be justified, Mr. Speaker. So that's the way the system works, Mr. Speaker.

Then the question is, why deregulation? I think many of the people who are watching this will know that over the last 20 years or so, 15 years, we've seen a move towards privatization in many aspects of government enterprise throughout North America and other parts of the world. We've seen an offloading of public services back to the private sector.

People will remember for example proposition 13 in California where there is an arbitrary measure set as to the amount of property tax that could be charged. Municipalities looked to reduce their costs through loading services on to the private sector. It means that people then had to pay private companies for the service that hitherto had been paid as property tax to the municipalities. That didn't necessarily benefit everyone but it might have benefited some large companies, Mr. Speaker.

People will know that we've had deregulation in the telephone marketplace. And if you're someone that never uses long distance, you might question whether this is in your interest to have this changed. But if you're someone that uses a lot of long distance, well it might be in your interest to have had that deregulation, Mr. Speaker.

In Canada too, we've seen various governments — whether it's in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario — take steps in the direction of privatization and deregulation. Alberta for example sold off their government-owned liquor stores to the private sector. They also sold off the interest they had in the Alberta telephone system so that it could form a new company called TELUS.

The Manitoba government, under the premiership of Gary Filmon, Conservative premier, sold off the Manitoba Telephone System to private interests. The Ontario government has moved or has tried to move in the direction of privatizing and deregulating Ontario Hydro but has pulled back somewhat because of opposition to these moves by the people of Ontario.

(14:30)

What is electrical deregulation? How does it work? Essentially, Mr. Speaker, it means that in a deregulated jurisdiction anyone can generate power and sell it for whatever price a buyer is prepared to pay for it. The basic idea is that like any other market item, supply will be produced to meet demand and competition will keep the prices down. The problem though, Mr. Speaker, is that electricity is not a product like other products.

Recently there was a paper produced by the Competition Bureau of Canada in looking at the question of competition in electrical production in Alberta. And they make a number of very good points about, electricity is not something you can store and save up for a rainy day. Electricity is . . . If you're in short supply, you can't just instantaneously bring on new generation capacity instantaneously like that. You need a long lead time to develop new electrical plants.

So there's some real question as to whether electricity can be treated as a commodity like we treat other commodities, Mr. Speaker, that might be bought and sold in an open marketplace.

What we have seen in other jurisdictions where deregulation has been implemented is that we have had as a result uncertainty of supply. We also have seen higher prices in many of those jurisdictions.

Some would say it's because of the uncertainty in the new marketplace. Some would say it's because of too many additional actors in the food chain, if you like, too many different new private interests all that have to . . . that all have to do their own profit-taking, and that this has increased the price of those commodities, Mr. Speaker.

But on this point and others, I hope that we will hear more from my colleagues and certainly we hope to hear from the opposition members of the House on this important topic. They have been very silent, you know, Mr. Speaker, on this topic of deregulation. They don't directly address where it is that they stand on the question of electrical deregulation.

Would they for example be prepared to entertain competition in production for our electricity in Saskatchewan from private interests, and therefore have private power production, Mr. Speaker? Would . . . and competition with SaskPower? Or would they agree that production needs to be sold to and through SaskPower, Mr. Speaker?

Where do they stand on the question of ownership of transmission and distribution lines throughout the province? Do they feel that that should continue to have public ownership, Mr. Speaker?

Where do they stand on the retail market? I'm sure on that one they, at the end of the day, will probably agree that it's in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan to continue to have SaskPower involved in the retail sale of electricity, but there are many other aspects of what SaskPower does and we'd be looking forward . . . we will be looking forward to hearing their comments in this matter, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I would now move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the member for Regina Northeast:

That this Assembly recognize it is in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan to have continued public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, and electrical retail markets, and thereby limit the negative impacts of uncertainty in supply and higher prices resulting from electrical deregulation.

And I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to second the motion put forward by my colleague, the member from Regina Victoria.

And I think it's a very timely motion because as we unfold in the process of this House . . . and it is the opportunity I suppose

for the opposition to put forward their position on deregulation, which in reality is privatization of our Crown corporations but in particular of SaskPower.

I believe it . . . if one looks around, one will see that deregulation is not a brand new issue at all but it has . . . Deregulation of the power industry has been attempted in other jurisdictions such as Australia, Great Britain, and many states in the United States.

One that comes to the forefront in my research has been the state of California, where if one does a little looking around and researching on deregulation of the power industry in California, one would soon come across a very extensive report done by David Freeman. Mr. Freeman is the chairman of the California consumer power conservation authority. Mr. Freeman is an expert in electrical production, electrical distribution, and deregulation. Mr. Freeman, formerly was the chief executive office of the New York Power Authority and before that the chief executive officer of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Mr. Freeman who experienced first-hand the results of deregulation of the power industry in California that took place in 1996, deregulation of its power structure. It was interesting in Mr. Freeman's report that the good folks of California were led down the very rosy path of the belief and of the promotion of the promise that competition was better than a monopoly in the energy business — much rhetoric, much very similar rhetoric as we hear from the opposition benches day in and day out.

The good folks of California were promised that residential consumers would enjoy a 20 per cent reduction in power rates. The reality was that the residential rates went up 40 per cent.

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — With apologies to the member speaking, with permission to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I noted some familiar faces up there or maybe I should say notorious Saskatchewan faces up there in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. We have with us today, Jeremy Morgan, who is the CEO (chief executive officer) of the Arts Board; Guy Vanderhaeghe which I'm sure he needs no introduction, winner of many literary awards and recognition; and Skip Kutz who has been a very active musician for years and involved in the AFM (American Association of Musicians) and other organizations.

So I just ask everyone in the legislature to join with me today in welcoming them to our legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Public Ownership of Electrical Utilities (continued)

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just some other indications of the impact upon California people of deregulation. It was during that same period of time, prior to the deregulation that took place in 1996, small-business people in California were promised that their rates would drop 15 to 20 per cent. The reality was the small-business rates increased 40 to 50 per cent.

Industry and commerce accounts and operators and investors were promised lower power rates. The reality was that industry and consumer rates increased 75 per cent. On top of the increase in rates, particularly affecting industry and commerce, was the rolling brownouts as a result of the inability for their power utilities to provide a constant and assured supply of power.

Power. Electricity is the juices of jobs. In 1996, the jobs in the California power industry alone was 20,000. Today, or in 2002 when this report came out, those jobs were now 4,000.

Lower power costs build the economy. Lower power costs attract economic development, attract investments. Lower power costs helps industry to be competitive in the commercial marketplace. But when you put your lifeblood of the economy and of our society in the hands of the private sector, for-profit-only companies, the results are power shortages and higher prices. This has been proven in many states in the United States such as California and Pennsylvania.

In fact in Pennsylvania today, Pennsylvania needs less power because industry is moving out. Industry is moving out of that state simply because they can move to a state or other jurisdictions where they can receive cheaper power but, most importantly, reliable power supply.

Private companies that have the responsibility to people . . . pardon me. The private companies that have no responsibility to people have no responsibility to keeping the lights on. A private company looks at only maximizing profits. In fact, power shortages is desired by the private companies. It's an opportunity for them to drive the prices up.

Deregulation is a dark curtain of secrecy that the private companies hide behind. You can't see their books. You don't have any idea if they're cooking their books or not. You have no idea if they're ripping off the consumer or not. Public utilities, on the other hand, have their books open. The public sees what is going on in a public utility.

Under deregulation or privatization, power costs go up, not only to residents but also to small businesses. But to corporations and industry, rates also go up making industry less competitive in the commercial marketplace.

Increases in power costs means local people have less money to spend. It means less tourism. It means industry less competitive, which means less jobs.

It also means that government services such as hospitals, schools, municipalities, libraries, kids' hockey rinks, curling rinks — all will incur higher electrical costs.

Twenty-two states in the US (United States) have looked at electrical deregulation, and have shelved it because deregulation

simply does not work in the best interests of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we enjoy an assured supply of electrical services provided to us by SaskPower. But it also . . . what we enjoy is very competitive rates. But all of that is spent right here in Saskatchewan. We have competitive rates and assured supply, but we also have . . . in SaskPower, in Saskatchewan, we have several thousands of jobs of SaskPower workers right across this province.

In Regina, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is responsible for the creation of over 1,000 jobs, right here in the city of Regina, many of them head office jobs — in fact 725 of them are head office jobs. That revenue is staying right here in the city of Regina, right here in our province of Saskatchewan.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, I, along with a couple of my colleagues — the member from Dewdney and the member from Regina Victoria — we had the opportunity to travel out to Alberta and to do some first-hand investigation as to what effect deregulation has had on Alberta, Alberta businesses, and Alberta residences.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was almost horrifying, when we had the opportunity to meet with the mayor of Lethbridge, when he related his experience of deregulation.

But while in Lethbridge, we also had the opportunity to spend some time with the owner and a manager of the Lethbridge Iron Works which really had upon his business — which is a family-owned business, which has been in his family for over 100 years now; in fact that company was incorporated before Alberta was even a province — it had a tremendous, tremendous negative effect on his company. And I have copies of letters here — and I wish time would allow me, Mr. Speaker, to go through them — but copies of letters that he wrote to Ralph Klein, the Premier of Alberta, clearly describing the very negative effect that deregulation had on his family corporation.

(14:45)

At one point in time he had to elicit the support of his workers so that they would work the midnight shift. They shut their production down during the day and did their production at night because that was during that period of time they could acquire energy at a rate that allowed them to stay profitability . . . and maintain profitability.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to just express once again to the Assembly what great pride I have in seconding this motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter this debate and I want to indicate that we'll be moving an amendment to the motion. And I'd like to read it into the record at this time and I'll move the motion formally at the end of the . . . at the conclusion of my remarks, Mr. Speaker. The amendment is as follows:

That all words after "recognize" be deleted and the following substituted:

that the NDP government, despite its rhetoric, has initiated the end to monopoly public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, and electrical retail markets, and has further initiated the first steps towards electrical deregulation.

So that the whole motion then would read, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly recognize that the NDP government, despite its rhetoric, has initiated the end to monopoly public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, and electrical retail markets, and has further initiated the first steps towards electrical deregulation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in support of that amendment, I want to make a few remarks that detail exactly how it is — how it is, Mr. Speaker — that the NDP has in fact initiated the end to monopoly public ownership of electrical production and how it is this NDP government that has indeed taken us down these first few steps towards a deregulated electrical market.

