

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens of the province of Saskatchewan about the condition of Highway 47 between Estevan and the Boundary Dam resort, which has seriously declined over the last number of years due to lack of proper maintenance by the province. Mr. Speaker, the petition indicates that the condition of this highway endangers the safety of drivers and causes an inordinate amount of damage to vehicles. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the fine community of Estevan.

I also received a letter today regarding the same matter, so I'm pleased to present this letter on their behalf.

Thank you.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again this afternoon on behalf of citizens from Moose Jaw concerned about a lack of dialysis services. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As you may expect, Mr. Speaker, signatures on this petition today are all from the city of Moose Jaw and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today I stand to present a petition on behalf of citizens of the community of Cabri. It's in relation to the issue of Crown grazing lease renewals. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue for the people of the Cabri region and I would like to present this on their behalf.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens of the Northwest concerned to preserve the historic bridges over the North Saskatchewan River. The prayer of relief reads as follows:

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

Your petitioners come from the town of Battleford.

I so present.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable and inconsiderate lack of a hemodialysis unit in the city of Moose Jaw. And the prayer reads:

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.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the city of Moose Jaw.

I so present.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm proud to rise again with a petition from citizens of rural Saskatchewan who are very much concerned with the access to . . . or lack of access to adequate health services. And the petition 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 to provide better information to the citizens of Rockglen.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Rockglen.

I so present.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people from west central Saskatchewan concerned with the state of health care. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure continuation of the current level of services available at the Kindersley Hospital and to ensure the current specialty services are sustained to better

serve the people of west central Saskatchewan.

And as is duty bound, our petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Kindersley, Major, and Eatonia, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present that deals with the condition of Highway 22, particularly that section between Junction 6 and Junction 20. 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 and make necessary repairs to Highway 22 to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of . . . the communities of Southey, Earl Grey.

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

**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 very, very concerned with government's handling of the Crown land leases. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Rabbit Lake and Medstead.

I so present.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 12, 27, 36, 41, 90, and no. 100.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the CIC minister: has there been a policy change in the past fiscal year which has resulted in requiring different persons to make the meter readings for both electricity and natural gas; if so, what is the cost savings of this move from one person to two people?

I so present.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: since the inception of the Our Future is Wide Open campaign, what percentage of total dollars spent on advertising in print and electronic media have been spent within the Saskatchewan boundaries and what percentage has been spent outside of Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: what was the cost of the six-page special information supplement for the province of Saskatchewan published in *The Globe and Mail*, May 13, 2003, and featuring a glossy picture of the Premier?

I so present.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As sure as spring arrives every year, the grade 8 class from the Rosetown Central High School makes their annual visit to the city of Regina and they come and visit the legislature as well.

And I'm very pleased to welcome 28 students, grade 8 students, from Rosetown Central High, 27 of whom are sitting in the east gallery up there, and Katie is sitting right over here. And we're very glad to have the grade 8 students visit us. We hope that they learn a lot from the proceedings and I'm also looking forward to meeting with them later on today.

They are accompanied by teachers Richard Berezowski, Miles Bennett, and Mary Munchinsky. And we welcome you here, enjoy yourselves immensely, and we hope you take back a good report to the fine community of Rosetown. Would you welcome them here.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, a group of seniors from Selo Gardens, which is located on McNiven Avenue in my constituency. This group is sponsored for this tour here by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Some of them are in the Speaker's gallery and some are here on the floor of the legislature.

I would ask that all members welcome them here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — (The hon. member spoke for a time in Ukrainian.)

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my pleasure to introduce an individual seated in your gallery, a Mr. Sang Wong Kim of Toronto. Mr. Kim is a successful entrepreneur who has worked in his family's business for a number of years and a friend of mine from

college.

And I hope he enjoys the proceedings today and that all members will join me in welcoming him to Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, Mr. Don Black from the Public Service Commission is accompanied by three students who will be working for the summer in areas of policy and communications. And they had the usual five minutes of quality time with me that my family's come to expect. And I just would like all members of the House to thank them for their interest in the public service and for joining us in the Assembly today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members today, a businessman from Yorkton, owner and operator of the Community Post, Dave Bucsis. And I'd ask all members to welcome him here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to join my colleague, the Minister of Health, to welcome the great looking bunch of people that are seated in your gallery, and in particular, to very good friends, Edith and Mike Burianyk, formerly from Ituna, who are now living here in this great city of Regina.

I'd ask all members to please help me welcome them to this Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a couple in the east gallery, Mr. Roy and Kay Nelson. They're residents of Regina now but their home has been in Glentworth for a number of years. And some people in the Assembly will recognize Roy as a former member of this Assembly.

So I'd ask everyone to please welcome them here to the proceedings this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Space Travel from Saskatchewan

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Okay, Mr. Speaker, repeat after me — 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, and so on. It appears that learning to count down is soon going to be part of the Saskatchewan vocabulary. Our Future is Wide Open and now that includes the space above our province and not just the resources within it.

All this by way of saying that Saskatchewan will host the world's first independent manned space launch. And as the

*Leader-Post* says today, the da Vinci project, a Canadian-based initiative to make a manned space flight is not "some wacko project" but the real McCoy.

The da Vinci project is one of 23 international competitors for the X PRIZE, a foundation providing a \$10 million US (United States) prize to the first group that launches a manned, reusable space capsule 100 kilometres into space twice within a two-week timeframe.

Project leader and astronaut for the da Vinci project, Brian Feeney, announced this morning that Kindersley, Saskatchewan will be the site of this space milestone, and once again Saskatchewan will be a leader in Canada. We've long been Canada's social laboratory, now we will be Canada's staging area in the final frontier.

Mr. Speaker, the launch date this year will be detailed later. Meanwhile I know that we're all thrilled at this innovative, technological adventure which embraces and symbolizes our bright future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

##### Swift Current Little Theatre

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say today that the Swift Current Little Theatre has been recognized as being the best amateur theatre group in the entire province.

This spring the Swift Current Little Theatre performed in front of sold-out audiences with their newest production entitled *The Foursome*. It's a story about four friends who reunite for a game of golf and to reminisce about old times.

Mr. Speaker, the Swift Current Little Theatre took their production to Theatre Fest 2003, the annual competition of amateur theatre clubs in the province, where they did exceptionally well. As a matter of fact, they picked up six awards including the best entry at the seven-play competition. They also received the William Hubbard Memorial Plaque for excellence and honourable mention for the best visual presentation. Individual awards were presented to Bruce Rayner as the festival's best actor, to Ken Johnson for best director, and to stage managers Connie Rayner and Toby Dueck, who won the Margaret Corbett Aspirant Award.

So congratulations to the actors: Bruce Rayner, Brian Potter, Steve Rempel, and Brian Dueck in *The Foursome*, and to everyone who works behind the scenes for the Swift Current Little Theatre — the best amateur theatre club in the entire province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(13:45)

##### Westmount Community School Celebrates 90 Years

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On May 2, Westmount Community School celebrated a very special 90th anniversary. I had the pleasure of attending this event along

with students, parents, teachers, past and present, and several community guests.

Mr. Speaker, as with so many schools of this age, youth who attended Westmount went on to play very important roles in our communities including contributing to world peace in the two world wars. And, Mr. Speaker, you may not know this but two special alumni of Westmount include hockey legend Gordie Howe and our own former premier, Roy Romanow.

The guest speaker, Al Anderson, also a well-known alumni and Saskatoon community booster, reminisced about school days gone by. He reminded guests that Westmount was never an affluent community and the school did not have all the bells and whistles. But as he said, it was a good school, the neighbourhood was a good neighbourhood, and the families were good families. Mr. Speaker, 90 years may have come and gone, but I can tell you the quality of families, the school, and neighbourhood is still very, very good.

Mr. Speaker, this was my first occasion to speak about our government's new initiative School<sup>PLUS</sup>. We are committed to meeting the needs for our children by providing excellent learning opportunities and critical human services to support their education. We know the importance of strong communities such as Westmount to a child's education and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, Westmount has enjoyed a wonderful 90 years, but you just watch the next 90. This school, these kids, and their family futures are wide open here in Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Cellphone Technology

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past 15 years the people of Saskatchewan have steadily embraced cellular phone technology as a way to communicate better. Cellphone technology has advanced to a point where businesses now heavily rely on this immediate communication as a tool that they must have in order to compete and succeed.

With the vast distances, citizens need a safety device in case of trouble or poor weather conditions. Situations have proven that where cellular coverage is provided, lives have been saved and people have the reassurance that their loved ones are safe on the road.

With expansion of Internet technology into the area of cellular service, businesses are now able to connect their laptop computers very quickly. So I'm very troubled when I look at the many areas of cellphone coverage that have not been fully developed in Arm River and across rural Saskatchewan.

The citizens of this province are asking why SaskTel has not given them adequate cellphone service. They're asking why this government has millions of dollars to invest outside of Saskatchewan in the high technology field, yet they are still waiting for the safety and security of cellphone service in their area here at home.

It is obvious that this NDP government has no intention of spending any more money in rural Saskatchewan. They have no intention of providing a service which most people and businesses agree that would be made available across our province. The taxpayers of Saskatchewan are tired of seeing their hard-earned dollars spent on similar technology in other countries. It's time for the NDP to start thinking of the safety and security of everyone in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Change of Command at 15 Wing Moose Jaw

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, as you know, I'm very privileged to have the Canadian Forces base, 15 Wing, in my constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow. It's great to have constituents from all over this country and from the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries whose pilots now train at the flight training centre program.

Last Thursday my colleague from Moose Jaw North and I attended, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, the change of command ceremony held at the base. Now the change of command from 15 Wing was transferred from Colonel Bruce McQuade to Colonel Alain Boyer.

Also attending were Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor and Major-General Marc Dumais, commander of 1 Canadian Air Division and the Canadian NORAD (North American Aerospace Defence Command) region.

It was an impressive ceremony, Mr. Speaker, befitting the importance of 15 Wing to our nation's defence and its importance to our international alliances. The rich history of pilot training goes back to the 1930s in Moose Jaw, and our clear prairie skies still provide an ideal training site for our pilots. In fact the new commanding officer, Colonel Boyer, completed his basic pilot training in Moose Jaw, receiving his wings in 1978.

Mr. Speaker, Colonel Boyer is the 20th wing commander at Moose Jaw in the past 50 years, and I know we all will welcome him back to Saskatchewan and wish him well as he assumes his new duties.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Asquith 2002 Volunteer of the Year

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gail Erhart was the well-deserved recipient of the Asquith and District Recreation Board Annual Volunteer Award. To honour her efforts, she was presented with a volunteer medallion and applauded for her outstanding efforts as a volunteer.

She works full-time as a teacher's assistant at Lord Asquith School, is a councillor for the town of Asquith, and also has an Avon business of which she kindly donates many items to teams and organizations that may ask.

Gail is known to devote all her spare time to various community involvement, and is seen about town everyday putting her volunteer touch on everything. Figure skating, the Legion

association, ladies auxiliary, recreation board, rink board, Lord Asquith School hot meal program — all have her mark on them. Not only does she volunteer to be on the board but she steps up to serve in an executive position, most notably her prowess as a treasurer and bookkeeper.

Gail's efforts over the past number of years have been devoted to the Asquith Sports Center. She has served on every executive position and has handled all the food ordering, banking, and bookkeeping for the rink, for the rentals. She has been one of the key players devoted to the improvement of the rink facility.

When the Lord Asquith School library was in need of computer automation, Gail devoted a year of her time transferring data from the library and coordinated the volunteers to the library program.

Asquith is fortunate to have a strong volunteer base with leaders like Gail to take them in the direction they wish to go.

Please join me in congratulating Asquith 2002 Volunteer of the Year, Gail Erhart.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Prince Albert Citizens Discuss Forestry Centre

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to congratulate the city council and the citizens of Prince Albert, who yesterday gave all of us a lesson in representative democracy.

As you know, in the past few days there have been some suggestions by some who live elsewhere that Prince Albert is somehow incapable of making crucial decisions affecting its own future. Better, Prince Albert was told, that newspaper columnists and opposition politicians will tell them what their city needs.

After all, Mr. Speaker, what does a city living on the edge of the forest, a city whose livelihood depends to a great extent on the forest industry, a city that proudly calls itself the gateway to the North, what could it possibly know about the value and placement of a forestry centre?

Quite a bit, it turns out. Yesterday morning the Prince Albert council held an emergency meeting to voice its unanimous support of the forestry centre and of its downtown location. Then at noon, 600 Prince Albert citizens rallied to voice their unanimous support of the downtown centre.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the community has spoken with one voice, and I further suggest that it would take a pretty anti-democratic group to ignore that voice. Apparently, though, we have just that group in the opposition party.