An Hon. Member: — The NDP did that?

Mr. Wall: — Well several members are already incredulous at the fact that it is this NDP government whose rhetoric seems to say something and whose actions say something else. It's this NDP government supported, when he was in cabinet I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, by the very member that moved the motion — supported by him. It's this NDP government that has taken the province down the first steps towards deregulation.

Mr. Speaker, in fact on June 28, 2001, the Government of Saskatchewan issued a press release. And here's what it's . . . here's the slug line or the title of the press release. It says, "More opportunities to buy and sell power."

That's what it says.

This press release details, Mr. Speaker, how this government is deregulating the markets for Swift Current and Saskatoon. The cities of Saskatoon and the cities of Swift Current, because of forethought on the part of their forefathers several decades ago, retained the rights to their own electrical utility. These cities owned their own electrical utility to generate income from that electricity. And up until now they were restricted to the purchase of the bulk power, if you will, Mr. Speaker, from SaskPower.

So the city of Swift Current light and power department and the city of Saskatoon light and power department went ahead and purchased their electricity from SaskPower; they were forced to. That's a regulated market. They were forced to buy from SaskPower.

June of . . . I beg your pardon. June 28, 2001 the government introduces a Bill, Bill 9, in this legislature, that we debated, that did what, Mr. Speaker? That deregulated the supply of electricity to those electrical utilities. So the city of Swift Current and the city of Saskatoon can now source electricity from some other power company other than SaskPower. And use what to get the electricity to Swift Current and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker? To use, well, the transmission systems of SaskPower, Mr. Speaker.

That's exactly what this government did. So the members opposite — the members opposite — put forward this motion that's full of rhetoric about deregulating the market, the electrical market in Saskatchewan, when it is their own government, Mr. Speaker, that has actually taken the first steps toward deregulation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member will know that IBEW recently, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, have sent out some questionnaires to MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and we responded to that, Mr. Speaker; we responded to it immediately. We sent a letter to the IBEW to let them know where we were on deregulation.

And we laid it out quite clearly in that letter, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party in government — and that'll happen in about eight months, Mr. Speaker — but the Saskatchewan Party in government has got no interest at all in moving beyond what the NDP have already done in terms of deregulating the market here in the province of Saskatchewan. That's the clear position of the party as communicated to the IBEW.

But I think what's less clear, Mr. Speaker, is this government's intentions. What's less clear is what the NDP are going to do in terms of this issue.

You see they've also deregulated the sourcing of . . . production of electricity in the province of Saskatchewan, which is also part of the member's motion. Because it's the NDP government that is in fact now cogenerating at projects like PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.) Cory. It's this government that is allowing the private sector, a company called SunBridge, to generate electricity — a private company generating electricity in the province of Saskatchewan, at a wind farm in the member from Cypress Hills' riding — and SaskPower buys it.

I can't believe the hypocrisy of this motion and of those members opposite who would say, Mr. Speaker, who would say that deregulation and the deregulating of not just the supply but also of the . . . removing the monopoly of producing power in the province is a terrible thing. They would say that, Mr. Speaker, when it's the NDP government that has done all of those things in the province of Saskatchewan.

And that is what frankly is driving voters crazy in the province. They either don't tell you information — whether it's the bingo scandal or SPUDCO or their investments at SaskTel that lost 60 million plus — they either won't give you information, or when they do give you information, Mr. Speaker, it flies against exactly what they're doing. They'll say one thing and then they'll do the other thing exactly, Mr. Speaker.

And the member who just spoke, the member for Regina Northeast, also spoke to the importance of assuring supply so that SaskPower workers can continue to work here in the province and we could continue to generate electricity, when at the Crown Corporations Committee — and there's members I see across the way that were there — at a recent Crown Corporations Committee hearing, we asked SaskPower officials, well what are your options in view of Kyoto? What are your options for supplying electricity to the province of Saskatchewan?

Now remember, this is supposedly the party that's worried about assuring a Saskatchewan supply and keeping Saskatchewan men and women working, presumably at places like Coronach and in the Estevan area. And do you know what SaskPower said that their option was, Mr. Speaker? One of the key options they're considering is just buying more hydro power from Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. That's what they said. Because of course hydroelectricity is much more Kyoto friendly than coal-generated electricity.

So apparently one of the options at SaskPower, on the part of a party that's concerned about assuring supply and the welfare of SaskPower workers, of IBEW members, one of the options they're considering would seem to be replacing, replacing electricity generated in Saskatchewan, electricity that employs IBEW and SaskPower workers here in the province, replacing that with electricity generated in Manitoba — generation, Mr. Speaker, that employs Manitoba electrical workers, IBEW members in Manitoba. That's what they said in Crown Corporations Committee.

So imagine, imagine on those three counts, Mr. Speaker, why anyone in the province would take this member's motion seriously in this House. Because he says quite clearly that they oppose the end of a monopoly public ownership of electrical production, when their government has done that — wind power and cogeneration at PCS Cory.

They say they oppose the end of monopoly use of transmission systems when their own government, SaskPower, in 2001, is going to allow deregulate transmission systems insofar as those systems supply the cities of Saskatoon and the city of Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, and that they are worried about electrical deregulation.

Well if the member for Victoria and the member for Northeast and others that'll speak to this are worried about deregulation, they ought to whisper in the ear of the minister responsible for SaskPower who is busy deregulating the electrical market in the province of Saskatchewan.

It's absolutely amazing that this government would propose this motion. They are prepared to sacrifice Saskatchewan jobs for Manitoba jobs in the electrical industry. They're deregulating, they're deregulating the market here in the province of Saskatchewan already. And they're also ending the monopoly electrical production in the province. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we're moving this amendment, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That all the words after "recognize" be deleted and the following substituted:

that the NDP government, despite its rhetoric, has initiated the end to monopoly public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, and electrical retail markets, and has further initiated the first steps towards electrical deregulation.

And given the facts, we know, Mr. Speaker, that all members — government and opposition — will want to support this amendment. This amendment represents the truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to agree with my colleague from Swift Current. It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, that the backbench members opposite would present this particular motion to the House condemning the deregulation of the power industry in Saskatchewan. It's not surprising; it's not surprising. But, Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder what's going on.

We have a news release here that says, Saskatchewan Government Executive Council. Now I can understand how secretive this Executive Council is; how secretive the cabinet is that they can't even tell their own colleagues the information, let alone the truth, Mr. Speaker. So you certainly can understand why the backbenchers would be completely in the dark on this. But, Mr. Speaker, this news release of June 28, 2001, SaskPower no. 511, it says: "More Opportunities to Buy & Sell Power."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're deregulating the power industry in Saskatchewan. So how is it, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite, the member from Regina Victoria and the member from Regina Northeast, don't know about these things? Well it's because their cabinet, their colleagues that sit in front of them in the House, keep them in the dark, Mr. Speaker, just as they try — they try unsuccessfully but they do try — to keep the public in the dark, Mr. Speaker, while presenting all the rhetoric about how terrible it is, Mr. Speaker, that you have to have continued public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, and electrical retail markets, Mr. Speaker.

And yet that's not what the cabinet and the government are doing, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can certainly see that they're not telling the backbenchers. Because obviously if they were telling the backbenchers, they would not have presented a motion such as this, Mr. Speaker.

You know, but I don't know how the backbenchers can be so ignorant of the facts. You take a look, Mr. Speaker. Husky Oil at Lloydminster is involved in a cogeneration project with this government. And fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government was running out of power, running out of power until Husky came forward and said, we will build a generation plant and we will sell that power to SaskEnergy. And that's a private company, Mr. Speaker — capital p, private. Even though Tommy Douglas was a director of that company, Mr. Speaker, it's still a private company.

And they're selling power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the province of Saskatchewan. It sure sounds to me like that's privatized power, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps there's some other word for it that the members opposite would like to use, but at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, that power company pays taxes on the profits they generate. That's right. They pay taxes in property. They pay sales taxes on their purchases. They pay income taxes to the province of Saskatchewan and that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a private company just in case the members opposite have never heard of making a profit and paying taxes.

(15:00)

But it's not the only one, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have the

Cory situation at the Cory potash mine. They're a cogeneration. We have SunBridge out in the Gull Lake area, Mr. Speaker. That's also a private enterprise. And it's amazing, it's amazing that all of those members opposite stand in their places to condemn the very things that their government is doing and they make it sound like they know nothing about it... (inaudible interjection) ... Yes, that's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite are in an information brownout.

Mr. Speaker, as the member from Swift Current pointed out, that in Crown Corporations Committee when asked what would happen in the case of this government's power generation plants at Estevan, at Coronach, and the coal emission, the gas emissions from those coal plants... If there needed to be some corrections, they would buy power from Manitoba. That's what their options are.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's take a different tack a little bit here. What would happen if Saskatchewan would grow? Let's say Saskatchewan grew by 10 per cent over the next 10 years. You know it's an amazing concept that the NDP say is statistically impossible to have happen. And yet we just had Agrivision come forward in today's news saying that over the next 30 years they believe the province can grow by 100 per cent — double in size.

But let's just say 10 per cent over 10 years. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's going to take electricity. It's going to take electricity to provide services to those people and to those businesses that they're going to generate in this province. What plans does this government have to provide that additional generation?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have no plan. Their only plan to defend jobs in Saskatchewan, to defend the businesses in Saskatchewan, to buy Saskatchewan products, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to buy Manitoba hydro or wherever else they can get it.

Are they going to buy nuclear energy from the new plant they're going to put in in New Brunswick? I don't know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there's no plans to generate it in Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker... Deputy Speaker, they are the ones who are deregulating the electrical environment in Saskatchewan.

Their own press releases clearly outline it: that there will be production in Saskatchewan, there will be transmission over SaskPower's lines of privatized electricity, Mr. Speaker, and there will be private retailing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of power in Swift Current and Saskatoon. Those two entities will retail electricity in this province outside of SaskPower, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And IPSCO, largest consumer of electricity in this province, also has the ability to buy electricity outside of this province. They may buy and they have access to the open access transmission tariff as well, as outlined in this news release. They can buy power outside of Saskatchewan, have it transmitted over SaskPower's lines for their own use in this province.