As for me and this side of the House, we'll be listening to the voice of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Payment of Municipal Property Taxes

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP (New Democratic Party) continues to tell us how much their SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) disaster has helped the people in the Lucky Lake area. Yet once again this year the NDP is refusing to pay taxes owed by the Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the RM (rural municipality) of Canaan has sent us tax notices showing that the Sask Valley Potato Corporation still owes the RM over \$84,000 for last year's taxes.

Mr. Speaker, on top of all the other damage that the NDP has done in Lucky Lake with the SPUDCO debacle, why are they now refusing to pay their property taxes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm advised by my officials that they continue to work with the RMs as they have last year, as they have last year, to try and find resolution on this issue, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite from the Sask Party will know that on a number of those instances — I should say in a number of those instances, Mr. Speaker — they did find resolution. And I'm confident they'll find resolution this year as well.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, most good corporate citizens, when they receive their tax notice, they pay their tax notices. Why is the Government of Saskatchewan different? They've already left a trail of destruction in the wake of the SPUDCO affair with millions of dollars in unpaid bills, homes that are now valueless, businesses that are bankrupt, and now, Mr. Speaker, they won't even pay their taxes. Eighty-four thousand dollars is a pretty significant fund for the RM of Canaan and the Outlook School Division. But once again the NDP is content to just walk away and not pay their taxes — let someone else pay the bills.

Well eventually, Mr. Speaker, ratepayers are going to have to pick up the cost if the government doesn't pay its tax bill. And how can that be fair? Mr. Speaker, haven't the people around Lucky Lake paid enough for the NDP SPUDCO disaster? Why should they have to suffer the consequences of unpaid provincial taxes for property?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, the member for Meadow Lake, the Minister of CIC, has indicated that we'll work very closely with the rural municipality to ensure that the taxes that are needing to be owed to the municipality, as we have in the past worked with the municipality, Mr. Speaker, to continue to make sure they get paid.

But I want to say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that you get up on your feet on a regular basis and you . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. I'd ask the member to make all of his remarks through the Chair, and I would ask members to tone it down a little so I can hear what's being said. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, we'll work closely with the municipality to make sure that the grants in lieu that are owed to the municipalities will get looked after, as we have in the past.

But I want to say to the member opposite, every time you stand up on your feet . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. The member has a very short memory. I would ask him once again to speak to the Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Every time that the member, Mr. Speaker, from Outlook gets on his feet — and Rosetown — and the member from Swift Current gets up on their feet, Mr. Speaker, they talk about, they talk about the losses in the potato industry in that area of the province, Mr. Speaker.

I have now three letters, Mr. Speaker, here from people who live in that area, who do business in that area, and they say, Mr. Speaker, that what they should stop doing is stop talking about the losses and attacking the industry on that part of the province, Mr. Speaker, because nobody's run off with the sheds, Mr. Speaker.

Those sheds are still there, Mr. Speaker. Six of those sheds are full, Mr. Speaker. Potato growers in the area are using those sheds and they're growing the industry there, Mr. Speaker, in spite of what the Leader of the Opposition stands up and purports on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well if those sheds are still there, the government should be paying the property taxes on those sheds.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — It's interesting to note that last year, Sask Water paid \$341,000 in legal fees to Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller. Maybe if they just paid their bills, they wouldn't have to pay so much in legal fees.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP is taking the position that these multi-million dollar potato storage bins are agriculture property, and that's why they don't have to pay taxes based on commercial assessment. Last year the NDP sold some of these potato storage bins to Pak-Wel, and Pak-Wel have paid their taxes and they paid them based on commercial assessment.

Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible) . . . is paying its bill. Why won't the Government of Saskatchewan, that NDP government, pay their bill?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, in this province where there are Crown properties, we pay grants in lieu, as we will on these properties, Mr. Speaker, to the municipalities as we have in the

past. But you just need to listen to what the Leader of the Opposition from the Sask Party talks about, and the member from Swift Current.

They've been on their feet on several occasions, Mr. Speaker, and they say that these buildings have absolutely no value. They say that these buildings have no value, Mr. Speaker. So if these buildings have no value, Mr. Speaker, why is it that the Leader of the Opposition from the Saskatchewan Party wants us to pay taxes for properties that have no value, Mr. Speaker?

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, these buildings have value. And if this building, if these buildings were to be designated, Mr. Speaker, as agricultural properties and we would pay tax on them as Harry Meyers pays tax on his sheds, Mr. Speaker . . . He pays taxes on his shed, Mr. Speaker, as a privately owned. We'll pay the grants in lieu on it, Mr. Speaker, in the same way that Harry Meyers looks after his shed, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP lost \$28 million on the SPUDCO affair and now they just don't want to pay the consequential bills from the fiasco. Mr. Speaker, they simply don't get it. They refuse to recognize that they have to take responsibility for their actions.

(14:00)

They rolled into Lucky Lake, Mr. Speaker, and they tried to convince everyone that this was a great deal. They misled people by telling them that this was a partnership, but as the member for P.A. (Prince Albert) Northcote found out, it was no partnership. Mr. Speaker, they got local farmers and businesses involved and when their potato deal went bad the NDP just walked away and left everyone else holding the bag except for their lawyers. Millions of dollars in unpaid bills, bankrupt businesses, worthless homes — that's what the NDP did to the people of Lucky Lake. And that's why they only got nine votes in that poll in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the NDP take some responsibility for the lives that they've destroyed? Why won't they at least start paying their taxes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to look after the sheds as Crown corporation assets, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to pay the grants in lieu to the municipalities as we have in the past, as is appropriate when we look after the grants in lieu, Mr. Speaker. But I say to the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, I have here a letter here from Lindylou Buhr who is a potato producer in that area, Mr. Speaker, and she writes this. She said:

We were given help by the Government (Mr. Speaker) and Sask Water to develop our dream.

And our dream, Mr. Speaker, is to build a potato industry in Saskatchewan. And we ask the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, to stop putting down the assets in the area, Mr. Speaker.

Because what happens is that they're trying to build an industry there and the Leader of the Opposition continues to get up and put the asset down.

I have a letter here, Mr. Speaker, that's written to me by Mr. Peters. And he says, Mr. Peters says:

I want to grow the potato industry by 400 acres in Saskatchewan but it's inhibited on a regular basis by the Leader of the Opposition, my constituency leader, putting down the potato industry (Mr. Speaker).

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Regional Highway Maintenance Offices

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Highways. Recently councillors in towns and RMs from various locations in Saskatchewan have been contacting me about the downsizing and even closure of regional highway maintenance facilities in the province.

The regional facility at Maidstone was closed and the area's roads and highways now must be maintained out of Lloydminster. The Churchbridge facility has been downsized by half, with two employees laid off. And even though the Department of Highways says that the maintenance facility in Gull Lake is under review and hasn't been closed, all that remains, Mr. Speaker, are four snowplow blades and two old packers.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how many regional maintenance offices are being reviewed by his department and how many will either be closed or downsized this year?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing constantly the operations of the Department of Highways. We have one of the most efficient operations going in this country. And I tell you, with \$900 million over three years we are fixing the roads in this province. We are making progress every day and we are doing it with efficiency as well.

And when we amalgamate some of those offices, some of the operations, Mr. Speaker, it is to give more effective service to the people of this province. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that today there's a letter to the editor from the Minister of Highways in the *Leader-Post* where he states, and I quote:

We recognize that addressing the impact of increased truck haul on our secondary highways is especially important in supporting the revitalization of rural Saskatchewan. To that end, we can assure motorists that our government is committed to improving the level of service on TMS highways . . .

Mr. Speaker, closing and reducing regional highway maintenance facilities does exactly the opposite. The communities who have contacted us are very concerned about how local highway maintenance in their areas will be affected

by centralizing the Department of Highways services.

Not only are their local families affected with layoffs or movement of jobs out of the communities, but their local highway services will now be served as quickly from the centralized maintenance units by having to . . . by these units having to cover a much larger territory.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister closing and downsizing some regional highway facilities?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was Mother's Day on Sunday and I recall one of the things that my mother always warned about and that is the pot calling the kettle black. And from those privatizers, the Sask Party on the other side who dumped so many people out of work in the Department of Highways back in the '80s, they don't have a place to stand. They're on quicksand when they start talking about this kind of thing.

We have been improving service. We have been improving the highways. We have been building up those TMS (thin membrane surface) roads. We've been making agreements with area transportation planning committees for heavy-haul roads so that we will continue to have dust-free, mud-free surfaces out there for people in rural Saskatchewan to be able to travel on.

That is just too far out for them to be pointing this way and saying, you're reducing services by amalgamating those service offices. We are providing the best possible service to this province and we are rebuilding those highways and we will see even better service in rural Saskatchewan in the years ahead, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about improving services and providing better highway service to the citizens of this province, Mr. Speaker, but how does closing maintenance facilities lead to safer highways, Mr. Speaker? And that is a concern for these communities, Mr. Speaker.

The province has announced and the minister has announced that the speed limit will be increased on the twinned highways on June 1 to 110 kilometres. With less local maintenance, Mr. Speaker, especially during the winter months, this could mean that highway safety could be compromised.

Mr. Speaker, these closures don't help revitalize rural Saskatchewan and there are certainly questions of highway safety. So where is the savings, Mr. Speaker?

The minister claims he'll be able to maintain the service, the same level of service, from the centralized maintenance office facilities. That will mean highway crews will have to travel larger distances and it will take more time for them to provide the maintenance, Mr. Speaker. So where are the cost savings?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain how much the reduction or closure of regional highway maintenance facilities will save this NDP government?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to provide the best service that is possible on these rural highways.

We will not do as the members opposite seem to think was a wonderful idea, the Core Services Review out in BC (British Columbia) which has basically gutted their highways and transportation program out there. So you don't provide any service when you take that kind of action. You can't build highways, you can't repair highways when you gut an industry like they have done and like their predecessors did in the past, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to build and maintain highways in rural Saskatchewan. With these amalgamated offices we will provide even better service. Mr. Speaker, we will provide that service and we will make sure those roads are good for the STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) buses to keep running down them and keep providing service to rural Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to tout this year's Department of Highways budget as a big money budget. He often says that this is the second biggest budget in the history of the province. But, Mr. Speaker, if you exclude the federal government's money that is going toward the twinning of our highways, the NDP's contribution this year is actually \$6 million less than last year's, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have actually cut, reduced, and slashed their provincial portion of the highways budget by over \$6 million. So, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, how is the Department of Highways handling these cutbacks? Is the closure of the highway maintenance facilities the result of the NDP's cut in their Department of Highways budget?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Speaker, the incredible distortions that we continue to hear from that side of the House, from the Sask Party, are continuing again today.

That is a distortion to say, well if you didn't have that money in there from the federal government, then you wouldn't have that much in your budget. We do have the money in. We worked long and hard to get that federal government contribution and we are using that to help build the roads in Saskatchewan, to give us a better future, to build a solid base for this economy.

We are moving this province ahead. We are building new roads. We're building a future that will be successful. That's what we're about and we see tremendous results each year.

And what are they about? Privatizing, cutting it back, cutting it apart, breaking it down — we've seen the results of that type of thinking. I had to counsel people who faced that kind of thinking back in the '80s, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going to be dealing with that with this government in power.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### SaskTel *Max* Service

**Mr. Wall:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if you've watched any of the NHL (National Hockey League) playoffs — and I hope you've had a chance to do that — they've been pretty good. If you've turned on the TV at all this spring, no doubt you've seen one of the myriad, one of the many commercials on television in this province for SaskTel's *Max* cable TV service, the cable television service that the NDP government has set up in the province of Saskatchewan to compete with existing cable companies and a co-op here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for SaskTel please tell us how much money the government has spent to date developing SaskTel *Max* and how many customers do they have?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well this is an interesting criticism just given a national survey that suggests in this area, Mr. Speaker — in this area — the public most wants convergence; that is so that they have opportunities to get high-speed Internet, telephone service, and cable, Mr. Speaker, all through one line.

This is the fastest growing area of public support in this area of technology, Mr. Speaker. And what would that Sask Party do? They would shut it down. They would sell it. They would get rid of it. Mr. Speaker, they would make sure that the people of Saskatchewan had no options, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't want to answer the questions. The questions were: how much taxpayers' money have they blown to develop the technology; how many customers do they have?

We know, Mr. Speaker, that they have spent \$21 million — at least \$21 million, maybe more — to develop this technology. And how many customers do they have in the province of Saskatchewan? According to information that was provided in this Assembly, about 5,000 customers, Mr. Speaker. After all of that cost and after all of that advertising that we've all seen on the television, they've got 5,000 customers; \$21 million spent.

So how about this question for the minister, Mr. Speaker. Has cabinet even put a ceiling, a cap, on how much SaskTel will spend on this initiative competing with cable companies before they'll put a stop to it?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well SaskTel has invested nearly \$60 million, Mr. Speaker — \$60 million — to bring high-speed Internet to communities like Swift Current and dozens of other communities across our province.

That's what they've invested, Mr. Speaker, nearly \$60 million.