Now that put them in a very unique position since they

represent I believe it's between 12 and 18 per cent of SaskPower's electrical consumption. They went to SaskPower and said: here's what we can buy it for on the continental market; what are you offering? Well SaskPower didn't want to lose their largest customer so they made an agreement with them.

Not only was IPSCO doing that, but so did TransCanada PipeLines. They said to SaskPower, either you give us a competitive rate or we're going to put in electrical generation in all of our turbine stations. We'll use natural gas to create our own electricity; we don't need you. Well SaskPower gave them a competitive deal as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to deregulating the electrical environment in Saskatchewan, it's the members opposite that are doing it. They don't want anybody to know about it. They want to hide that under their rhetoric, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They want to hide it, like the minister of Industry and Commerce was doing about the SPUDCO fiasco, they want to keep the public in the dark.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan both has their eyes open and the lights turned on, and they see and know what the members opposite are doing, what this government is doing.

You know if I was a member of the IBEW, I would certainly be talking to the members opposite. You know there's a number of union leaders back there including the Minister of Labour. I'd want to know what their real stand is. Why are they proposing to buy power from Manitoba Hydro? Why? Where are the job protections that they keep saying that they're providing to the unions?

They're hollow words, just like their hollow words when it comes to their rhetoric on deregulation, just like their hollow words when it comes to their campaign promises. And as their Minister of Finance said, Mr. Deputy Speaker: it's just political rhetoric; you shouldn't really believe it. Well you shouldn't believe in this government either.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very pleased to enter into this debate, and I'd like to clarify a number of statements made by members opposite.

First off I think it's important that the members opposite realize that it doesn't matter what the member from Swift Current, the creator of fiction, says or that what the member from Cannington says. The people of Saskatchewan know full well — they know full well — that it's the right-wing, ideologically driven governments across North America, and in particular in Canada, have deregulated the power industry in their jurisdictions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan know full well what the Conservative government of the 1980s — the Conservative government under which the member from Cannington was elected; the Conservative government that the

member of Swift Current worked for — did to this province. I just want to give a couple of examples of what the right-wing ideology of the 1980s, that those members represent, did to this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we saw the wholesale sell-off of the assets of the people of Saskatchewan. We saw Saskoil sold. We saw the reserves of natural gas sold off. We sold the . . . or we saw the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan sold for just mere pennies of what it was worth, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is the right-wing, ideologically driven governments in Canada that deregulate, sell off, and privatize the people's assets. It's not the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan. It's the right-wing ideology, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the governments that have done it in Canada. The Alberta government, the Alberta government — the land of opportunity in the members' opposite minds, Mr. Deputy Speaker — are the province that have hurt, have hurt their citizens the most.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hear the members opposite yelling because they don't want to hear about what the negative things that right-wing ideological governments have done to hurt their citizens.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they believe quite frankly in privatizing those very assets that are important to the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they'd do it. They may not do it right immediately wholesale, but they will do it by undermining the capability of those assets, of those Crown corporations to work in the global environment in which we now have to work, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And those members opposite can talk about how the IBEW members should be scared of what this government would do. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you they're very scared of what the members of the opposition might do if they ever become a government. They believe it's a very scary future for them.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Alberta experience and some of the things that were said before they deregulated. And they will sound very, very familiar as things that come very often from the mouths of the members opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they'll talk about customers will have choice. We've heard that many times from the members opposite. They'll talk about customers having choice. They will talk about the old system just isn't efficient enough; it just doesn't work. They'll talk about the old regulated system being too costly, that the private sector can do it cheaper, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They will talk about bringing about greater innovation, and new ideologies and new opportunities within the marketplace, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They'll talk about faster growth rate and new generation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they'll talk even about things that people want to hear, about it helping green power, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well, the reality is all those things were said in the province of Alberta, and the reality for the citizens of Alberta was quite different, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now the members opposite can talk all they want about, you know, how the current government's doing this and the current government's doing that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is we have a very efficient power corporation delivering very efficient services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Now the world as the members opposite see it, they want to tell everybody what they want to hear but their real agenda is no different than their agenda from the 1980s. And their agenda in the 1980s was to strip, equity strip from those Crown corporations and sell off Crown-owned assets, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They did it because they ideologically, ideologically disagree with public ownership. They believe that government should not own assets and that people should not run their own corporations, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I want to talk about the conclusions that came out of the Alberta electrical deregulation. Deregulation destroyed the Alberta advantage once enjoyed by electrical consumers, according to those very consumers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The cost to the Alberta economy is measured in billions of dollars — dollars that surpassed the requirements of the annual education budget or a good portion of the health care budget in the province of Alberta. There was absolutely no benefit to the consumers in the charade that resulted in the deregulation of power in the province of Alberta.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite have a right-wing ideology similar to their cousins in Alberta. They often sit and praise the province of Alberta and their right-wing cousins there.

And we see from their own history what they did when they governed in this province during the 1980s where they sold off our assets in Saskoil, they sold off our natural gas assets, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they sold off our potash assets. That had the people of Saskatchewan owned those today, we would be a province thriving in economic activity and those dollars being returned for the benefit of the public of Saskatchewan and reducing — reducing, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the tax burden on the citizens of this province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what happened in Alberta. I have an article here saying Edmonton electricity the most expensive in all of Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to talk about the impact on business, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the party opposite says they are the protectors of business. They talk ideologically about business should drive the economy, and I agree that business should drive the economy but they shouldn't drive the economy out of Alberta. But electrical deregulation played a role in significantly hurting Alberta's business environment and climate.

I want to talk about a business that myself, the member from

Regina Northeast, and the member from Regina Victoria visited in the city of Lethbridge — Lethbridge Ironworks. "Electrical deregulation is increasing . . ." and I'm reading from a press release provided by that company, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Electricity deregulation is increasing costs for Lethbridge Iron Works to the point where the company's continued existence in Alberta is becoming questionable. The company has been in Alberta for 102 years and was incorporated in the city of Regina under the Northwest Territories Act before the province of Alberta (even) came into existence. The provincial government's ill-conceived move to . . . (electrical) deregulation has put . . . (this) company's future in jeopardy.

(15:15)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we met with John Davies, the vice-president and one of the partners in this family-owned company in the city of Lethbridge, Alberta. And what we heard from him is that this 102-year-old company that had thrived in the province, in southern Alberta, city of Lethbridge — had thrived in Alberta — nearly closed its doors as a result of the right-wing ideological plan of the Conservative government of Alberta.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they had to go from operating their plant in two shifts a day, two eight-hour shifts a day during the day and afternoon, to operating just between midnight and 8 in the morning because that was the only time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they could buy electricity cheap enough to operate their factory in the city of Lethbridge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that resulted in workers being laid off, it resulted in families having hardship, and it resulted in that company rethinking their position on a right-wing ideological government in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite can talk all they want about ideology and about what this government might do. But we know fair well that they have already done — they have sold off our natural gas. I want to repeat, they have sold off the citizens' assets in natural gas through Saskoil. They sold off the Potash Corporation. And it is the same individuals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sitting over there who had that same ideology.

And last but not least, I want to spend just a few seconds talking about the impact on rural Alberta because rural Alberta paid even a greater price because of that right-wing ideology than the cities did. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it cost a greater amount of money for that power distribution in rural Alberta and they have fewer options in rural Alberta, and they saw a significant decrease.

So I'm very pleased to support the motion and oppose the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to speak on this topic, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's amazing that the member from Regina Victoria has actually

brought forward this motion, a motion which says that it is a . . . negative impacts of uncertain supply and higher prices resulting from electrical deregulation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very ironic. This government and the three members from the government side obviously are not aware of what its own government is doing. It's really a matter of do as we say, not as we do. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has already started down the road of deregulation in the entire electrical and power industry due to its own actions. A news release, Mr. Speaker, from June 28, 2001, and it says it allows the corporations more opportunities to buy and sell electricity in the North American marketplace. This is a news release by the NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

So it makes one wonder where these members are. Obviously the cabinet or maybe the chairman of the SaskPower hasn't informed the cabinet and the caucus of the NDP-Liberal coalition about what it's doing, what its intentions are. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Dewdney talk about right-wing parties that are really hell-bent on deregulation and the excesses and the problems that it causes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this NDP-Liberal coalition government is well on its way to deregulation in the electrical industry. And it just amazes everyone concerned that they would bring forward this type of motion while their own government is deregulating the electrical industry.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago the government introduced an Act to amend the Power Corporation, and it was Bill No. 9. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 9 paved the way for deregulation of the electrical industry in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to hear the NDP's own rhetoric concerning this whole issue.

Mr. Speaker, one has to ask a question. What are the plans of this government? The Saskatchewan Party has a plan to grow this province by 10,000 people over the next 10 years — 100,000 more people. There's a recent proposal by Agrivision to double the population of this province, Mr. Speaker — double this province. And this government has no plan to grow the province in any way.

And, Mr. Speaker, you would think that the government should have a plan in place now to start building more power generation stations. But what is the government's plan? Well the government's plan is to buy electrical power from Manitoba. Take all those jobs and the millions of dollars of investment and give it to Manitoba, give it to the Manitoba taxpayer — hire people from Manitoba, create jobs in Manitoba.

This government doesn't want to do this in Saskatchewan. It doesn't want to create the jobs in this province. It doesn't want to create the infrastructure in this province to grow Saskatchewan.

And I think this government is really misleading the taxpayers of this province. You can only look at other errors where this government has misled the province. You look at situations like SPUDCO. It took six years before this travesty was brought out into the public. Just recently the mega bingo deal.

And it's amazing that this government has hidden such problems that they've created, and now they're trying to pretend in this motion that they are against deregulation when actually this government is pursuing deregulation in a big way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you can look at other aspects of this Bill. Well already the government has allowed cogeneration projects to take place — the Husky Upgrader, the government's buying power from the Husky Upgrader. You can look at cogeneration projects like Cory potash mine. And you also talk about projects that the Saskatchewan government and SaskPower are involved in as concerning wind power generation that the government is involved with.

Mr. Speaker, we can only . . . we need to look at places like California, like Ontario, and to a certain extent Alberta, where there has been problems and concerns related to deregulation. And, Mr. Speaker, this government must know full well what's happened in California, but they insist on starting to go down that road.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we need to do to grow this province is to keep rates as low as possible, to be competitive with other jurisdictions, and to really encourage investment and growth in this province. And again there's no plan of this government to do any of that in the future.

Mr. Speaker, as we see, the telephone industry is already deregulated in Saskatchewan and now the government's talking about the electrical industry is being deregulated as well. And it's very interesting that the government slid through this piece of legislation that will further deregulate some Saskatchewan industry.

And they say that we don't ask the right questions. Well eventually the NDP government will have to answer to the people of Saskatchewan, whenever the Premier actually has the courage and calls an election, and then this deregulating NDP government will be gone from the power faster than they can privatize another industry, Mr. Speaker.

This deal that is signed by SaskPower called OATT — an open access transmission tariff — well what does it do, Mr. Speaker? Well it opened SaskPower transmission system to the wholesale energy suppliers and users — sounds like deregulations to me. And an open access transmission tariff, in SaskPower's own words, is an open offer of transmission service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before the members opposite stand up in this House and cry blue murder over deregulation, maybe they should call up Frank Hart or at least some of his . . . or ask him to the next cabinet meeting and ask him about what Saskatchewan is already doing concerning deregulation, Mr. Speaker.

As I had stated by its own news release dated back on June 28, 2001, states that SaskPower will be allowed to buy and sell more power. There's your deregulation, Mr. Speaker. It seems the wheeler-dealers within the Crowns are hard at it for the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, another area where the NDP takes . . . likes to

crow about is continued public ownership. Well again it's do as we say, not as we do. And that is the area of wind power as I mentioned before. And who set up the wind power project? A private company, SunBridge. So again the NDP uses the privatization and deregulation bogeyman but in fact the NDP is ahead first into the business of deregulation and privatization.

Let's not make any mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, the NDP under this Premier and this CIC minister are on a vicious deregulation agenda, a sneaky plan to stand up and rant and rave until blue in the face, and deep down inside the NDP deregulation train rolls along, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will not support the motion but I will support the amendment to the motion that reads:

That the NDP government, despite its rhetoric, has initiated the end to monopoly public ownership of electrical production, transmission systems, electrical retail markets, and has further initiated the first steps toward electrical deregulation.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member's time has expired. There will now be a brief 10-minute question and comment period.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at one time SaskPower owned the coal used to power its coal-fired power stations. And at one time it owned the natural gas used to power its natural gas power stations. The Devine PC (Progressive Conservative) government of the 1980s kept SaskPower all right, but sold off the coal and the natural gas.

To the member for Souris-Cannington who was elected as a Devine PC, Mr. Speaker, he had the opportunity to clearly state his opposition to further privatization in his motion. He did not. He sidetracked. Mr. Speaker, why should the people of Saskatchewan trust him in this matter now?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to inform the member opposite, there is no member for Souris-Cannington. It's Cannington, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very proud to represent the constituency of Cannington, even though the members opposite do not recognize its name, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of things that were done wrong in the 1980s and, Mr. Speaker, the government opposite is copying those examples to a T. They are arrogant and out of touch, Mr. Speaker. And the very fact that the member who asked the question was not aware that it was his government that was carrying on the policy of deregulation, Mr. Speaker, only goes to show how much like the Devine Tories that member, who sat here in the House at that time, has become and how he is copying, Mr. Speaker, the very actions that he is condemning. He condemned his own government's action just as he condemned the past.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for months now we've been hearing government members on that side spew the misinformation of, if the Sask Party was in power, when it gets in power, what

they'll do with the Crowns.

I thought this would be a good opportunity for the member . . . And my question is for the member from Swift Current to go on the record to explain to the government side just what the Sask Party would do after the next election and when we are the government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for that tough but fair question. And, Mr. Speaker, unlike, unlike the Minister for CIC who just moments ago outside, he said he didn't have to answer questions in this legislature if he didn't like the opinions of those who were asking the questions, they're going to find today that the answers are going to come forthright from this side of this House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we as Saskatchewan Party in government in about eight months are going to refocus our Crown corporations, including SaskPower. We're going to refocus them on the task at hand. We'll refocus them on the markets here in the province of Saskatchewan. We'll put a moratorium on all of the hare-brained, out-of-province investments that have cost us \$85 million-plus, Mr. Speaker, as a result of this government's actions.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will undertake a major review of the Crown corporations so that going forward, so that going forward we will know that those utilities are maximizing service to the people of the province, that they are contributing positively to the economy, and they are maximizing the taxpayers' return on their investment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:30)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is going to be for the member from Swift Current.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the member from Swift Current that . . . a very simple question. Will he assure the people of this province that at no point, at no point if they form government after the next general election, that they will not sell off a single asset in the distribution, the generation, and the transmission of electricity in this province; that they will all remain publicly owned for the entire period in which they're government?

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well first I want to congratulate the member for Regina Dewdney for understanding that the Saskatchewan Party in very short order will be the government of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — I can also assure that member, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party in government will never say one thing and do the other, Mr. Speaker. They'll never bring a motion into this legislature that condemns deregulation and the privatizing of power production on one hand while all along that government is deregulating and privatizing power

production, Mr. Speaker.

People will be able to expect straight answers from this government in about eight months, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I hope the people of Saskatchewan were watching this. He was asked a very straightforward question concerning his party's intentions with respect to SaskPower. He did not answer the question.

Let me ask the question again. Will you, sir — will you, sir — guarantee to the people of Saskatchewan that you will never, never sell off any of the assets of SaskPower, full stop, period?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I would remind all hon. members to put their comments to the Chair and through the Chair.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now the member for Regina Victoria is acknowledging that the Saskatchewan Party will form the next government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, you're seeing something here that you're going to see a lot of in the coming months in advance of a campaign. You're seeing the NDP around this province telling the people of the province that the Saskatchewan Party has a preconceived plan to privatize any of the major Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

Every single time you hear the NDP say that, you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is a lie, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The platform of the Saskatchewan Party on Crown corporations is clear. It's been clear since we made the case to the Regina Chamber of Commerce a year ago and it's hidden away on something called the Internet. It's on the Web site, Mr. Speaker. I invite the member opposite to check out the policy there.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is to either the member from Regina Victoria, Regina Northeast, Regina Dewdney, or all three if maybe one of them have an answer.

As we see in this motion, Mr. Speaker, they're talking about the ills of deregulation. I'd like to ask one or all three of the members, considering the news release June 28, 2001 concerning more opportunities to buy and sell electricity in the North American marketplace, I want to know why these three members do not know that their own government is deregulating the electrical industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, we're very aware of the issue that the member raises and I hope that the members are aware, the people of Saskatchewan are aware, that SaskPower and the people of Saskatchewan live within a North American marketplace; that we cannot put up walls around this province; that if there are times that we need to purchase power from other jurisdictions — because we may, in the middle of winter,

need to have additional power supply — or if there are opportunities to sell power to other jurisdictions when we have a surplus of power, then we need to be able to enter into the arrangements that are set down by that marketplace outside of the province of Saskatchewan.

This we have done, but it's in a very limited way. We continue to own the transmission lines, Mr. Speaker. That's what we have done. The members would seek to divert us on this but refuse to answer the clear questions that were put to them.

Will you or will you not sell off any part of SaskPower — full stop, period?

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Swift Current. I asked a very straightforward question in which he could have answered yes or no. I asked him on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, if, if — and it's a big if — if they ever formed a government in this province, would they sell off any part of the transmission, distribution, or generation of SaskPower at any time?

A very straightforward answer — yes or no, Mr. Speaker. They're refusing to answer it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, what we're seeing here is part of the NDP's political strategy heading into the next election. It used to be, Mr. Speaker, that they used to scare the people of the province with the health scare. They used to tell them that anybody other than them would close down their hospitals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though it was that government that was closing down hospitals in the province.

Well now we're seeing their latest scare tactic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're seeing their scare tactic. And I want to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we look forward to the election campaign when we will have an opportunity on this side of the House to present our Crown corporation policy and it'll be clear. And every time the people hear them say there's a preconceived plan on this side of the House to do something with the major Crowns, they'll know that it's not the truth. The election will happen and we'll take their place on that side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The 75 minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 3 — Expansion of Child Care Services

The Deputy Speaker: — Order.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and a pleasure for me to rise and speak to the largest expansion of child care services in the history of this province. Our government believes investing in our children is the most important investment that we can make. At the end of my remarks I will place a motion before this Assembly for debate on just this topic.

For there can be no vision in Saskatchewan for a future that is

wide open that does not contemplate a parent's need for safe, affordable child care. To enable all Saskatchewan people the opportunities to contribute to the economy and social life of the province, quality and accessible child care is essential for parents who are working or who are going to school.

The child care announcement does not come in isolation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the strategic focus for a department whose name clearly reflects the future work that needs to occur — Community Resources and Employment. With the strategic focus on economic independence and self-reliance, and on inclusion in families in communities, the budget this year is \$606 million. It will also see initiatives that are complementary to the child care announcement such as affordable housing; the Kids First program, a program for children in vulnerable situations; some added dollars for people with disabilities and their search for employment and for other initiatives to help those with disabilities; the additional monies for those working for community-based organizations; and many of those workers who will be seeking the affordable child care that is presented in this initiative; and the initiatives around high-risk youth. They are the additional supports to families that are committed to by the Department of Community Resources and Employment.

And with this government's commitment to early learning and child care, it allows us to take full advantage of the federal funding dollars that will be available to the provinces.

We also, as the minister responsible has pointed out to us, we play an important leadership role as a province in the national framework that's being developed around a national early childhood care strategy.

This is not just a one-year plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a four-year plan to support attachment to the labour force and for early childhood development at a total cost of \$5.15 million. The newly added capacity will see approximately 7,900 child care spaces supported by an annual budget of over \$22 million.

Now I'd like to spend a few moments on the exciting details of this announcement. As part of this government's commitment to early childhood, early learning, and child care, we are continuing to invest in child care not only this year but into the future. Saskatchewan will be taking full advantage of the federal Early Learning and Child Care funding together with some of our dollars to develop 1,200 new child care spaces over the next four years. There will also be another 131 new spaces for the Kids First program, and this represents an 18 per cent increase in child care spaces for Saskatchewan families by 2006-2007.