And, Mr. Speaker, by the end of this summer, 75 per cent of the population of Saskatchewan will have access to high-speed Internet. Mr. Speaker, will have access to high-speed Internet — 75 per cent.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, and that Sask Party would, on a daily basis, stand here and criticize SaskTel for providing options and choices for people in many of the constituencies that they represent across Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my first answer, a recent survey says that in this area of technology development, people, the public of Saskatchewan appreciate the fact that they have under one single cable the option of high-speed Internet, telephone service, and cable. They're off base when they're offside with the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of the province would be a lot happier about the money invested in Internet if 60-plus million hadn't been blown by the NDP just last year in investing out of our province in Atlanta and Tennessee and Australia, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, here's the problem. Here's the problem with this particular issue. And by the way, the minister isn't coming anywhere near answering questions on *Max* TV. That's what these questions are about.

No wonder, Mr. Speaker. They've spent \$21 million; they've got only 5,000 customers. And the question for the minister was: how much more are they prepared to spend before they'll put a stop to it?

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of that, they're competing, they're providing a service that anyone who wanted previously could have gotten. And in so doing, they're competing with the private sector and co-ops here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So again, in light of all of that, Mr. Speaker, a question for the minister is this: how much more money, what sort of a ceiling, what sort of a cap, has cabinet put on SaskTel on this *Max* TV initiative?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:15)

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Well thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Survey after survey says, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan appreciate choices, they appreciate high-quality service, and they get that from SaskTel, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, the service they talk about, *Max*, provides Saskatchewan residents with leading-edge technology. And, Mr. Speaker, market research conducted, as I

said, this spring, 2003, by a reputable company Canadian Cable Television Association, notes the following, Mr. Speaker:

... that consumers are embracing new products because they answer a need (Mr. Speaker).

They go on to say that:

The line between the home computer and TV set is blurring ... with 23 per cent (23 per cent) of households (now) with an Internet connection watching video on their computers (Mr. Speaker).

That says, Mr. Speaker, that SaskTel is on the right page when it comes to doing this kind of technology, Mr. Speaker; the Sask Party is on the wrong page.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, some of the companies, the co-op now competing with the government, with the NDP on this particular, in this particular area have been telling us that some *Max* customers are already abandoning SaskTel and going back to, in this case, Access. Apparently there are many problems with the *Max* system. Some Internet sites may not be compatible with the television and the system can only be hooked up to two televisions, Mr. Speaker ...

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, members. Order. Order, members. Got a little problem here, members, particularly with members sitting in the front row of both sides of the House. And I would ask members just to allow the question to be put.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's some of the problems with the system and it's a reason apparently why some *Max* customers are leaving and going back to Access, in this particular case.

We also know the system can only be hooked up to two TVs. And apparently — apparently — *Max* is not at all compatible with HDTV, with high-definition television. And we're also told, we're also told that if it now is compatible with HDTV, which more and more people are buying, the reason it would be compatible now is that they've had to invest even more money on the system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question to the minister is this: has he asked these questions of SaskTel officials as his cabinet colleagues have been approving millions of taxpayers' dollars? Is he aware of these problems? Are these the issues behind the reason why they've spent 21 million taxpayers' dollars and they only have 5,000 customers so far?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen to the irony of the question, Mr. Speaker. On one hand, Mr. Speaker, that member says and he argues, Mr. Speaker, that *Max* will not work because it's ... technologically it won't work, Mr. Speaker. On the other hand, he says somehow they're competing with the service that apparently does work in the private sector. It doesn't make any sense. If it doesn't work, Mr. Speaker, why are people choosing *Max*? Mr. Speaker, it's

obvious; it works.

Mr. Speaker, the reason they're choosing it is because people in Saskatchewan want a choice. They understand and they are part of the new technological age, Mr. Speaker. They want their services delivered under one line, Mr. Speaker, which will give them high-speed Internet, will give them telephone service, and will give them cable TV. Lots and lots, Mr. Speaker, of telephone companies across Canada and North America are going this way. Why would the Sask Party be opposed to our own telephone company doing the same thing?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Point of order.

### POINT OF ORDER

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Agriculture quoted from three letters that he said he's received. According to Beauchesne's 195, rule no. 7:

When a letter, even though it may have been written originally as a private letter, becomes part of a record of a department, it becomes a public document, and if quoted by a Minister . . . must be tabled on request.

So I would request the Minister of Agriculture table the letters that he has quoted from during question period.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to table the letters that I quoted from.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Members, order. Order. Order, members. The member's point is well taken.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses to questions no. 211 through 256 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to questions 211 to 256 have been tabled.

### SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

#### Support for Small Business

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the motion that I will be moving at the end of my remarks states:

That the Assembly expresses its strong support for

small-business owners throughout Saskatchewan and regrets any call by any organized labour leader in this province to stage a politically motivated boycott of those businesses, something that would ultimately hurt workers.

Mr. Speaker, I think this motion should be supported by both sides; at least they're talking about supporting small business throughout this province. And the importance of supporting small business throughout the province cannot be underestimated. We need to make sure that small business realizes that we understand that they are the engine of our economy; they drive the economy in every small community throughout this province, Mr. Speaker.

And it really is disconcerting when you hear the leader of the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) talking about boycotting small businesses due to statements made by CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business).

Now I've looked at and we've seen what CFIB has mentioned in their remarks, and it's absolutely appalling, I would say, that the Federation of Labour would go to such extremes to talk about a boycott of small businesses — the very backbone of our economy, Mr. Speaker.

This CFIB is responding to concerns raised by 5,300 members across this province. They poll their members on a regular basis and get a feeling for what their members want to see in the province. They get a feeling for the direction they want this province to go, Mr. Speaker, by polling their members, by getting a feeling from businesses in small towns, in communities such as Fort Qu'Appelle or Milestone or Indian Head, right up to cities like Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert.

They have a feel for what is happening in business in this province. So when they make remarks, it's not made by one person or what that one person's opinions are. The remarks that were made, were made through opinions expressed through businesses throughout this province.

And then you get the leader of the SFL coming out and saying that: well I'm sorry but the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, doesn't know what they're talking about and by saying the . . . expressing the concerns of its business owners to have the SFL talk about boycotting the very businesses that employ so many people in this province is absolutely unconscionable.

So I'm going to be very interested, as we go through this 75-minute debate, to hear the comments from the government party, the NDP, who are truly hooked at the hip with the Federation of Labour and many other unions throughout this province. I mean the very genesis of the NDP, the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and the trade unions, it was a combination of the CCF and trade unions coming together to form a party.

So now we've got the Federation of Labour, who the NDP are joined at the hip with, making such a statement. I'll be very interested, as we go through the 75-minute debate, to see if that isn't the true feeling of the governing party. Is that what the governing party feels? The NDP, do they truly believe that they should boycott businesses because business is expressing a

concern at the direction that this province is going? I think that frames the whole debate that we are going to have here in 75 minutes.

Does the NDP and the governing party believe that the SFL is correct in boycotting small businesses throughout this province — because that is the very statement that was made — small businesses that employ thousands and thousands and thousands of people throughout this province, Mr. Speaker.

When I looked at the NDP Web site and I looked at some of the links, the direct links and some of the affiliates that the NDP Party have, they state the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour right there on their Web site as one of their affiliates. So it'll be very interesting to see if they stand behind the words expressed by the SFL labour leader, Mr. Larry Hubich. Some of the words that he has mentioned, he said that:

The organization that speaks for provincial workers may implement a boycott of all Saskatchewan businesses that belong to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

That statement is scary. It goes on to say:

If this business lobbyist outfit can't find anything better to do with its time than attack working people, then we have every legal and moral right to respond appropriately, Hubich says in a press release put out by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

Mr. Speaker, I would take great exception, and I think most business owners, and I would really truly believe, I would hope the government party, governing party, the NDP, would take great exception with words such as that, directly attacking small business and large business for showing concern as to the direction this province is going, especially when you look at the document that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is talking about. This is a document that the CFIB has put out as a policy paper, as a guideline, as a judge as to how governments are doing. These are the suggestions that they get from businesses throughout the province through surveys done on a regular basis.

And let's look at some of the things that the Federation of Independent Business is talking about, and should they cause such a strong statement as the leader of the SFL has put out by boycotting small business. Let's look at some of the things that they've asked for. Is it that outlandish that the CFIB is asking for . . . to ensure a competitive business-tax environment? Now personally I think if we ensure a strong business-tax environment, I think that can only do much better for the province

The more business we attract into this province, the more corporations, the more small business, the more big business that we attract into this province, the greater chance of employment. The greater chance of employment, the more employees there are. The more employees there are, some of them will become unionized and some will remain non-union shops. But it gives a potential for more people working in this province.

We have been hemorrhaging taxpayers out of this province for the last decade, and for the first time our census has shown that the province of Saskatchewan has dipped below 1 million people, contrary to the Minister of Labour. The census shows that we have just dipped below 1 million people. In other words we're losing young people out of this province — young people that would pay taxes, young people that would work in small businesses throughout this province, Mr. Speaker.

So when the CFIB and many other groups talk about ensuring a competitive business tax, does that warrant workers throughout the province to start boycotting business because they're asking for a competitive business tax? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at point number two that CFIB talked about. It talked about creating a low-cost, high-performance government. Is that asking too much? Is that why they're going to boycott businesses throughout the province because they are asking for a low-cost, high-performance government? Isn't that what every taxpayer would want? Now isn't that what the CFIB would want? Wouldn't that be what the SFL would want, is a government that was high performance and low cost? I would think that would be a issue that everybody could rally around and say, that's exactly what every province wants for its government.

Mr. Speaker, as we go through them it just . . . It's hard to believe that this document would draw such strong criticism, criticism that talks about boycotting the very business that employs thousands, hundreds of thousands of people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

(14:30)

It talks about . . . How about this one, no. 5.5 here. It says lower taxes for consumers. Now who would those consumers be? Would they be unionized people or would we be . . . would this mean lower taxes for only non-union workers? Is that what is behind this document? And if that's what's behind this document, then maybe I could see what the SFL was talking about.

But that's not what is behind this document. What they're talking about is lowering taxes for consumers, for all consumers — whether they're unionized employees or whether they're un-unionized employees, Mr. Speaker. What they're talking about is putting more dollars in the pocket, more disposable income for people in this province to spend as they wish — not as the government wishes.

We could keep the taxes high, we could keep the corporate taxes high, and we could keep the personal consumer taxes high so that the government could spend that money. So that the government could spend that money in places like, oh I don't know, Atlanta, Georgia. How about Palm Springs? Things like that. I just love to be able to pay taxes so that the government can then invest them across the border, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps that is why the SFL is talking about boycotting business throughout the province. Because they're calling for lower taxes for consumers, Mr. Speaker, such as property tax. We talked about property tax over and over again in this Assembly. And to tell you the honest truth one of the scariest

times . . . One of the most shocking times I had in this Assembly is when I heard the Minister of Education talking about mill rate, and a 2 mill increase, that sounds small. I just can't believe that a Minister of Education would know so little about the impact of a mill rate in this province and would be calling herself the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the CFIB is asking for lower taxes in consumers by saying maybe we should lower the mill rate and property tax to give people more money in their pocket so that they can spend it on goods that they want, as opposed to the government spending it in provinces and countries and states that they want, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately, losing that money over and over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other topics here — ensure a sustainable workers' compensation system. Well that's a very interesting one that they would have brought that out three or four weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. And perhaps this is what the SFL was so upset about, and that's why they're calling for a boycott.

Do they not want a sustainable and guaranteed workers' compensation system, Mr. Speaker? I can't believe that, that members of unions don't want a sustainable workers' compensation system, Mr. Speaker. And if that's the case, then they should be very happy with the government they've got in place right now. For the first time in the history of Workers' Compensation, it is in an unfunded liability position, Mr. Speaker. They cannot cover their responsibilities into the future.

When we were doing estimates the other day, the minister said that they were at a 99.2 per cent funded liability position. Last year she said that they had, according to the Act, had to be at 100 per cent liability position but this year they're down to 99.2. For the first time in the history of WCB (Workers' Compensation Board), has it ever been in that position?

Now the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, is asking for a sustainable workers' compensation system. Now that may be the point that they're keying on and saying because of this — they're asking for a sustainable workers' compensation system — we should boycott business. Is that the argument for boycotting business throughout this province? I sure hope not, Mr. Speaker, because I think every employee and every employer in this province should be, have access to a sustainable WCB system, Mr. Speaker.

It also talks about addressing skill shortages; keeping our youth at home. Perhaps that's what the SFL is angry about. Perhaps that's why they are saying we should boycott business throughout the province. By keeping our youth at home, supplying jobs for youth at home to work in our own province as opposed to having to drive home every long weekend to see their parents and grandparents, is that what is so annoying about this proposal?

Mr. Speaker, keeping the youth at home is something that we have been talking about for a long time. We have been saying for the last three and a half years that it is extremely important that we . . . In fact, the very future of our province hinges on the ability for us to attract youth, for us to attract business, for us, for our province to grow over the next decade.