We have particularly good news for this year, 2003-2004. Although for the first year the federal funding is very modest, in Saskatchewan we'll be adding \$1 million to enable development of 500 new licensed child care spaces this year. Many of these spaces will be available for low- and modest-income working families or for whom child care subsidies will be available.

In addition there's another \$1 million available to increase child care subsidies an average of \$20 per month per child, effective June 1 of this year. Now this varies of course because it's \$30 a

month for infant care, it's \$25 a month for toddler care, \$20 a month for preschool-aged children, and \$10 a month for school-aged children.

With this, that also means there's an increase in the income levels eligible for funding. So if your family income falls within the requirements of the child care subsidy program, and I'd like to use the following example of the monthly family incomes that qualify for the highest amount of subsidy: \$1,640 or less gross income, with one dependent child; \$1,740 or less gross income, with two dependent children; and \$1,840 or less gross income, with three dependent children.

Using that, an example might be a single parent with one infant using a centre-based care, the monthly child care fee of \$518, maximum subsidy increase of \$30 per month, from \$325 to \$355. The previous cut-off point would have been \$2,940 gross income per month; the new point will be \$3,060 per month.

Another example of this might be for a two-parent family that has one toddler and one preschool child. Their monthly child care fee is \$900. The maximum subsidy increase of \$45 a month is from \$520 to \$565. The previous cut-off point was \$4,020 gross income per month. Now the new cut-off point for that family will be \$4,300 gross income per month.

The reason I highlight that, Mr. Speaker, is people talked about the increase in subsidy be very important. But there were many low-income families who stated that they just didn't meet that cut-off point, and now with the changes that we've announced this year they will qualify for the subsidy level. So there'll be many new families that can qualify for the increases.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I . . . (inaudible) . . . putting a personal face to this, and I think of all of the parent families that have young children in the province, and we want to say to them that the future is wide open. So for example, a single-parent mom or dad who needs to attend school, who's going to be training to become actively involved in the workforce, can now look to the province for increased child care spaces, the number of licensed spaces.

And of course, there are many of the spaces in child care locations in the licensed child cares who didn't wait for our announcement. There were a number of about 250 spaces now that are licensed spaces that will qualify under this program.

(15:45)

Another part of the program of course will be because we're increasing the amount of spaces. There are many child care locations, licensed child care facilities, that will need capital requirements and they'll be able to access money for expansion of their services, expansion of their space.

I know that there were many centres that talked to me about saying, we're providing to the maximum now and, you know, we already had plans. Is this a welcome announcement for our child care facilities.

The other thing I like to mention, of course, is because we've encouraged men and women to seek employment to their fullest potential. And we have now the need for right across the

spectrum of employment, men and women, two parents in the family — some of them needing to work and many of them wanting to seek employment to the fullest extent of their education and their abilities — are looking at these announcements with much favour. They are able to approach the workforce, become part of the Saskatchewan future is wide open as a career, because they've chosen to stay here, to live here, and to work here. And this announcement signals to them a government that's interested in having everyone become part of, not only the economic fabric of the community but the social fabric as well.

We know that . . . And I know through the new Voluntary Sector Initiative that we're undertaking, that many of those people who are employed in the workforce also have a very active life to contribute to the community. And they look at child care as a way that they can — and the child care spaces — to be able to participate in a social fabric of the community as well. And it's very, very important to the future of our province and the life of this province.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my past — I know some might know this but others might not — I was an early childhood educator. And I was someone who helped our community association establish a preschool for two- and three-year-olds. It was a joyful experience then, and I look back very fondly to the days that I was able to have an impact on the lives of very young people in this province.

Any early childhood educator will tell you that one dollar spent very early on in the formative stages of a child's life . . . Many of the connections that are made in impacting on the learning capabilities of children happens before they reach the age of three or four years old. And every dollar that you put into early childhood education initiatives, not only in this program but certainly in some of the steps that the Department of Learning have taken for early childhood, have paid off in benefits fivefold later on in the lives of those very young Saskatchewan people.

So it was very joyful for me to be involved in that establishment of early childhood initiatives. I know of programs like the SCEP (Socialization, Communication and Education Program) Centre and the Early Learning Centre that have been involved for a number of years in this. And they're also looking at this announcement as a very welcome step for this government, and they support this initiative 100 per cent because it also complements what they do for the lives of a community, and the children in our community.

But the day that this announcement was made I was joined by a number of colleagues as we watched the Premier and the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment make this announcement to our province of Saskatchewan. And to see the faces of the children, to hear their voices raised in song, to be able to sit on the floor in the 24-hour child care and talk to the children was just a return to that experience in my life.

Where that announcement was made you would just need to look in the faces of those children and hear them, but also see the beautiful cards that were made by the children and the staff to thank us for the announcements that were made. They are

just priceless treasures that I know the Premier and the minister will have to take with them many, many years to come, and feel a sense of satisfaction that they've played a role in the largest announcement, the best announcement that we could make, for the future is wide open in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — If you want to see that future I would invite each and every one of us to look in to the face of a child. These young people will one day be running our businesses, making the decisions in government, and managing our economy. In those early years from conception to age six that are the most important in establishing a foundation for learning, it's a foundation for the behaviour and the health of the rest of their lives.

I'd also say that I watched the faces of the people who were employed in the child care facility, because they open their hearts and their lives to the young children but also provide the supports to the parents. The parents also are very active in — certainly in this child care, but many others — on the hours they contribute to the board to make certain that they're run according to the guidelines and the safety requirements of the province, and will be responsible for the decisions taken to the addition of spaces, but also the additional help that is required to meet the needs of those spaces. Because there are certain numbers of people who need to be employed, based on the number of children that are in the child care.

And in listening to some of the workers, I also heard them express the same sentiments that Lois Grylls, who's the Co-Chair of the Saskatchewan Early Childcare Directors Association, expressed to us in an e-mail. And she states:

On behalf of all the early childcare directors in Saskatchewan I would personally like to thank you for addressing childcare in the budget that is being released tomorrow. I have received a copy of the news release that happened in Regina and I am celebrating what your government is going to be doing for the children of Saskatchewan. Your government has 'dared to care'.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that in mind, with the encouragement of a province who not only provides leadership throughout the nation not only this issue but others that have happened . . . I think the child benefit program, the first new social program in this country over 50 years was birthed in this province not to mention the supports to children and families in our province through the development of medicare and the fight on this side of the House to provide publicly funded, publicly administered health care, and many, many of the other initiatives we talk about. We can't separate these from the kinds of things the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation is doing to have our young people fit, to get people involved in their communities, to have people who are active and vibrant, contributing leaders of the future of our province.

And so with all of that in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move in this Assembly:

That this Assembly recognize the achievement of this government for announcing the largest expansion of child care services in the history of the province, an announcement that will enable Saskatchewan children and parents alike the opportunity to partake fully in the economic and social life of this province.

Moved by myself and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very delighted to be able to second this important motion on child care, and recognizing what is a very important policy initiative by this government; namely, Mr. Speaker, that we are recognizing in this motion the importance of this government investing in our children. And the Government of Saskatchewan invests in children in this province in a great many ways, but one of the most practical ways that makes a difference for families in this province is an investment in daycare.

And I want to thank the minister of Social Services and the Premier for supporting this investment. And I also want to recognize, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the role of the member for Regina who has just spoken, I want to recognize the contribution in this initiative that was made by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, who has been a long time advocate in this Assembly for improved funding for daycare, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to, as the . . . I want to discuss the essence of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, which is a four-year plan for expanding daycare spaces in the province of Saskatchewan that will be led by the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment. And with the expansion of spaces, Mr. Speaker, also comes an improvement in the subsidy that is available to lower income families in this province to assist them in accessing daycare space.

And the third element of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, is a modest improvement in the wages that are available for daycare workers who deliver this very important daycare service to the children of our province.

So those are the, in essence, those are the three key parts of the initiative, Mr. Speaker. And at the end of my remarks, I also want to make some comments, Mr. Speaker, about where I hope, over the long-term, the daycare policy in our province will go. But I want to primarily focus on the important elements of the announcement.

And the first one, Mr. Speaker, is that our plan is to expand the daycare spaces in the province of Saskatchewan by a total of 1,200 over the course of the next five years. And the biggest increase in the spaces, Mr. Speaker, will be in year one. We're looking, Mr. Speaker, in this year at an increase of 500 daycare spaces in the province of Saskatchewan. And that is good news, Mr. Speaker, for families across our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in terms of our

daycare funding this year, the bulk of the new funding in this first year is inserted by the province of Saskatchewan. And the province of Saskatchewan is investing a total of \$1.8 million in our — sorry, Mr. Speaker — \$2.2 million in our daycare package. A total of \$2.2 million.

But we also, Mr. Speaker, are fortunate to have a contribution being made by the Government of Canada in the amount of \$800,000. And I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that in future years we can look to the federal government. They have signalled to us as part of the agreement that they have signed with this province that their contribution is going to increase in subsequent years by a significant amount, Mr. Speaker. The member for Kindersley is saying, by how much? And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it'll be by \$2.6 million for next year that we can expect from Ottawa.

So with the investment of the province and the investment of the Government of Canada, Mr. Speaker, we've got a significant injection of new money into child care that we can expect. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that at the end of the four years we can expect to have at least 8,600 daycare spaces, new daycare spaces, in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, with an additional 1,200 spaces being added over this four-year period through the child care program, and also additional spaces, Mr. Speaker, being added through the Kids First program.

The member for Regina Wascana mentioned Kids First, Mr. Speaker. And this is a program that is focused on serving families with special needs — especially high needs, Mr. Speaker — and there'll be 131 new spaces through the Kids First program that will be made available for child care in the province this year in addition to the 500 new spaces that'll be delivered through the child care program, Mr. Speaker. So a total this year of 631 new spaces in our province. Now that's progress, Mr. Speaker. That's progress.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Mr. Speaker, the second area that I want to touch on is the improvements in the daycare subsidy that the Department of Community Resources and Employment will be delivering. And here, Mr. Speaker, we see an average of a \$20 a month increase in the subsidy. But the details of the increase, Mr. Speaker, vary a little depending on whether you're talking about infants, or preschool children, or school-aged children.

(16:00)

So I want to provide members of the audience who will be listening to the debate, and members of the Assembly, with more details on the subsidy increases.

In a child care centre, Mr. Speaker, in a licensed child care centre, the current maximum subsidy rate that is available to a family that qualifies for the full subsidy is \$325 for infants. That'll be going up, Mr. Speaker, as of June 1. So in one month it'll be going up to \$355. For toddlers, Mr. Speaker, the current subsidy is \$285. It'll be going up to \$310. For preschool children, the current subsidy is \$235, and it'll be going up to \$255. And for school-age children, Mr. Speaker, there's a \$10 a month increase, going up from 200 to 210. And all these figures

that I've provided are monthly subsidy figures, Mr. Speaker, for those who are eligible for the maximum subsidy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that there will be an improvement in the family's ability to access daycare funds depending on their income.

So again we've got a change in income levels that qualify for the subsidy, Mr. Speaker. For instance, a single parent with one infant using a licensed centre, Mr. Speaker, will be eligible for an increase in the maximum subsidy of \$30 a month, from 325 to \$355 a month.

Previously, Mr. Speaker, someone would have qualified for this subsidy if they had a gross monthly family income of \$2,940. In the case of this single parent, the new cut-off point, Mr. Speaker, for qualifying for the maximum subsidy will be \$3,060 a month. So, Mr. Speaker, that is a modest improvement in terms of income eligibility.

And similarly, Mr. Speaker, we've made those same kinds of policy changes for two-parent families. The subsidy kicks in not on the basis of whether it's a one-parent family or a two-parent family but on the basis of gross monthly income for the family unit as a whole.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that we have improved the . . . both family's ability to qualify for the child care subsidy and also the level of the child care subsidy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the increase in spaces, with over 600 new spaces being put into effect this year. I mentioned the increase in subsidy which will take place as of June 1 with an average monthly increase of \$20 a month. And the third area, Mr. Speaker, that I want to touch on in terms of our government's initiative in child care is on improvement in grant funding for our licensed daycare centres across this province, Mr. Speaker, that will allow those centres to improve the salaries of child care workers who work in those centres.

And we've made a steady improvement in this area, Mr. Speaker, over the last four years. In every year the Minister of Community Resources and Employment has set aside extra dollars in the budget that are available to improve the salaries of daycare workers, and I might say, Mr. Speaker, to also improve the salaries of workers across this province who work in community-based organizations. So I'm pleased, I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to see these improvements. And I think the motion rightly recognizes the achievement of the government in this regard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the question, what would members opposite have done? And members may want to comment on what they would have done when they get up in this debate, Mr. Speaker. But I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that last year I noted the position of the Sask Party when it came to social services spending. They talked, Mr. Speaker, about ripping out 25 to \$50 million a year out of what was then the Department of Social Services, now called the Department of Community Resources and Employment. A 25 to \$50 million dollar reduction is what they said, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, they weren't specific about it being

targeted at daycare. They were talking across the board in terms of spending in Community Resources and Employment, but I say, Mr. Speaker, you can't take 25 to \$50 million out of the Department of Community Resources and Employment without taking money out of daycare, Mr. Speaker.

This government, Mr. Speaker, is increasing the resources available for child care and we're seeing extra spending, as I mentioned, this year alone of just provincial dollars, \$2.2 million more.

The Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, are talking about cutting funding to the Department of Community Resources by at least \$25 million, Mr. Speaker. Their precise words were 25 to \$50 million, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they'll want to clarify in this debate where that's money's going to come out of, Mr. Speaker.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, we saw just about three-quarters of an hour ago in this Assembly, the member for Swift Current refusing to even answer a straightforward question about what their position was on whether or not they would privatize parts of SaskPower. And any member of the television audience who's been watching over the last hour, Mr. Speaker, will know that the member for Swift Current didn't answer the question that was posed about whether or not he'd privatize SaskPower. And I doubt, Mr. Speaker, that members will be any more forthcoming about what the details are of their 25 to \$50 million planned cut to the Department of Community Resources and Employment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to close my comments by saying that we recognize that in the Assembly, in this motion, that this is a very significant step forward in terms of our investment in child care. And we also recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the plan is not complete; that there's still more to do — more to do in terms of increasing the subsidy, Mr. Speaker; more to do in terms of increasing the number of spaces, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that one day in Saskatchewan we'll move towards the kind of model that they have in Quebec, Mr. Speaker — which is what I see as the ideal in Canada in terms of daycare — where they offer a \$5-a-day child care program, Mr. Speaker, that's widely available to the citizens of the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know that we are making in this year's budget, in this province, very significant advances in terms of the level of the subsidy, the number of spaces, and some improvement in terms of salary for daycare workers. And I look forward to the day, Mr. Speaker, when even more improvements will be made in this regard, and members of the public and families could be confident that they will see from this government every year — in a re-elected NDP government — an increase in the number of daycare spaces in this province, Mr. Speaker, year by year over the next three years in addition to the increases this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think members of the public can be absolutely certain that if they elect members opposite, members of the official opposition in the Sask Party to government, that we will see from the department that provides the funding for daycare, they would see a reduction of 25 to \$50 million in total funding for that department. I'm not saying it will all come out

of daycare; I don't know where it will come from, Mr. Speaker. But clearly there's a huge ideological difference on this issue between members opposite and members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to be on this side of the House, and I'm proud to be supporting a motion, Mr. Speaker, that backs a major investment in child care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to stand in this Assembly today and speak to this motion that's been brought forward, a motion that calls for and basically recognizes government expenditure in the area of daycare spaces in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I've listened to the member from Regina Wascana Plains and the member from Saskatoon Greystone, and both of them are just really . . . what they're basically saying is they . . . their recognition of the provincial involvement and the increases in daycare spaces in the province of Saskatchewan. And in many ways they're endeavouring to take all of the credit for the daycare spaces that are going to be made available.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, that's somewhat a little bit misleading because I would suggest to you that if it wasn't for the federal dollars that have been put forward at this time — if it wasn't for the federal dollars being put forward at this time — this government would not have the ability to brag about the number of spaces. They would probably have increased spaces somewhat but they would be majorly limited in the number of spaces available because the federal money wouldn't be there.

And it's very interesting as I watch the current government. And a number of the initiatives, even in the most recent budget and Throne Speech that were announced, were initiatives where money had already been expended and wasn't really new money. And yet to hear the Minister of Finance and to hear the Premier in his Throne Speech talking about initiatives the government was taking, it was as if it was totally new funded dollars.

And in regards to the daycare spaces, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker . . . And we acknowledge that there are needs in the province of Saskatchewan for young families, especially low-income families, to have access to daycare spots because of the fact that they're trying to make a living; they're trying to provide a home atmosphere, an environment for their children; they're trying to provide some of the comforts of life.

And unfortunately as a result of the stagnant economy and the economy that . . . We just see in today's paper, the headline reads, "Saskatchewan economy finishes last." When you look at the economic engine of this province, and I believe the current Minister of Justice, former minister of Finance is now blaming the drought for the provincial economy . . . The facts are, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, as a result of the economy that we're living in today and that young people are living in today, young parents are living in today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, young couples have no other alternative but to look to programming that would help them overcome some of the difficulties in providing for the daycare that they're looking for and providing for.

And when we're talking daycare, we're talking quality programs. We're talking quality opportunities for these young families so that their children are growing up in an environment that is positive and certainly supportive to helping these young individuals grow up with having a healthy view of life and of living and of learning to get along and co-operate with their fellow men.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Deputy Deputy Speaker, as I listened to the member from Cumberland, if the member would pay attention a little bit he would get, he would actually find out a little bit and it may not hurt him to listen.

However, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, we'll just take his words. And his monologue that he's entering into the debate will allow him to have that debate right now and continue to talk to himself while we address the question before us.

Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Greystone talked about reducing the funding in the new Department of Community Resources and Employment. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly there are avenues if we take a . . . and endeavour to address these issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Harper): — Order. Order.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you for just giving me the opportunity to speak without having to try and think over the other debate that's taking place in this Assembly.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important for the members opposite to listen a little bit and to pay attention to some of the concerns that are coming from people outside of this Legislative Assembly, outside of this city, and certainly in other areas of the province.

The member from Saskatoon Greystone talked about the Saskatchewan Party and looking at reducing funding to the Community Resources and Employment. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would assure you, will assure you that as our party puts forward its plan to grow the province of Saskatchewan and puts forward its plan and we begin to see a growth in the province of Saskatchewan, rather than an economy that continues to finish last across this nation, an economy that begins to grow, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will see job opportunities for young families in this province that will give them the ability to move from the welfare rolls into the employment field.

(16:15)

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will mean that governments will have to put less and less into the Community Resources and Employment because our goal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not just to create more daycare spaces because of the lack of job opportunities. Our goal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to create employment opportunities that will bring quality job opportunities to the people of Saskatchewan so that they can provide for their families and provide for their children on their own rather than always looking to government.

And if the government members were listening to the young

families of this province, they would hear that young men and women across this province are more interested in building their family relationships on their own rather than always having to look out for someone else to provide for the daycare opportunities.

However, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we are not opposed to creation of more daycare spaces where they are needed. And in today's economy and today's society and with the demands being put on young parents' lives, unfortunately more and more young parents are having to look to daycare spaces. And a lot of the reason they're looking for subsidized daycare spaces is because their income opportunities are so low they don't have a lot of dollars left over to actually find daycare space opportunities in the private sector, even though there are many out there.

And I guess as my colleague had said as well, the view of this current government in place, in power, is to provide for people rather than . . . and to look after people rather than giving them the ability to provide for themselves. It's, I guess, the old socialist philosophy of looking after people because we know what's best for you.