We have set a target of 100,000 people in the next 10 years and failing that, Mr. Speaker, this province is going to have a harder time paying the medical bills than it is right now, a harder time paying education costs than it is right now. The very sustainability of this province depends on growth, Mr. Speaker, and that is exactly what this document is talking about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would ask the SFL if they don't agree with growth, if they don't agree with more people working in this province, if they don't agree with more business coming into this province to supply jobs, both union and non-union, then what do they support, Mr. Speaker? What do they support?

I find it appalling that the SFL, which is joined at the hip with the NDP, and I'll be very interested as we go through this debate to see if the NDP support the position laid out very clearly by the SFL, because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we don't.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's with privilege that I move a motion, seconded by the member from Swift Current:

That this Assembly express its strong support for small-business owners throughout Saskatchewan and regret any calls by any organized labour leader in this province to stage a politically motivated boycott of those businesses, something that would ultimately hurt workers.

I so present.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly a pleasure to enter this debate and follow the member for Indian Head-Milestone who did a great job of outlining reasons why all members of this Assembly should have an interest in supporting this particular piece . . . this particular motion, I should say, Mr. Speaker, because it just fundamentally speaks to supporting the most important engine in our economy.

Now I can't count how many times I've heard members of the government, members of the NDP, quite rightly point out that indeed it's the small-business sector above any other sector — above the public sector and above the corporate, the large corporate sector, and above the co-op sector even — it's the small-business sector that creates jobs in this province to a greater degree than any other sector of the economy that really spurs on growth in our economy.

And so here we have the spectre, Mr. Speaker, of organized labour in the province of Saskatchewan, and specifically the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, as reported in April, in the April 23 *Leader-Post*, here we have the spectre of the SFL urging all of its members, all of its members, to boycott those very small businesses that the NDP believe, the political cousins of the SFL, the New Democratic Party believes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, and the member from Regina Qu'Appelle says hear, hear. And I am . . . And I certainly welcome his intervention in the debate and will be looking forward to his intervention and to his answer to the question, what has he done?

What steps has he taken to talk to his colleagues, to his friends in the SFL leadership, to talk them out of this scheme that

would feature, if you can believe it, Mr. Speaker, members of the SFL being urged by their leadership to boycott the very small-business men and women in the province of Saskatchewan who generate the taxes that indeed support the jobs that employ the members of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

Mr. Speaker, it all begins and ends with the creation of that job. And we all agree in this House — NDP, Sask Party, and perhaps the Liberal — we all agree that it is the small-business sector of our economy that is the number one creator of those jobs.

We know that we all agree that the small-business sector, small-business men and women, create the jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. And when each of those jobs is created a tax base, Mr. Speaker, a tax base is built, a tax base upon which we can afford the public services that pay the wages of the members of the SFL, the very organization that would seek to destroy the ability of those small businesses to create or maintain jobs by a boycott.

And so, Mr. Speaker, why this debate is important in this legislature is we will need to hear from the NDP members in this House what they are doing about this issue, what they have done about this issue. Have they taken the matter up with the SFL leadership? Has the Minister of Labour . . . did she contact immediately the leadership, Mr. Larry Hubich of the SFL, to talk him out of this strategy that they had taken, Mr. Speaker? That is what we will need the Minister of Labour to tell us.

And now in order for the Minister of Labour to do that, Mr. Speaker, there would have to be a relationship between the governing New Democrats, the Minister of Labour herself, perhaps, and the SFL leadership. It would be unfair, it would be unfair to ask the government, the NDP, to do anything in this regard if there was no relationship. And so we have to decide what is that relationship exactly, and if it exists then truly the minister should be compelled to do the right thing and contact them and intervene in this matter.

Well, we know if you get onto the World Wide Web and take a look at the NDP Web site for example, one of the links, Mr. Speaker, one of the links that they feature — actually there's two of them — under the Labour section, CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) National and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. They encourage people who come to the New Democratic Web site — fair enough — to go to the SFL Web site. That speaks of a relationship.

We know very well the minister from Indian Head-Milestone has highlighted the historical relationship between the New Democratic Party and organized labour, not just here in Saskatchewan but across the country. Fair enough. They certainly aren't ashamed of that and they make no bones about that fact at their conventions. It's quite clear there is an allegiance.

We know that there is a coordinated political strategy between the leadership of the SFL and the NDP. And make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about rank-and-file members of the union. We have every reason to believe that, just like the rest of the non-unionized sector of Saskatchewan, the unionized

sector of Saskatchewan, more of them voted for the Saskatchewan Party in the last election than the New Democratic Party.

But, Mr. Speaker, but we do know that there is a relationship between the leadership of the SFL and the government, including now the two former Liberal members who are now full-blown members of the NDP Party it would appear. They now would have a solid relationship with the leadership of the SFL.

We know now, we know, Mr. Speaker, we know that \$72,000 was provided in the fiscal year 2002 and 2003 from the Department of Learning to the SFL, probably some program funding. Certainly that's not the question here in this debate.

The question is, is there a relationship? And that speaks to one. In 2002 the Department of Labour provided the SFL 12,500 for funding various things. We're not debating what they might have or may not have funded, just that there's a relationship between the two.

So we know that there is a political relationship. We know that there's a relationship between the leadership. We know there's a funding relationship. So when the SFL proposes something like the boycotting, the boycotting of Saskatchewan small businessmen and women, you would want your government, Mr. Speaker, your government, no matter what its stripe is, you would want your government — whether it was NDP or Sask Party — you would want them to stand up and be able to assure the people of the province that they have done everything in their power to talk the SFL leadership out of such a boycott that would hurt the province's economy, that would indeed fly in the face of the fact that the future may or may not be wide open.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that is going to be the question later this day of these members. We don't mind telling them that. We don't mind telling them that. They're going to have to answer the question, what have they done? What have they done? Do they consider the matter serious?

They're all kind of . . . the Minister of Highways is laughing. He's laughing about the matter. It's not a serious issue. If his political friends in the SFL leadership, the people that fund his campaign probably, it's not his concern if they are now boycotting the same men and women in small business in this province that he expects to create jobs, to generate wages, so he can do something in his Department of Highways and Transportation. He's laughing about the matter. We'd hoped that they would take it more seriously, frankly. It's a very, very important . . . it's a very, very important issue.

(14:45)

The important question is this, what has that member done? What has the Highways minister of the province done? Has he picked up the phone to his political friends in the SFL leadership and fought for small business in this province? Has he done that, Mr. Speaker?

I would say he hasn't done that, Mr. Speaker, because it's not in his political interests to do that. It's not in the political interests of the NDP to pick any kind of a fight with the SFL leadership

on the eve of a provincial election when they need their support and when they need their money.

And that's what we're getting to today in this Assembly, because regardless of your ideology, Mr. Speaker — I'm sure the Minister of Highways in a more rational state would agree, regardless of his ideology — it is unhealthy for the province of Saskatchewan for one its largest organized labour leadership, for them to advocate a boycott of small business. Surely when he is less angered by something — I'm not sure what it is; he was laughing a moment ago, now he's angry — but when he is less angered by whatever it is that's bothering him, I think he would agree.

He would calm down and agree that it is never healthy, regardless of the stripe of the government, that a government would stand by and do absolutely nothing in the face of a potential boycott of its small business by someone from outside the province. No, Mr. Speaker, by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour leadership, by the leadership of the SFL.

Mr. Speaker, it's such an easy motion to support and I think members opposite, many members opposite will want to support this motion. Many will want to speak to the motion. They'll want to support small-business men and women.

And in so doing, it certainly doesn't mean, Mr. Speaker, that they're not supporting the rights of organized labour in the province, the right for workers to organize, the collective bargaining process. It doesn't mean that they would disrespect any of that. It would just mean they would be standing up for small-business men and women and doing the right thing. And we hope that the motion will be supported and that the action will be taken by the government to do exactly that.

And it's a pleasure to second the motion, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks, I'll move the following amendment seconded by the member from Saskatoon Southeast:

Remove all words after "Saskatchewan".

Mr. Speaker, I move this amendment because the government has created a positive environment and continues to improve the environment for small business to establish, prosper, and expand in our province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great place to live, learn, work and play, and do business.

I rise today in support of the government's record on promoting small business. And as I support these policies, I know these policies have support of the people of this great province. That's why Saskatchewan residents have chosen New Democrats to govern for approximately 40 of the past 60 years.

I know the members across will agree that not only do we have an astute workforce but an astute electorate. This great province, this province where the future is wide open, has just posted its 12th straight month of job growth; 12,900 more new

jobs April 2003 over April 2002. And youth employment was up 5,400 year over year.

Saskatchewan had the second lowest youth unemployment rate in Canada in April while the youth force . . . labour force grew.

The Saskatchewan economy . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Now why is the member . . . On a point of order?

**Mr. Weekes:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point of order, Mr. Speaker, is when the member from Swift Current was entering in debate, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley was shouting out the words that he was lying.

And according to Beauchesne's, 6th Edition, Mr. Speaker, that word is inappropriate and I would like that member to apologize for the use of that word.

**The Speaker:** — I thank the member for his intervention. If the Speaker would have heard that intervention and as described, the Speaker would have . . . definitely have required that member to withdraw the statement.

If the member is . . . did make that statement, I would ask the member to stand, to rise in his place and apologize to the House.

I recognize . . . The member may proceed.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — The Saskatchewan economy continues to show a strong performance with job growth in a number of key sectors including finance, insurance, real estate, service, and other primary industries.

Saskatchewan's unemployment rate is the third lowest in Canada in April at 6.1. Regina had the second lowest unemployment rate in April, of major Canadian cities, at 5.3 per cent. Saskatoon was tied, the fourth lowest at 5.9.

Mr. Speaker, retail sales continue to be among the strongest in the country as they were in 2002. Vehicle sales continues to rise. Year-to-date housing starts are up more than 50 per cent from 2002. Manufacturing shipments are up. Mineral production and value of mineral productions are up.

And the news in Saskatchewan keeps getting better. Private sector forecasters are positive in their outlook. TD Bank predicts Saskatchewan will have the third highest economic growth in Canada, both in 2003 and 2004. The Conference Board of Canada expects to see strong job growth in Saskatchewan in 2003 and 2004, and second highest economic growth in Canada in 2004. The Royal Bank expects Saskatchewan to rank third in Canada in economic growth this year.

Mr. Speaker, the economic plan we've been implementing, attracting investment, growing key sectors, balancing budgets with sustainable and responsible tax cuts, investing in infrastructure — all parts of our plan that are working. Unlike the members opposite, we have a plan making sure Saskatchewan future is wide open.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses in Saskatchewan are defined as those with fewer than 50 employees or less than 5 million in annual sales. These are the most successful businesses in the province and the lifeblood of the economy. Small businesses comprise more than 90 per cent of total number of non-agricultural private firms in the province. They directly employ about one-third of Saskatchewan labour force. They account for 40 per cent of the total private sector employment. Small business has created about 94 per cent of all new jobs in the province during the last decade. Mr. Speaker, our government supports small business.

Saskatchewan-based business's corporate income tax rate goes to 6 per cent in 2003 and will be 5 per cent by 2005, a 10 per cent drop since 1991. The corporate income tax will now be on the first 300,000, up from 200,000. In addition, Saskatchewan has a 15 per cent tax credit for scientific research and development expenditures. We have 35 to 40 per cent employment tax credit to encourage film developers to operate in the province. Saskatchewan can provide new employers with employee training grants to a maximum of 5,000 per employee to a maximum of 150,000 per company.

Mr. Speaker, the government-administered, community-run Small Business Loans Association program has loaned more than 3.5 million to approximately 500 start-up and non-traditional businesses. The program is credited with creating and maintaining over 1,100 jobs, primarily in rural communities. Mr. Speaker, supporting these small businesses are the people of Saskatchewan, and this government is making it possible by providing lower taxes.

A two-income family of four earning 50,000 a year will pay 1,500 less in Saskatchewan income tax in 2003. We've eliminated the debt reduction surtax and the Saskatchewan flat tax, making Saskatchewan's income tax system more progressive. In 2004 and every year thereafter, the residents of Saskatchewan will see their taxes continue to drop through full indexation.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses continue to thrive in an environment of not only financial — in health care, Saskatchewan's gift to the people of our province and the people of Canada. This government believes in building the foundation and we have boosted health care spending by 8 per cent to \$2.5 million.

Education — a record 1.2 billion investment to provide quality education for our young people. This includes 76 million in capital improvements for schools and post-secondary institutions.

All this, Mr. Speaker, to building the best workforce in the country. Mr. Speaker, workers need assistance and this government is providing just that, the largest child care expansion in the province's history. New child care funding supports new licensed child care spaces, new subsidized spaces and capital funding for building development renovations and fire safety requirements associated with new spaces. New additional early childhood services grant funding begins to address wage and human resources requirements in licensed child care facilities. With added capacity, there'll be approximately 7,900 child care spaces supported by an annual

budget of 22 million.