And basically I think that's what the two members who spoke, as they were speaking today, were telling us, that they know what's best for young families. They know the best way or the ways in which they can provide for the young children of this province better than young parents in the province of Saskatchewan.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that the young men and women and the mothers and fathers of this province should be given every opportunity to provide the family environment, the home environment, and the ability to raise their children in a positive and a productive and a loving and caring environment rather than governments providing that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

And so when the member from Saskatoon Greystone says, well we are . . . accuses this party of reducing funding, Mr. Speaker, our goal is to build this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, if this government was paying attention to building this province, they wouldn't be bragging today about the extra dollars they're putting into daycare opportunities because they would be looking at the \$28 million that they lost in the SPUDCO endeavour, and they were saying, well, man, what could we have done with that \$28 million to provide job opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Or what about the . . . what about the \$7.9 million they just lost in the mega bingo, Mr. Speaker? And, Mr. Speaker, if the member from Regina Northwest keeps harping from his seat, I'm afraid we're going to lose more money in our Highways budget and, Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford, we cannot afford to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for people of Saskatchewan to know that they need a government that will create an economic and political environment that will open up the door for quality job opportunities, so that young men and women can make the choice of whether or not that parent, one of the parents would like to choose to stay at home and provide that home

environment for that young child.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'm a firm believer in the fact that if a young couple decides that . . . and if a mother would chose — in many cases it tends to be the mother — makes that choice, would like to stay at home and provide that home environment and that loving and caring environment for that child at least until the age until they begin school, that young couple should be able to make that choice. However, as a result of the economy, the activity in this province, very few couples have that opportunity any more.

And we realize, Mr. Speaker, that there are couples even who do have the means and choose to continue to work and choose to put their children in a daycare space, but as a result . . . I'm not saying as a result of. They make that choice and they pay for it.

What we're saying, what this program is doing is at least acknowledging that it's . . . this program is acknowledging that it's the low-income families that are being provided for in the daycare program. And if you're on a low-income wage, you've got the ability to apply for subsidized daycare programs. And, Mr. Speaker, we have certainly indicated that we are not opposed to helping those who are less fortunate provide for themselves.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between the Saskatchewan Party and the current government.

We need to take a serious look at where we spend the dollars and what this government has done over the past few years and where it spent money outside of the province. If they would have taken the time, Mr. Speaker, to give as much thought to building the economy of the province of Saskatchewan rather than just throwing money away outside of the province, they would have created the job opportunities that would allow the young families of this province to not only look at coming back and living in the province of Saskatchewan but making the choices that they would like to make.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the most recent release of the Crown corporations' annual reports and we see that in 2002 the taxpayers funded out-of-province investments by the Crown corporations of this province, we're taking a bath in red ink to the tune of some \$85 million.

Mr. Speaker, what do you think that we could have done in this province with \$85 million in investment opportunities? Or what do you think we could have taken . . . done in regards to addressing, in addressing debt, on the general revenue portion of the debt in this province if there was that \$85 million actually invested in the province rather than outside of the province?

Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that young families are forced to find and try to live on two incomes, and in many cases they're low-income earners and as a result they find it very difficult to pay for babysitting services.

And I've talked to young families, Mr. Speaker, who have . . . when they've sat down and looked at what they were bringing in for income into their home, by having that second, second income — in many cases they didn't because they didn't have

access to a subsidized daycare program — they were asking themselves, exactly what do we have left by the time they've paid for their daycare services, by adding that additional income.

And in some cases, Mr. Speaker, these young families have decided they would try and make it on that one income rather than the other partner, spouse working and with their income finding out that they had very little left after they paid for their daycare program. So in situations of this nature where we have young couples trying to survive on low-income job opportunities, the subsidized daycare program will certainly give them an avenue that allows them to create more economic activity for their home environment so that they can try and endeavour to meet the needs of their growing children.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the investments that the Crown corporations have made in the province of Saskatchewan and outside of the province of Saskatchewan, we look at the losses that we have seen in these Crown corporations. SaskTel, we see, was the biggest money loser with at least 6 to \$7 million in lost . . . in out-of-province investments, including a \$40 million writedown on its Australian telecommunications company, Austar, and an \$11 million loss on a BC telecommunications company called Navigata.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the investments that the Crown corporations have invested in and the investments that they have invested in outside of the province and we look at the losses that they have incurred, and one has to ask, what could have the Crown corporations done in regards to economic activity when in most cases the economic engine for the Crown corporations has been the province of Saskatchewan, has been right here within the province of Saskatchewan.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, they have done very well. They have made . . . had good profits. Unfortunately they've had to . . . their profits had been cut back because they've had to write off losses that have incurred as a result of their investments outside of the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look at the motion before us and what we're basically saying, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the motion before us — we can brag all we want about achievements in addressing the need for child care services — but what we're saying, Mr. Speaker, is the need for child care services may not be as large if the economy of the province was growing and if we were investing.

If, rather than investing outside of the province, if the Crown corporations were making their investments in the province, creating quality job opportunities, we may not need as many child daycare spaces that government is bragging about.

But we're recognizing the fact that there is a need out there. We recognize that fact, that there is a need for these child care spaces.

And as a result of that need and as a result of a lagging economy, Mr. Speaker — and as I indicated earlier, the headlines today talking about the economy in this province dead last; certainly, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the economy finishing last, there's no doubt that we have — the

government's forced to again go begging to the federal government for some funds to invest in this province so that they can meet the needs of the people of this province and especially the young families who are trying to get their feet on the ground.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about people, young couples and children and providing job opportunities, one of the things that we're all aware of is that many young families or young couples as they begin looking, begin building for the future, in many cases some of these young couples are facing significant university tuition fees and, Mr. Speaker, they're also facing large debt loads as a result of student loans.

And so when they begin their workplace environment, sometimes the work environment or the job opportunity that may be available to them is a fairly low-income job opportunity. And they're trying to pay for home rent, house rent or make house payments, or payments on a vehicle, and they're starting a family and so they've got those payments to make, Mr. Speaker, as they provide for their young family, as well as trying to pay down their student loan debt.

And so, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of pressures on young couples today as they begin to build for their future. And as a result of their needs, they're . . . in many cases they're always . . . they are forced to look for daycare spots.

And, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that fact. We recognize that fact. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's . . . We need to start looking at beyond just providing for the daycare needs of low-income families in the province of Saskatchewan. We need to start looking at ways of how we can grow the economy so that these young couples have access to those job opportunities.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, what we've been pointing out as well is the fact that if the government spent its money wisely and if it would be very careful on how it enters into its investments, and if it would create an economic climate in the province of Saskatchewan that would allow much of the private sector to certainly invest in the province of Saskatchewan, we would have the job opportunities for young families to enter into that would open up the doors for them to build for their futures and the futures of their children.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many other avenues that we could go in and discuss as we debate this issue regarding daycare spending in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the privilege of going into and looking at a . . . It's not really a daycare program. What it is, Mr. Speaker, is a support program for young parents and young mothers. And it's actually is hosted by . . . in the basement of the education wing of the United Church in the community of Moosomin.

And I went down there yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and it was really . . . What was really interesting, there were, if I'm not mistaken, about eight young mothers there looking after a number of children. I'm guessing right now in the neighbourhood of 25 to 30 if not more.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you would walk down into an

environment of that nature, you would expect that you're going to hear — especially when you're looking at from toddlers up to probably in the ages of three and four — that there'd be a lot of noise. And in many cases you might expect a lot of children who might not be getting along with each other and screaming and crying.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I walked down into that area yesterday of the education building in Moosomin, it was interesting to just see how the children were playing together, were interacting together, and there just was a sense of real support.

(16:30)

And what the program does, Mr. Speaker, it's . . . A couple of individuals decided they needed to provide an environment where young mothers could come and bring their children and they could be a support for each other.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I think we've all been through that. We've been through that, and in many cases, as I've said, maybe as husbands sometimes we don't always take the time to appreciate what our wives went through when they were at home with toddlers. And maybe a toddler isn't feeling well, or a toddler is acting up, and as a young mother it can become very frustrating.

And what these young women have done is decided we're going to provide a support mechanism where two days a week young mothers can come and we can sit down with each other, and our children can learn to play together and learn to appreciate other individuals and how to get along in a community environment. And as mothers, as our children are playing together and learning to get along together, we can discuss some of the avenues whereby . . . as to how we meet the needs of our growing family and as we offer encouragement to other young mothers.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was very enlightening to walk into that environment and just see the peaceful atmosphere within the facility and how these children were working . . . were playing together and how each individual parent was being a support to the other parent and just offering words of encouragement.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to do a little more of that in this province as well, whereby parents themselves put together support programs and support initiatives so they become a support mechanism that they can each draw on when they find that there are times in their day when it becomes somewhat discouraging and they think that they're — especially for young mothers — they think they may be all alone, nobody really cares. And yet when they sit down and start talking to other individuals who have little children and other young mothers, they find, oh, there's a real support mechanism out there.

And, Mr. Speaker, what that program is doing is actually addressing a need in that community — a support program for young mothers. And while it isn't a subsidized daycare program, Mr. Speaker, what it is doing is it's meeting a need in the community. And I think it's a need that could certainly be expanded outside of that community to other communities where . . . especially for young mothers who have decided to stay at home because they want to be there.

They want to be there when that, whether a young son or daughter, starts to take their first steps or when their young son or daughter starts to say the first words. They don't want the daycare supplier or a person to hear their young son say a few words, his few words, or take his few steps. They want to be there and to observe that and be a part of it and help that young child as they begin to develop and as they begin to become individuals in their community.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated earlier, while we're supportive of the fact that there is a need for some daycare spots in the province, subsidized daycare spots in the province of Saskatchewan, we also I think need to give some thought and support to the parents who choose, where once . . . choose to and have made the decision and the choice where one spouse will stay at home for a while to provide care for the child while the other spouse is working, and thereby providing the care.

And, Mr. Speaker, what they're doing is they're actually passing on their principles to that child. And they want . . . What they're saying is, we want to be here for you so that you can learn what it is to have a parent at home rather than somebody else being that parent.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we recognize in some ways where the government is going in this motion.

We also want people to realize that a large portion of this funding is coming from the federal level. And while the government is endeavouring to take all the credit, a fair bit of the credit certainly would go to the federal government for their support and the transfer of payments to the province of Saskatchewan.

But also, Mr. Speaker, we need to go beyond just providing daycare, subsidized daycare spaces. We need to start to build the province of Saskatchewan. And that's what a Saskatchewan Party would endeavour to do, is to build this province so that job opportunities are there, and not just low-income job opportunities but very well-meaning and paying job opportunities that would allow young families to make some of the choices that they would like to make. And if they choose not to look for a daycare program, that's a choice they're able to make because that quality job is there.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Kindersley:

That all the words after "recognize" be deleted and the following substituted:

the importance of government-funded services such as child care, and therefore regrets the NDP's habitual propensity for wasting taxpayer dollars on ill-fated schemes such as SPUDCO, mega bingo, and a myriad of foreign fiascos.

I so move.

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to enter into the debate this afternoon on this important issue of child daycare.

I want to start by saying I was speaking against the motion and

in favour of the amendment. I'm speaking against the motion by large and part because of the amount of fluff contained within it. It seems to be a bragging about something that in some ways doesn't really add up.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that over the next 10 years is planning for 35,000 fewer students in the K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) system, and yet at the same time they are expanding the daycare, subsidized daycare mind you, by 1,800 spots over the next couple of years.

If we extrapolate what these numbers mean, it means that about two and a half per cent of the population is going to be on lower income, looking at needing subsidized daycare. And this is shameful and it's part of the record of this government that the economy that they have produced and are responsible for has not kept up with the rest of Canada.

We are at the lowest levels. And because of this we have more people living in poverty, and in turn we have more children living in poverty or we have children of parents who are working hard to make ends meet and needing to use daycare facilities and barely squeaking by.

To start with, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to commend some of what the member from Saskatoon Greystone said when he talked about the actual impact for the individuals receiving these subsidies. And he went through a number of the numbers and I thought it was an intelligent discussion.

The reality for persons receiving these subsidies is, it's often they're working one or two jobs and it is very hard to make ends meet. The member from Saskatoon Greystone talked about the extra \$20 a month increase in subsidy for child care for the different ages, and that this comes to those persons as very important. Where I differ from that member, however, is in why this is happening.

The province of Saskatchewan has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources and human resources and yet we are the poorest GDP (gross domestic product) for economic growth in the country. And this is shameful and this falls directly on the members opposite and the way that they have mismanaged this economy.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Saskatchewan can be so much more. Our party, Mr. Speaker, has a plan to grow this province and we're going to grow the province with a population of 100,000 over the next 10 years. Further to this, Mr. Speaker, there were members in the gallery yesterday from Agrivision that are talking about growing this province by a million people over the next 20 years . . . or 30 years rather. And there is no reason that this can't happen, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that . . . I've met with a number of our daycare workers in Kindersley. They had a whole number of concerns. The member from Saskatoon Greystone said that over the last four years there has been a constant increase in the funding that licensed daycare workers were receiving and this unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, is completely not the case from the individuals that I have spoken with.

I asked a number of written questions earlier on in the session,

Mr. Speaker, about where monies over the last five years had actually gone. And the lion's share had gone to the programs of Early Childhood Intervention Program, the Head Start program, the pre-kindergarten program, kindergarten programs, Kids First program, and the child care subsidy.

The fact of the matter is is that the licensed child care workers face many, many challenges and that they really haven't seen an increase of pay over the last number of years. There's some systemic problems as well that the government hadn't addressed.

One of the real problems is in the event that a licensed daycare worker takes a child to watch and the parents don't show up and, you know, they keep the children overnight or maybe even in some cases for two or three days, and at the end of that the parent comes and hasn't paid the bill. Well there's a number of problems involved with this.

The first is that these licensed daycare workers have incurred an expense for all this time that they've diligently taken care of this child but the system is currently set up that there is no way that the licensed daycare worker is able to take this expense and write it off as a business expense. It is just an outright loss. And that is a clear problem and it results in putting extra pressure on our licensed daycare workers. And they have no choice, Mr. Speaker, because they have to . . . they have the moral responsibility of taking care of those children which are left with them. And yet at the end of the day they're out of pocket, which puts further stress on the system. And it is something that needs to be remedied and this government hadn't looked at at all.

One of the suggestions that came forth from a meeting I had with daycare workers is not only should they be allowed to write off such losses, there should be a form of contract between the parents providing the children to the daycare workers and to the licensed daycares. And that these contracts would be the form which would demonstrate what the losses would actually be.

Further, it was their suggestion that there be a data bank maintained so that when you have situations where parents and families are transient, they are not able to go to another town and kind of souse the next daycare worker. That there could be a data bank so that until a daycare bills in arrears were paid up, services wouldn't be provided.

Akin to that, if such a service were set up it would also be very necessary and, I think, important for family services to have access to that data so in the event that you had a transient family that had arrears in daycares no longer eligible to have daycare — and sometimes as I said, daycare workers have told me that children are dropped with them for two or three days at a time — that Social Services are aware of these families so that if they're not being allowed to go into daycare, Mr. Speaker, that they're not falling through the cracks and just being left at home and left completely unattended.

I think these are a couple of areas the government has missed and that definitely need to be looked into.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize, as the Saskatchewan Party, the need

for more spaces for families in daycare where both parents work. The member from Moosomin did point out though that this kind of a system that's been brought forward is leaving out the situation where we have families that have a mother or a father that wish to stay at home, for single . . . families where the best care could be provided by an actual parent rather than having to go to daycare. And I think that the overall initiative of the government really didn't touch on this fact in any kind of meaningful way.

Mr. Speaker, our government . . . this government is bragging about the economy and how well we're doing, yet there's so many people on low incomes who must rely on daycare. And this is a situation that needs to be turned around. There is no doubt that early childhood . . . monies spent on early childhood care is very important. What is alarming is the number of children in this province that are on the low end, living in families at the low end of the income level. And when this happens, their chance in life is diminished.

(16:45)

And that, Mr. Speaker, is a clear reflection on the handling of the economy of this government. There have been a number of fiascos in foreign investments where we've seen monies which could have been better spent within our province for services we'd all desire, exit the province to the tune of about \$85 million last year alone.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that all of us in this Assembly want to see the best province possible. Where we really differ and where the members opposite I think are a bit of an anachronism, even with regards to international leftist parties, is they've missed the boat on the economy, wanting to have a centrally planned economy where they run everything. And unfortunately it has failed miserably and continues to fail.

We see, Mr. Speaker, in the third way from Great Britain and Prime Minister Tony Blair and the economic success they have there when they make a distinction between the situation that the economy should function independently of the government, whereas the government should still be in a position to be delivering services that everyone wants. And daycare would be one of these, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite haven't come to this conclusion yet. Their federal counterparts in the NDP haven't come to this conclusion yet.

The Clinton administration, Mr. Speaker, in the United States had a pretty good understanding of this, and we saw great economic gains under the Clinton administration for the United States. The Dow Jones grew at a rate never before seen then or since, and they understood that you cannot have the government involved in the economy first and foremost and still deliver the services that everyone wants. The two just don't work.

The members opposite are the antithesis of the third way. They're demonstrating completely that we can't have either successfully. And not only do we have the poorest GDP rate in the country, Mr. Speaker, we have an unbalanced budget. We have \$400 million of debt added to this. And, Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier that's adding \$1 million a day.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to touch on the aspect with regards to daycare for rural centres. One of the things that doesn't seem to be addressed adequately here is the modern farm family, Mr. Speaker, is often mother and father. And as rural depopulation has increased over the last 11 years, we have fewer and fewer families out in the rural areas. But this also means, Mr. Speaker, that we have fewer extended families. In the past it was a tradition that working farm families would often leave child care to members of extended families — grandparents or aunts and uncles.

Unfortunately as we continue to see rural depopulation under a mismanaged government, children are more or less . . . more and more often left to be in the care of overworked parents who are both running the farm. The situation is very serious because, as all members of the House would know, agriculture often demands very long hours under tiring circumstances and also under somewhat dangerous circumstances.

This government I think has completely failed in their latest round of proposals with regards to daycare to make sure that farm family children are not being . . . are being taken care of within the licensed daycare system. Instead they are being left in jeopardy around various very dangerous equipment and under less than ideal work conditions.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that . . . it's a point for something in my area, Mr. Speaker. We have members in our area who have . . . when we have members in our area, Mr. Speaker, who would like to have access to daycare, we also have the issue of transportation. The services that seem to be provided in this new Bill aren't really addressing any issues of transportation when we have more and more rural depopulation, smaller and smaller towns.

Some of the farms and the farm families are farther and farther away from licensed daycare centres. For example, in my own town of Eatonia, people farming south towards the river that could be utilizing daycare would be 50 miles from a licensed daycare centre. There has been no consideration by this government on how these children would access that daycare on a regular basis, specifically during the busy periods of harvest and spring planting, Mr. Speaker.

This is somewhat problematic and for all the change that will possibly lighten some of the load for some families utilizing this service, it still falls far short.

Mr. Speaker, there's much better places that money could have been spent that this government . . . And as the amendment reads, we have such ill-fated habitual propensity for wasting taxpayers' dollars on ill-fated schemes such as SPUDCO, mega bingo, and many other foreign fiascos.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that we shouldn't be spending money outside the province. This is not what the single mothers that are wanting this child care subsidy are asking for. It's not what taxpayers in general are asking for. And it's a burden and it's an unfair burden to be placing on our children, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read a few of the figures that . . . about the increases that have come from over the last five years with regards to some of the other expenditure areas of the former

Social Services department.

We saw from the Early Childhood Intervention Program in 1998-99, it had \$1.773 million spent, and that was bumped up by 2002-2003 to \$2.478 million. Pre-kindergarten, 26 different programs received about \$2 million increase in funding at the same time. And the licensed child care centres in that period received significantly less, Mr. Speaker.

The child care workers in my area have said, it's our turn. And the federal initiative that has seen this Bill come forward is the first thing that will allow them to make sure that they get some of this. But what they are calling for is they are saying we have waited a long time, it is our turn, and that we should be recognized. The extension only of new spaces may not adequately address this and we're not sure from what was being spelt out by the members whether this will be occurring.

Mr. Speaker, we've had . . . With regards to the increases, I can say, and I've said before in the House, we would like individuals that are receiving the subsidies, if it were possible, to receive more. But at the end of the day the question is left as where does the money come from? And from this government there's no real problem with that, Mr. Speaker. They just add it to the debt. They added 400 million this year. They called it balanced — none of the other banking institutions or anyone else did. And of course they're going to pay for this with a 6.8 per cent growth increase whereas the Royal Bank of Canada, this morning on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio, Mr. Speaker, said at best we're going to see a 3.8 per cent growth rate.

Mr. Speaker, I see that we're coming close to the end of time here. I'd like to move to adjourn debate. I know that the members opposite have been moved in great ways at the depth of my speech, so I would move to adjourn.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:56.

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