Mr. Speaker, small business needs roads. This year's provincial budget invests over 296 million in our highways and fulfills our three-year, 900 million commitment to renew Saskatchewan roads — to make them safer for Saskatchewan families and better for getting our products to the world.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you more, more about this great province and its exports. In a document prepared by STEP, Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, in 2001, Saskatchewan's international exports reached 14.6 billion compared to 9.95 billion just five years ago. Today international domestic exports account for nearly 70 per cent of Saskatchewan GDP (gross domestic product).

Arbel Pulse and Grain Company of Turkey, the largest pulse trader in the world, saw an opportunity to invest in Saskatchewan. As a result of a joint venture, Saskcan Pulse Trading opened its doors almost a year ago just outside of Regina and is already processing 24 hours a day at its Regina factory. Saskcan employs 25 full-time staff and exports over 95 per cent of its product to 20 markets in Americas, Indian subcontinent, Middle East, and Europe.

Beta-Bioproductions of Saskatoon recently launched a new line of cosmetic ingredients. The new line of supercritical extracted ingredients was launched based on researching an opportunity in the market for natural products. The current export markets are Europe, Asia, and North America.

Mr. Speaker, and what about the Crown corporations? The Crowns spent 2 billion a year . . . yearly on local purchases, capital spending, and employee earnings. Crowns purchased more than 12,000 local Saskatchewan businesses. Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy had the lowest rates in Canada four of the last six years. SaskPower had lower residential rates than corresponding rates in Alberta as of January 1, 2003.

And, Mr. Speaker, what does the Sask Party want to do? Sell off or deregulate. In *The Globe and Mail* of May 12, an article:

When Alberta finally took the step forward and partly deregulated the electricity market, consumers were promised a new era of lower prices. A deregulated market, they were told, was going to attract a raft of new competition to the province and drive down the electricity prices.

But the competition has happened only at the bigger end of the market . . .

With (the) three big players dominating the market, along with a rate cap of 11 cents a kilowatt hour, it is easy to understand why there has been no new competition at the smaller end of the market, which demands services to a huge number of small customers over a broad area. The result is two years and billions of dollars later, Albertans are paying the highest electricity costs in the country.

And last week they found out they would . . . (have to pay) more.

Mr. Speaker, the business needs a strong labour force. And, Mr. Speaker, because of our labour laws and progressive legislation in occupational health and safety, we have among the best workforces in the country if not the world — 9.8 years average job tenure, best in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much more I would like to say but I leave that for another time.

I would move the motion to amend the opposition motion, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Southeast:

Remove all words after “Saskatchewan.”

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Lorjé:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to enter into this debate today because, quite frankly, both the motion put by the Saskatchewan Party and the amendment moved by the member from Saskatoon Fairview and seconded by myself — proud members of the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan — goes to the very heart of the difference between the two parties.

Mr. Speaker, on the surface it would appear as if both of us, the Saskatchewan Party on one hand and the New Democratic Party on the other hand, are saying the same thing — that we support, endorse, and care very passionately about small businesses in this province. Because of course we all know small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy here.

But, Mr. Speaker, if you would read very carefully the motion that’s been put by the member from Indian Head and contrast that with the amendment put by the member from Saskatoon Fairview, you will see the total and complete difference in style and substance of the two parties.

(15:00)

The member from Indian Head said that the importance of supporting small business cannot be overemphasized. I totally, completely, agree with him. But then he went on to say and to insinuate in fairly carefully picked words, but to insinuate that somehow because the NDP cares as equally about organized labour that this is somehow a terrible or reprehensible thing.

He said, for instance, that the NDP is joined at the hip with the SFL, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. I’m not sure what school of anatomy he’s ever been to, but if we’re joined at the hip with the SFL — I presume he thinks that that must be the left hip — I want to tell you though there are two hips in a body, generally, and we are also joined on the other hip — maybe that’s the right hip — with small businesses and with regional economic development authorities, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Lorjé:** — The member from Swift Current, in seconding the motion, during his speech went on and tried to do as he always does in this House, Mr. Speaker, to distort reality, to give half facts, half information, and to sow the politics of discord and deception.

Mr. Speaker, my seatmate, the member from Melville, took great exception to the remark he made saying that the members from Melville and Saskatoon Northwest were full-blown members of the New Democratic Party. As anyone knows, anyone who has followed Saskatchewan politics, they are not members of the New Democratic Party, though I can assure you we have found that they have been honourable gentlemen and have conducted the affairs of the province of Saskatchewan in an extremely credible way and we would be more than willing to accept their \$10 membership. But they are not members of the NDP.

The member from Swift Current then goes on and challenges us to demonstrate that we’re standing up for small business. Mr. Speaker, I could stand here for the four minutes remaining in the time allotted to me and I could read into the record over three pages of things that this government has done to increase tax competitiveness. That increasing tax competitiveness, as he knows — as he very well knows — goes an incredibly long way to supporting small business. And I believe it demonstrates in a very clear and tangible way that we are standing up for small business in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask one of the Pages to very kindly deliver the compilation that I have here in my hands, the three pages of measures that we have introduced over the last 11 or 12 years to increase tax competitiveness for businesses in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I won’t read them all into the record right now, but I will say that this government has introduced a number, an incredible number of initiatives to improve the competitiveness of Saskatchewan’s business tax regime.

Mr. Speaker, we have reduced the small-business income tax rate from 10 per cent in 1991 to 6 per cent today, and we have made a further commitment to reduce it to 5 per cent by the year 2005. That of course is a year, the province’s centennial year, the year that we will still remain in government, improving the competitiveness regime for Saskatchewan small business, standing up for small business and for labour in this province.

Because I want to give the opposition a little hint. I’m going to tell them a secret about why the NDP forms government and why they will never form government. Now all my colleagues are saying I shouldn’t let them in on the secret but, you know, it’s a secret that the proud million people in this province know.

Mr. Speaker, the secret to being government in Saskatchewan is to represent all the people — not to sow the politics of discord and division but to represent all people; to recognize that Saskatchewan, as a land of opportunity, is also a land of fairness; to understand that Saskatchewan is also a land of compassion, a land of caring, and a land that cares for all people and doesn’t try to pick winners and losers and to sow division and discord.

Mr. Speaker, this motion, as I said, goes to the very heart of the differences between our two political parties. We do stand up for small businesses. We do more than just mutter about how great they are. We introduce sound, practical measures to stand up for small business.

Mr. Speaker, I started to talk about the small-business income tax rate that we have reduced so dramatically. We've also increased the annual amount of income eligible for this rate, from 200,000 up to \$300,000. We've significantly reduced corporate capital taxes for Saskatchewan-based businesses. And we have also introduced a number of tax incentives targeted to specific segments of the provincial economy including manufacturing and processing, the film industry, and the resource sector. Mr. Speaker, we are doing all this to improve tax competitiveness and to encourage Saskatchewan-based small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we are also working with small businesses in the area of immigration. We have a provincial nominee program, and small businesses, I will say, are the most enthusiastic supporters of the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. Do you know I asked people over in the department earlier today to get me some statistics and as of November 2002, 65 per cent, 65 per cent of the employers taking advantage of the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program have been businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

The provincial nominee program is something that supports small businesses, and the number of nominees has been increasing each and every year. We've started out quite small but it's like a little snowball that's going down the hill and it's gathering momentum, gathering speed — it's soon to become an avalanche — because each year for the last couple of years, we've been doubling the number of provincial nominees.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up my remarks just by saying that I do not believe the politics of division and discord, as demonstrated by the party opposite, are the politics that Saskatchewan people truly care about. They do not . . . They understand, they understand that we, all of us, live in a truly great province and that we, all of us, care very passionately for small business and for labour both. Mr. Speaker, I will take my place now saying that I am very proud to second the amendment from the . . . by the member from Saskatoon Fairview. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to take part in this debate. It's incredible that the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and I'll quote from their news release on April 23, 2003:

"If this business lobbyist outfit can't find anything better to do with its time than attack working people then we have every legal and moral right to respond appropriately," Hubich said.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's incredible that those words would come out of a labour union head in this province. It's incredible for many reasons, but the most incredible reason is that this leader of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is considering boycotting small businesses in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's kind of like cutting off your nose to spite your face.

The small businesses in this province are what creates the job; they're the engine of growth in this province. And if the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour wants to hurt the

employers of this province, guess what's going to happen? It's going to hurt the union members, union and non-union workers of this province. So it does not make any sense whatsoever why this policy would be adopted.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business speak on behalf of the independent businesses in this province. And one of the reasons maybe the head of the SFL is so concerned with this Canadian Federation of Independent Business is possibly the reality of what's going on in Saskatchewan.

The member from Saskatoon Southeast is saying what all the wonderful things that this NDP government has been doing on the tax front. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to . . . Some information coming from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is when they do their polling — and by the way, Mr. Speaker, the CFIB has 5,300 members across this province and they make a point of polling their members on all aspects that concern small businesses in this province — and one of their recent polls that they did of their members was the priority issues for Saskatchewan. At the top of the issue was total tax burden in this province. And the members of the CFIB polled 86.7 per cent as tax burden as the highest concern for small businesses. The second one is Workers' Compensation.

As we know now, Mr. Speaker, Workers' Compensation is an unfunded liability position. That's incredible, Mr. Speaker, because that puts the whole plan in jeopardy. It puts the Workers' Compensation at risk. As we know, the workers . . . the employers of this province fund WCB and now it's an unfunded liability, not because of what the employers are doing, because the handling of this NDP government and its hand-picked NDP head of the Workers' Compensation Board.

Mr. Speaker, as we have seen the last two years, the NDP government has mismanaged Workers' Compensation and it's to the . . . and it's a real serious concern because when they mismanage Workers' Compensation . . . The board is there to protect injured workers of this province, and it's something that the NDP forget about is what's good for the workers of this province.

The other points on the CFIB poll was third place was government regulation paper burden, 72.2 per cent. Number three closely, or four, closely behind regulation is provincial labour laws at 67.2 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, so this government has a long ways to go before they can claim any victory concerning the red tape and labour laws in this province.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, the businesses either are leaving this province or they have been leaving for 10 years. And if . . . and the businesses aren't leaving, there's a big red flag at the border of Saskatchewan because they know the NDP are in power and that there's unfair labour laws in this province, which is just a red flag to businesses in this province. They'll take their investment dollars elsewhere.

And we know they've been taking it to other jurisdictions — Alberta, Manitoba. Even in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP government, they've taken a moderate position as far as labour laws and working with businesses, and it shows in their expanding manufacturing base and a growing economy

compared to Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's incredible that the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour would consider taking, basically taking a run at the small businesses of this province. Of course as we see, we don't know if the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is going to continue with this bizarre position or not. Possibly some sense will come to the Federation of Labour, and I'm hopeful that the leaders of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour will take a second look at this.

Because we know, we talk to union members and non-union workers in this province and what they tell us is they don't agree with the NDP position in this province. They don't agree with many of their own Saskatchewan Federation of Labour rules and regulations that they espouse, Mr. Speaker.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, in the last election that many unionized and non-unionized workers voted for the Saskatchewan Party. And I'll make a prediction that there will be many, many more unionized and non-unionized workers voting for the Saskatchewan Party in the next election. We'll form a majority government after the next election, and it's just a matter of when the election's going to be called, and after Saskatchewan Party forms government, what kind of a mess this NDP government will leave this province in? That's the only two questions that are out there, Mr. Speaker.

(15:15)

If this policy continues with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, we're going to see more pressure put on the small businesses of this province. And this is something that the small business of this province do not need. They are in a very competitive environment because of having to compete with taxpayer dollars, they're having to compete with the NDP Crown corporations. And so they are really on a . . . in a very dangerous situation as far as their economic health, having to compete not only around the world with other businesses, but they also have to compete with their own government in this province, as we have seen many times in the past.

As we know, there is an incestuous relationship between the unions and the NDP. We see through the union deductions — which are mandatory by the way; the workers do not have a choice of giving to their union leaders — and then they pass it on to their friends in the NDP. So it's quite a concern to the workers of this province, to the unionized workers of this province, that the NDP Party are taking policies, making policies that hurt the independent businesses of this policy and hurting the jobs that the small business create in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we have seen there is another way to approach labour management, government relations, and the Saskatchewan Party has a plan. The Saskatchewan Party believes in a partnership. The Saskatchewan Party believes in a partnership with business, it believes in a partnership with Aboriginals, it believes in a partnership with the farm community of this province, and believes in a partnership with the workers of this province — both unionized and non-unionized workers in this province.

And after forming government, the Saskatchewan Party will put

that plan in place to come together, to work together in a co-operative fashion, to grow this province. Naturally we're going to, obviously, do something about the way the Crown corporations are competing with small businesses in this province. And we will certainly, certainly, bring all these groups together under one tent, into a common goal of growing this province.

And we believe we can grow this province by 10,000 people per year over 10 years, have 100,000 more people after 10 years by working co-operatively together, working with all groups, and joining together with union and non-unionized workers for the benefit of the province as a whole, not for the benefit of one particular group that supports the NDP Party or one political party. We believe in supporting the province as a whole for the common good of everyone in the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's incredible that the members opposite have amended this motion. And we will see in questions shortly, how the NDP Party really feel about small businesses in this province when they have to answer some very difficult questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to stand in support of the amended motion proposed by our newest member and the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

And I think that what we will see, what we've heard is that the Sask Party wants the NDP to show its support on the record for small business in Saskatchewan. And members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, do that not only on the record, not only by standing in the House and speaking about it, we do it by deed.

And there have been many, many initiatives over the period of time since we've been government and over the period of time to continue. As has already been mentioned, the reduction of the corporate tax will come down yet further. It has been reduced this year and will continue to be reduced through till 2005. And then we'll see where we go from there, Mr. Speaker.

But they say they want us to show our record . . . on the record our support for the small-business community in this province. And I say that I and other members on this side of the House are very pleased to do that.

But I think that the most significant remarks on record today, Mr. Speaker, the most significant remarks, the ones that will be the widest distributed, the ones that will be paid the most attention to, are the remarks of the Saskatchewan Party which show their obvious contempt, their obvious contempt, for organized labour in this province. And I think that that's . . . therein is the shame of it, Mr. Speaker. And many of their remarks are aimed at the SFL and a lot of the larger organizations in this province and the leadership.

But I think it's very interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that small business is defined, in Saskatchewan small business is defined as those businesses with fewer than 50 employees or less than \$5 million in annual sales. And there are certainly some of those that are organized, but I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there are many more who are not organized and are not represented by the SFL, but nevertheless their concerns are

taken into account in all of the labour lobbies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these small businesses are certainly some of the most successful businesses in this province. And as has been said, and I'm proud to indeed join in the praise, those small businesses are the lifeblood of this economy. They actually comprise more than 90 per cent of the total number of non-agricultural private firms in the province.

They directly employ about one-third of Saskatchewan's labour force. They account for approximately 40 per cent of the total private sector employment. They created — and we've been talking a lot, Mr. Speaker, about the record of job creation in this province — and small businesses created about 90 per cent of all new jobs in the province during the last decade.

And that's a record that we're proud of for the way that we've been able to assist small business in this province. And it's a record that small business should most certainly be proud of in the way that they've been able to deliver 94 per cent of all the new jobs in the province during the last decade.

Forty-two per cent of all Saskatchewan businesses are located in rural areas. And we constantly hear criticism from the opposition about our labour policy, and yet many of those jobs and many of those small businesses are located in rural Saskatchewan. And you would think that there would be more support for employees and employers over there because we have an awful lot of people who work in rural Saskatchewan — 25 per cent of the total employment in this province.

And we have initiatives designed to support small business through growth and development. And I think that that is something that our province is, and our government is very proud of — how we've been able to encourage development of business networks, business mentoring programs, and new business collaborations; creation of the single-window initiative to coordinate regional business support networks with the services of the Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre.

So there are many, many things that we can be proud of, that the government can be proud of, and that the small-business community can be proud of.

And I want to emphasize again, Mr. Speaker, just last week we had the latest update on the labour statistics and for one straight year Saskatchewan has had great news to report on the job front — more jobs, more opportunities, and a future wide open.

The Statistics Canada labour force report indicates that there were 12,900 more jobs in the province compared to April of last year. And I think that that's very significant. But do you ever, ever hear praise from the opposition, from the Sask Party? No you never hear praise from the Sask Party and yet the jobs are created — they're created by the very people that they want to stand up and try to divide and conquer on this side of the House and that side of the House.

We celebrate the successes of small business. We constantly highlight that. And yet what do they do? They stand up and criticize the efforts of the government and of small business for creating 12,900 more jobs this year than last year.

So I think that those things are a good indication that the economy continues to show strong job . . . strong performance in job growth. We in Saskatchewan have the lowest unemployment rate in April 2003 of major Canadian cities at 5.3 per cent. Saskatoon is tied at . . . with the fourth lowest at 5.9 per cent. And opportunities for youth in our province are certainly a priority, and there was an increase of 5,400 new jobs for youth and new youth were employed in Saskatchewan.

But all you ever hear from the opposition is that our young people are leaving the province. Well they can't all be leaving, Mr. Speaker, because there are 5,400 more young people working in our province this year compared to last year. And the youth unemployment rate is down. It's down from 12.5 per cent in April 2002 to 10.3 in April 2003.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, there are many things to celebrate. We're proud of the small-business sector. We're proud of the government's record on assisting them through whatever means are possible, through various tax incentives that have been mentioned by my colleagues. And there is absolutely no reason for the Sask Party to think that this government does not support small business, and we do.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Sixty-five minutes of the 75-minute debate have now elapsed. We will now proceed to the 10-minute question period.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you much, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the member from Redberry Lake. I would ask the member if he would lay out for the members of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan what unfair labour laws that he continues to refer to and what labour laws he will change, amend, and what rights he'll take away from ordinary working people in Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to respond to the questions from the member from the opposite side. As we know, the motion we're debating here is whether . . . The question is whether the NDP are supporting this boycott by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and are they taking any steps to stop this horrendous boycott which is hurting members of their own Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, both unionized members and non-unionized members.

And the member should take steps immediately to stop this boycott and help its members and help the small businesses of this province to grow this province, to create more jobs for the good of everyone in this province so the government of the day — which will be a Saskatchewan Party government soon — so that the government has more money for education and health.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMorris:** — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Meewasin, and I guess it may be as a hypothetical question because the boycott hasn't gone into place. But if Larry Hubich and the SFL follow through with their boycott of . . . (inaudible) . . . businesses throughout this province — 5,200 businesses throughout this province — will she be supporting that boycott by not shopping

at those businesses?

**Ms. Jones:** — Mr. Speaker, the member, the Sask Party member who is the Labour critic, asks the question would I be supporting a hypothetical boycott if indeed it would occur. On this side of the House, we don't deal with hypothetical, Mr. Speaker. We deal with when a situation occurs that we will respond. We will respond when the time occurs.

However this is not a response for the government. This is a matter between organized labour and the CFIB. We have a good record of support for small business. We also support working people, but they will make their decisions about how best to respond to a lobby from either side, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the speech given by the member for Indian Head-Milestone and I thought it was interesting given the lack of democracy that seems to be from that side of the House.

(15:30)

I would just ask the question for him, is there freedom of speech for businesses to give their point of view but not freedom of speech for people that belong to a union, men and women? Does he believe that the member from Saskatchewan Rivers should be able to stand up and say what he has to say or should he be curtailed in his freedom of speech? Should the former member of this House, Grant Schmidt, who wanted to be a candidate, you know the lack of democracy shown there, does he support that sort of thing?

So I guess my question in summation, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Indian Head-Milestone: does he believe in freedom of speech for business only or does he believe in freedom of speech for labour unions as well?

Thank you.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the member asked that question. Because yes, on this side of the House, unlike that side of the House, we do believe in freedom of speech. We believe in freedom of speech on any union drive that comes in this province. We will allow not only the union leaders to talk to employees but will also allow businesses to talk to employees.

I will ask the members on that side: will they not support freedom of speech and let business owners talk to their employees during a union drive? That's freedom of speech, Mr. Speaker. Do you want to talk freedom of speech? That's freedom of speech.

So do we support freedom of speech on this side? Absolutely. Unlike the government party.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld. The question is direct. It is a yes or no question. It deserves a yes or a no answer.

Has the NDP — have any members on that side of the House or any representative of the NDP — intervened with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour leadership to put an end to the talk of a boycott of Saskatchewan's small businesses?

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, to date I am unaware of a boycott.

And whether or not this question is directed or hypothetical, I spent quite a bit of time pointing out that we are in support of small business in a number of things. And the kind of division, the kind of division, the kind of division that we're hearing from the other side, the kind of distortion that we hear on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's not much like when we ask the opposition members where do they stand on SaskPower? Are they going to sell it off or deregulate it, Mr. Speaker? We were here and we spent new. . . We have . . . Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. The member's time has elapsed. Order. The member's time has elapsed.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I know that the Leader of the Opposition has stated publicly that all of his members will answer questions in this Legislative Assembly. So I have a question for the member from Redberry.

To the member: you have on occasion introduced as a . . .

**The Speaker:** — I'd just remind the member to speak through the Chair.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Pardon me. The member from Redberry has introduced through a private member's Bill right-to-work legislation in the province of Saskatchewan. Can he describe what he means, what the member means by right-to-work legislation? Does it mean that members of unions have a right not to be a member of a union? What precisely does right-to-work legislation mean?

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be glad to answer that question. Mr. Speaker, as a former Labour critic, I've done a lot work in the labour area. And since the election in 1999 we have talked to businesses and labour groups and union heads and union members, and we've talked to a lot of people and we've answered a lot of their questions.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened to the workers of this province. When the workers of this province said that they wanted a secret ballot when they go to organize a union, that's . . . we agreed with them and we put that as a part of our policy — a secret ballot to determine whether they want to have a union or not.

Mr. Speaker, when we listened to the businesses of this province and they said they wanted freedom of information, freedom of speech in the workplace when it came to discussing a union organization drive in their workplace, so we have responded by giving that.

And directly to the member's question, we listened to the labour leaders of this province and they said right-to-work legislation was unacceptable to them and we agreed. We withdrew that

from our party platform . . .

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Southeast, the same question that I asked the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

If the SFL asks you to boycott businesses throughout this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If the SFL asked that member to boycott businesses throughout the province, what businesses that employ members from the SFL will she agree to . . . Will that member agree to boycott those businesses and perhaps contribute to their demise?

**Ms. Lorjé:** — Mr. Speaker, apparently the member from Indian Head is under the mistaken impression that we are debating the motion that he put, which is, I would suggest, full of the politics of division and discord. We very clearly moved an amendment to say that this Assembly expresses its strong support for small-business owners throughout Saskatchewan.

During his speech, Mr. Speaker, he challenged us. He said, the importance of supporting small business cannot be overemphasized. I'm going to tell you how we support small business — by increasing Saskatchewan tax competitiveness. In 1992, the small-business corporation income tax rate was reduced from 10 per cent to . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Well I thank all members for their participation in the debate.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 5 — Legislative Reform

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to . . . At the conclusion of my remarks, I'll be moving the motion:

That this Assembly recognize the advancements that this government has initiated with democratic reform of the legislature, reforms that bring the people of Saskatchewan closer to government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the issue of democracy. Democracy is what we fundamentally, as citizens of Canada, see as our rights to express our opinions and our rights to vote in a duly elected government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's an old concept in democracy. It's very simple: the minority have the right to have their say, just like the majority do, but in the end of the day, the majority rules, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, elections are about the right of the majority to rule. And on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we believe very strongly in that democratic principle. But, Mr. Speaker, the members of the Saskatchewan Party don't believe in the democratic principle of the majority rules, the majority wins.

Now I just want to cite an example. Just a few short weeks ago, the constituents, the members of the Saskatchewan Party from

the constituency of Melville, they voted. They turned out in some 1,200 to vote on who they'd like to be their representative for the Saskatchewan Party in the next provincial election.

And, Mr. Speaker, they voted overwhelmingly, they voted overwhelmingly for a gentleman by the name of Grant Schmidt, a gentleman who served in this legislature for a number of years — a gentleman who, although I may not agree with his politics, I may not agree with his particular point of view on issues, Mr. Speaker, nonetheless a gentleman who served his constituents well because obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those very same constituents wanted to send him back to this very same legislature.

And they turned out in number on a very stormy night in the constituency of Melville to vote. And they voted overwhelmingly for Mr. Schmidt. And then Mr. Schmidt, Mr. Schmidt wanted then to move forward, as any of us who are elected as candidates, to be the candidate in the next provincial election representing the Saskatchewan Party. And the old concept that most votes wins should have allowed him to do that.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no, the Saskatchewan Party leader and the Saskatchewan Party executive and hierarchy decide no, Mr. Grant Schmidt isn't good enough to be their candidate in the next upcoming provincial election.

Not only did they say he's not good enough, they went on to malign his character, to attack him personally, and do things that no respectable political leader should ever do to a candidate from his own party, or for that matter, to another individual.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about Grant Schmidt's history. To my knowledge — and I watched the political career of Grant Schmidt as did most of the people of Saskatchewan — he was never, never found guilty of anything criminal, never found to have done anything morally . . . or disrespectful, or anything that would make him ineligible to sit as a member of the legislature.

I have to say that I didn't agree with his viewpoints and I didn't agree with his political position on many things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he served his constituents in the manner in which they elected him to serve. He served them well. We may, him and I, may have very well had very strong differences of opinion but he was the people's choice.

And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 12 years later this gentleman — who was good enough to be the president of the Melville constituency Saskatchewan Party executive — sought again the right to represent the people of Melville in this great Assembly. And he went forward, he went forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, put forward his position to the people at a nominating convention. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those people, those people chose by a majority to support Grant Schmidt as being the Sask Party candidate from Melville-Saltcoats in the next provincial election.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know what the Saskatchewan Party is thinking when they believe they can overturn a valid election, voted for by the majority of people who own memberships in their own party in that constituency, for no

more reason than they don't like the individual.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does that say about democracy? That says that in the Saskatchewan Party, democracy's not important. It says that what the people of the province want, or in that case the people of the Melville-Saltcoats constituency wanted, wasn't important — that a few people can get together in a backroom and say what the people want is not important, that they can overturn the elected choice of the people because they don't like it.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does that say if that party ever formed government? That they could overturn the very things that the people of this province want. What's it say about the right as an elected member of the legislature to have the ability to speak freely? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it significantly hurts the very things for which we as citizens of this province stand for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we stand for the right of people to speak their mind, to have opinions other than that of the leader of the party. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what this whole institution's about; that is what democracy's about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two people can have different opinions. They can have different approaches to solve a problem. And that should be debated vigorously in this Assembly. But if a member of the Saskatchewan Party, a grassroots member has an opinion that varies from that of the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party says he doesn't have the right to be a member of the legislature.

So he has the right to choose who's going to represent the grassroots people in his own party. He has the right to defeat and overturn what the very grassroots of his party wants. So that's utter disdain for the grassroots, and by doing so it's utter disdain for the democratic principle.

So it doesn't matter what the members of the Saskatchewan Party want, it only matters what the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party wants. Is that the type of leader that anybody would want to elect to be the premier of Saskatchewan? I'd say no, because an individual has utter disdain for democracy, has utter disdain for the very institution, for the very principles in which we as a province stand for.

(15:45)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to contrast that value or viewpoint of the Saskatchewan Party leader to that of the Leader of the New Democratic Party, the current Premier of Saskatchewan. I want to talk about the many advancements that he has made in democratic reform, bringing this great institution closer to the people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to start by one of the most recent events that we've had to deal with, that of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What happens in the Electoral Boundaries Commission when they bring forward . . . when, pardon me, the commission is structured, that the Chief Justice will appoint the Chair of the committee. Then it's up to the Executive Council or the Premier to appoint two other members to the committee. The current Premier of the province chose, because he believed it to be the

right thing to do, that there needed to be fairness, not only in his mind but also in the view of the public, in the appointment of the commission.

He allowed the Leader of the Opposition to appoint one of the members of the commission and then the government appointed the other, so that the people of Saskatchewan could have faith in that the Electoral Boundaries Commission was truly looking at the new electoral boundaries for the province, not from a self-interest point of view but from a point of view that was fair to all citizens of the province. That's what the Leader of the New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan, the current Premier, did. He put aside any opportunity to appoint two people, and allowed the Leader of the Opposition to appoint one of those two people to the commission.

That is true democracy. That is moving forward in a way that shows great leadership and respect for the viewpoints of all people in the province. He, by doing that, showed that it was all right and acceptable for somebody on that commission to have a different point of view than the representative he appointed to the commission, that good public policy comes from being able to debate differences of opinion, not by putting down or stifling differences of opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So where the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party will say that democracy doesn't count, if some duly elected candidate from one of his own constituencies to represent his party in the upcoming election has a different point of view, he won't let that person run. Contrast to the current Premier of the province who allowed the Leader of the Opposition, which he didn't have to do, to appoint one of the three members to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The Chief Justice appoints the Chair and then the government appoints the third member.

So this Premier not only believes in the principle of democracy and fairness, he demonstrates it by what he does. He demonstrates it in the actions in which he takes, in the fairness he wishes to display to the people of Saskatchewan, for the people of Saskatchewan, because he truly believes in democracy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk about the new opening . . . the opening up of the committee structure in the legislature that's been proposed by this government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's going to have citizens and stakeholders being able to go before committees of the legislature — all-party committees of the legislature — to talk about proposed legislation, to put forward ideas, amendments, concerns, so that all members of the legislature . . . or, pardon me, all the members of the committee from all parties of the legislature have an opportunity to hear from those stakeholders firsthand. It's opening up democracy so that the citizens of this province have a greater say in the future of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are significant steps forward. That's talking about valuing the opinions of others. It's talking about listening to the opinions of all. It's talking about working with all people to make the province a better place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's far significant . . . far different — far different — than what we heard from the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party when he wouldn't even, he wouldn't even

allow a member to run for his party that might have a difference of opinion with himself. That's not only about democracy, that's about a leader who wants party for . . . or wants power for power's sake and doesn't care about the viewpoints of others. He's interested only in what's important to himself.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that tells a great message about the basic fundamentals of the institution in which I am part of and all members of this Assembly are part of; an institution that allows debate, that allows differences of opinion, and allows ultimately the majority of those of us who are elected to represent their constituents make decisions.

It allows members . . . It talks about allowing members of the Assembly to have differences of opinion whether they're on the government side or on the opposition side. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would never stifle anybody from having the right to have their say. Members of the government side, in the last four years that I've been elected, have had the opportunity when they were unhappy or had some concerns about particular pieces of legislation, they stood up and brought forward those concerns in this House.

That's what democracy is about. It's about being able to speak freely about your concerns. And at the end of the day, democracy says that the minority have the say and the majority, through voting, get their way. Well on this side of the House, we believe very strongly in that principle. We believe in that.

We're not going to stop a duly elected, nominated member from ever running in election, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Members opposite, members opposite may talk like that's happened on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, but it's never happened. In one case, Mr. Speaker, an individual withdrew, an individual withdrew because he was facing personal challenges. And we on this side of this House respect the fact, we respect the fact that an individual member has a right to withdraw from running if he's facing personal challenges.

But we won't force, we won't force anybody not to run. And we haven't forced anybody not to run, unlike the members opposite, unlike the members opposite. A duly elected member of the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats for the Saskatchewan Party, who faced no criminal or moral issues, no criminal or moral issues, was not allowed to run for the Saskatchewan Party because he had a difference of opinion with the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, democracy would say that that's flaunting it and throwing it right in the face of the very institution in which we're part of. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, democracy is a principle that we cannot afford to play with because if you will flaunt democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will do anything because you believe that the rights of the majority aren't important, that the end justifies the means, and you can do whatever you want to do, that you don't have to listen to the majority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is flying in the very, very face of democracy. It's very dangerous. It's extremely dangerous to the principles on which our country and our province have governed themselves since Confederation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's put that in contrast to the Premier. The Premier who, by his actions, made the Electoral Boundaries Commission represent all political parties, and fair to all peoples of the province. The fact that this Premier led the opening up of the committee system in this province to bring democracy closer to the people. That he opens up the committee structure so that citizens and stakeholders can go before an all-party committee to bring their concerns forward, not just before the government but before all-party committee so both the views of the stakeholder are heard at the same time by both members of the government and members of the opposition.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought the member from Regina Dewdney needed a little break. It's a pleasure to introduce a group of students that have just joined us in the Assembly this afternoon, Mr. Speaker — 24 grade 8 students from Whitewood, accompanied by their teacher, Elaine Wyatt, and I notice a few of their chaperones and teachers. I see they've also brought Pastor John along, so that's a good thing.

But a special welcome to the students who have come to join us this afternoon. I look forward to meeting with them shortly for pictures, and just an opportunity to discuss some of the proceedings that they're witnessing this afternoon, and at that time I'll just explain the process.

As you'll note the demeanour in the Assembly is a lot calmer than if you'd have come at question period, but we'll talk about that a little later on. So a special welcome to the students and I'd invite the members to join me in welcoming them today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 5 — Legislative Reform (continued)

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased to continue with my remarks. As we are here debating today the fundamental principle of democracy, the very fundamental principle of the institution in which I stand today, it's very fitting that those who witness this debate have an opportunity to hear the different views on democracy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to use a number . . . a quote from a number of articles in papers throughout the province.

I want to talk . . . the headline here is, "‘Holy inner circle’ of Saskatchewan Party." Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes on to say and I quote:

Some, like former Conservative Dan D'Autremont, say Schmidt was given the boot because of his ties to the

Conservative Party. My goodness, they are going to wear out their shoes kicking out everyone who meets that description!

What about MLA Brenda Bakken? What about MLA Doreen Eagles, who was Grant Devine's personal assistant?

What about MLA Brad Wall, who was an assistant to John Gerich while Gerich was Grant Schmidt's associate minister in the Department of Economic Development?

MLA Don Toth served one term in the Devine government.

And nearly all the current Saskatchewan Party senior staff cut their political teeth in the . . . (same) government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if Grant Schmidt's greatest sin was being tied to the Grant Devine government of the 1980s, well then why are not all these other members being kicked out? Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the question I think that the people of Saskatchewan wonder about.

Grant Schmidt was a duly elected candidate by the majority of members in attendance at a duly constituted nomination convention. The majority spoke. They elected Grant Schmidt and then the Sask Party executive and members decide no, they can overrule the democratic principle of democracy that most votes win. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a very, very scary concept.

I would like to refer to another article in the *Leader-Post* dated Monday, March 24, 2003. It's from Bob Hughes, an editorial. And it says as its title, "Maybe voters should decide which candidate they like." A novel concept — democracy. But this article goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to say that the voters did speak in Melville-Saltcoats. The voters did speak.

Those members that held Saskatchewan Party membership, those individuals that held Saskatchewan Party memberships in the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats turned up, some 1,200 of them, and they spoke. And the majority voted for Grant Schmidt. And then the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party can decide that democracy does not count.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've got an interesting bit of information here. It's from the P.A. *Herald*, August 12, 1997. And it says, "Krawetz chosen interim leader for new party" — referring to the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it goes on and I quote:

"Krawetz said he welcomes the endorsements of people like former Conservative premier Grant Devine and former cabinet minister Grant Schmidt."

(16:00)

P.A. (Prince Albert) *Herald*. P.A. *Herald*, August 12, 1997:

The first leader, the interim leader of the Saskatchewan Party praised (praised) the endorsements of former cabinet minister, Grant Schmidt.

And now he and others in the backrooms decide that Grant Schmidt is not fit to run as the democratically elected representative for the Saskatchewan Party for the Melville-Saltcoats constituency.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there is no greater tragedy in our democratic system than to flaunt the very democracy of which we all must uphold — the very democracy that this institution is all about.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes on. And I have an article here that says, "Sask. Party democracy put to (the) test." And this is from a Hali Oleksyn. It goes on and talks about:

As one of "the clever voters of Melville," I attended the nomination meeting on March 3. Many . . . (Saskatoon) Party MLAs were sitting in the back of the auditorium, and I can guarantee that their behaviour was both rude and unprofessional.

It goes on to say:

I overheard jokes about sabotaging the buses from Melville and watched and listened as they rolled their eyes and snickered throughout Grant Schmidt's speech. They managed to top off their "professional" behaviour by chanting "Bob, Bob, Bob!" just as Schmidt finished his speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree the Saskatchewan Party's democracy was put to the test. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they badly, badly failed that test.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have here a letter from Lesley Nordick. And it calls . . . it says, "Democracy (is) alien to (the) Opposition." And it reads, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Ever since the Saskatchewan Party formed itself out of the tatters of the old Liberal and Tory parties, I and most people I know have tried to figure out (what it stands . . . figure out what for) for what it stands (Mr. Deputy Speaker, pardon me).

What we've learned so far is that you can't depend on what its members say because any one of them will say anything at any time, depending on the way the wind is blowing.

One day, they don't believe in government investment in the economy, says their leader. The next, (day) they elect an MLA from Wilkie who has lobbied the government to invest in a new spa in his town. That's one example. You can see why I'm confused.

The Schmidt affair helped us a bit. We learned one thing they don't believe in: democracy. The wishes of the 1,200 people who nominated Grant Schmidt mattered not a sniff, overturned in another back room by a group of faceless party executives.

Now, the Wiberg affair, (it says) where (the) Saskatchewan Rivers MLA Daryl Wiberg first opposed the Saskatchewan Forest Centre in Prince Albert, then changed his mind to support it because he was told the community wanted it,

then changed his mind again when leader Elwin Hermanson told him that his party didn't like the centre.

So now we know that what a Saskatchewan Party MLA's constituents want doesn't matter. More proof that democracy is a foreign concept.

So, we know in what they believe. What does that leave? The only thing I can see is that the party wants power and will do anything to get it. What the people want, what Schmidt wants, what Wiberg wants, what the people who support them want, matters not . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. Hon. members, I'm attempting to listen to the member speaking and I'm having a difficult time hearing him. If we could just have the background noise toned down.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Obviously the members opposite, we hit a nerve, because even the members opposite, even the members opposite know that the people of Saskatchewan believe in a democratic principle. They believe in the concept of democracy. And the more they flaunt it, the more they stick their eye in the concept of democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the more that they become nervous and upset at their own actions, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, anyone who believes in the institution of government, believes in the right of democracy and freedom of speech, cannot be very comfortable with what they have done.

They have to be ashamed of themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They can't, they can't, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I hear the member — the current member from Melville, or pardon me, the current member from Saltcoats — say he feels terrible. Well he should feel terrible because Grant Schmidt was elected, beat him in a nomination, beat him in a nomination, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And he wouldn't even respect the democratic principle of those . . . the person who gets the most votes wins.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party as I wind my remarks up. Again, I have an article here that says, "Hermanson apologizes to Schmidt." The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party had to apologize because the remarks he made about Grant Schmidt after he won the nomination in Melville-Saltcoats were so over the edge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they went so far that he faced a challenge in the courts if he didn't apologize. So he apologized because he knew, he knew that he could not get away with those types of comments and that the people of Saskatchewan, and in fact the very laws which we stand up for as members of the legislature, wouldn't allow him to go as far as he went, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Here's the article. I'm going to read just a couple of paragraphs. It says:

Saskatchewan Party Leader Elwin Hermanson faxed an apology to Grant Schmidt Thursday to apologize for comments he made about the Melville lawyer and rejected party candidate.

Schmidt said Wednesday he was considering suing Hermanson for telling the Saskatchewan News Network

last week "most people in the Saskatchewan Party . . . (don't) feel they would trust Grant Schmidt with their family, their business interest, (or) with their finances."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a man who served in this Assembly for more than 10 years, honourably. We don't have to agree with his politics. We don't have to agree with the decisions he made. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the very people who elected him to serve in the 1980s turned out in mass numbers to re-elect him as their candidate for the Melville-Saltcoats constituency in the upcoming election. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the majority spoke.

And not only did the Sask Party have to take away his right to run — in the backrooms — not only did they flaunt democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only did they flaunt the very democracy which governments across this country operate under, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but they had to personally attack the gentleman, they had to personally attack him in a very vile and disrespectful and contemptible way.

And the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party attacked Grant Schmidt after not allowing him to run, after they overturned the decision by the elected majority, but he had to personally attack him in a contemptible way. And for that attack he had to apologize, as he should have, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party by its very actions, and demonstrated by its leader, has contempt for the very institution in which he wants to be the leader of. He has contempt for the very institution in which he wants to lead, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude my remarks I would move:

That this Assembly recognize the advancements that this government has initiated with democratic reform of the legislature, reforms that bring the people closer to the government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm delighted to stand today and second this motion. I think it's a very, very important motion that speaks to why we are all here today, because we value democracy. It's the institution upon which the legislature is based. And I will read the motion:

That this Assembly recognize the advancements that this government has initiated with democratic reform of the legislature, reforms that bring the people closer to the government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that says it well. We are committed here on this side of the House to advancing reforms that make our government more in sync with the people here in Saskatchewan. And I want to say that this is very, very important because this is all about credibility; it's all about trust; it's all about faith. It's about how does the government rule.

And you have to have . . . people have to have confidence in the government; and what we do, how we act says how people will feel about us. Do people have trust, confidence, and faith in us? What's our record?

And we feel, I believe, we have an outstanding record on this side of the House and I will speak about that in a minute. And of course then I will speak a little bit about the record of the opposition and how it lacks sorely in terms of building trust, confidence, and faith if they were ever — and I rue the day — if they were ever to become government.

Because I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the member from Regina Dewdney spoke so well about the tragedy when people give up on democracy and instead, in their quest, they decide it's all about power.

And this is what's happening on the opposition side. They have given up on the principle of democracy and it's all about the principle of power. And this is what it's all about — power at any cost — while we on this side value the principle of democracy, and this is what this party is all about. It's not what that party, what the Saskatchewan Party is all about.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about three pieces of evidence that shows that we are committed to the people of Saskatchewan as we make the advancements to reform democracy here in Saskatchewan.

I want to talk about the external things that our former Premier Romanow did in the early 1990s to reform government so it's more in sync with the people. I want to talk about a very exciting initiative that I was part of over the course of last winter and that's the voluntary sector and how do we develop active citizenship and the growth of democracy, and as well the new initiatives that have been put forward this spring and how exciting they are.

And of course all of this is about democracy. It's not about power. It's about partnerships. It's about the full development, how a society matures. And this is very, very important in Saskatchewan as we come closer to our centennial.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I'd like to talk about the Romanow reforms. And they were an excellent beginning, a very good beginning. Of course, they were a response to what happened in the 1980s, a sad, sad time for democracy, and as we can tell, that there were so many — I understand the number is up to 22 — former MLAs were charged. And the abuse of power which is a very, very sad thing so we had to respond on this side to bring elected officials into a more positive, honourable light.

And what were some of those things that we did? Well we implemented The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, thereby giving citizens greater access to government records. We introduced changes to require by-elections on a timely basis. We established an independent commission to review all issues related to MLA pay and constituency allowance usage, and implemented the report without amendment. We substantially increased the budgets for the Provincial Auditor's office, the Ombudsman's office, the Human Rights Commission.

Now that's an interesting one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we know at one of the very first conventions for the Saskatchewan Party, they would like to do away with the Human Rights Commission, which is incidentally something they did in BC and we talked about that last spring. It's very, very scary. The Human Rights Commission is one of the foundations of a democratic society.

And we've also established the Children's Advocate. So those are some of the things we did in the first two terms of the Romanow government. And that . . . those were important. They are not insignificant things.

(16:15)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about a very important report that was released last November, chaired by the member from Regina Wascana Plains, and I'm talking about the Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an important piece of, how do you develop a society; how do you value what people have to say? And this is about a partnership between the voluntary sector and the public sector or the government sector. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the whole root of it when we talk about a civil society and how we hope from a civil society evolves democracy.

People get their experience by . . . involved in democratic institutions like community associations, parent-teacher associations, those type of things. This recognizes all the organizations that we have in this province that are founded on the democratic principles.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's our vision for the relationship between the Government of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan's voluntary sector? Well what we see is this, and I will quote from the report:

The outcome of the work of the initiative will be a vibrant, robust environment that promotes quality of life and encourages active citizenship in Saskatchewan. The Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative builds on an effective and collaborative relationship between the Government of Saskatchewan and the voluntary sector.

And so active citizenship is the key word here. And this may be hard for the Saskatchewan Party to understand because they would like an inactive, passive citizenship that would let anything happen to them. And this is the kind of thing we see in BC, but here in Saskatchewan we are calling for a development of an active citizenship such as we saw in Prince Albert earlier this week, where I understand 400-plus citizens came out to express their opinion as active citizens about what they see happening in their city.

Now what are some of the values that define the relationship between the Government of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan's voluntary sector? Well one of the key ones — there's many but this is one that I think is very key and relates very well to this motion here today — democracy. This is one of our key values in the voluntary sector, upholding the right to associate freely and to express freely and to engage in advocacy and active citizenship. That's what we're promoting on this side of the government — active citizenship and democracy. It's part of the

Saskatchewan way and we believe in it completely. And we see it in all the work we do here.

As well, we go on in this report to talk about our principles. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is how the relationship between the Government of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan's voluntary sector will operate. But one of the key ones, and there's many here as well, is advocacy. And we encourage this within the voluntary sector and we encourage people to come to the government and say, how are things going on the streets, the farms, the villages, the cities of Saskatchewan.

Advocacy is a key part of that. It is inherent to debate and change in a democratic society. The right of organizations to advocate their positions and interest the Government of Saskatchewan will be upheld. That's our commitment. That's one of our key principles, that the right of organizations to advocate their positions and interests to the Government of Saskatchewan will be upheld. And I think that's a fundamental thing for people to hear in this province today because some places this is not, in some parties this is not honoured.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think this is an exciting initiative and we're going to round two with this. And I can tell you one of the very most interesting things that happened. Just last week we introduced the Bill to protect or limit the liability for non-profit boards, and I think this is a strong signal to the people of Saskatchewan, we want to see you involved as active citizens taking leadership roles in democratic institutions like community associations and all of that. A very, very important signal.

And so we're doing this all the time on all fronts. So we take this democratic reform very, very seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And as well I would like to talk to . . . Perhaps this is the most obvious one, but it's one that I think is very, very important, so I'll just take a few minutes to highlight this. But of course it's the rule changes to how the committee structure will operate in the legislature. I think this is exciting and this is important because this makes our work more accessible to the people of Saskatchewan and we increase public involvement and it's better use of MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) time. And that's the long and short of it. And I think this is exciting because I'm really looking forward to working in this kind of environment.

Now of course some of the parts of it . . . We talk about how we're going to move private members' day from Tuesday to Friday. I think that'll be an interesting time. And I think this will be very interesting, having this 75-minute debate. I think that's an interesting structure and I think that every week this is going to be lots of fun. I'm going to be looking forward to that.

**An Hon. Member:** — The ratings are going to go way up.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's right. It's going to be fun and it's going to be exciting. And I think people . . . It'll give experience to all of us. I think this is good stuff.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the other and the most important part of this talks about the policy field committees, and I know

others will want to get in this debate and have a lot more experience talking about this. But I think this is a critical piece of it as we make better use of the MLA time and get the public involved.

Of course the five — the standing committees on the human rights, standing committee on the economy, the Crowns, executive agencies, and in government affairs and infrastructure — all of this we hope will be televised. And we'll review annual reports, Bills, estimates, regulations. We may conduct hearings and inquiries, so there's that interconnection with the public. That's very important. Reporting to the House, all of this is really exciting stuff. And I'm looking forward to it and I can't wait till we get right at that on. So I'm looking forward to that.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to talk for a minute . . . So that's our record. And I think there's three parts that I want to emphasize. The initiatives of the Romanow government in the first two terms — very exciting work, well needed, and they did the job, and that was exciting stuff.

The second one that I talked about was Voluntary Sector Initiative. I think that's key about civil society, democracy, and of course now with the committee structure being changed and made into a new, innovative way, I think that's good news for people.

So that's our record. What's the record of the opposition? And as I was preparing for this debate today, it hit me that there were three pieces, three pieces, that I think really put the light on Sask Party in terms of their quest for power. What a tragedy that is, their quest at any cost. It doesn't matter. We know that democracy can be messy; sometimes there are rough edges. But what they want to do is they want to have power — the long and short of it. And it doesn't matter if there are people in the way, they're going to roll over top of them. And it doesn't matter if they're accurate in their facts. It doesn't matter.

And so what I want to talk about . . . And I'll go through this quickly because I know the member from Regina Dewdney did a very good job of pointing out how sore their record is and how disappointing it is.

But I would like to talk about three points. And the first was of course the dead-of-the-night deal in the, I believe it was, the late mid-'90s where people got together to form the Sask Party. And what kind of deal was that? Was that the height of democracy? Were they out there talking about getting people involved? No. That was a deal for power. They really felt . . . this is what they did, what they had to do, to get power.

Now the other thing — and I know that there's been lots of debate around recall and that type of thing — but the other part of this, around their party stuff, is the lack of resolutions. Now sometimes we get into a lot of discussion because — over on this side — because we do get a lot of direction from our party and we honour that direction. We have a council system set up so we can work within that.

But what about the other side? Like when we had this debate this Christmas about Kyoto and were talking about our November provincial conventions, how many resolutions did

they have? They had one resolution. And was that debated at length? No. That was the extent of their resolutions.

We had full debate about many resolutions, and I'm really proud of that. I think that's a strong indication of how we value democracy. But here is something that comes from *The StarPhoenix*, November 19, '97 from Murray Mandryk, "Sask Party lacks deep thought":

But the reality is that precious few Sask Party resolutions this weekend, (and) few social policy resolutions in particular, were tempered by such liberal thought.

And I am quoting here from this article, and I continue the quote:

Come to think of it, far too few resolutions were . . . (debated) by any thought at all.

Mere moments after passing the youth crime resolution, forum participants sent a resolution calling for disbanding the human rights commission to the convention floor.

(And) How ludicrously right-wing is this? Well it had Grant Schmidt (yes, that Grant Schmidt) appealing to delegates the next day for a modicum of restraint and reason. (The motion was tabled — not defeated . . .)

Add in resolutions which call for chain gangs for both young and adult prisoners, insist that . . . only definition of a family is a married couple and would make union membership optional in certified workplaces and you get a picture of how far to the right this party went.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a sad, sad day when we look at the Sask Party record in terms of democracy. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague, the member from Regina Dewdney, talked about a few letters and I want to bring these back into the record because I think this is important.

Here are some members writing letters to the papers. And here's one: "Sask Party disregarding democracy."

Dear Editor:

and I quote:

I am writing to protest the actions of the Saskatchewan Party in overturning Mr. Grant Schmidt's recent nomination.

And I continue, quote:

To overturn that result violates (a) . . . trust of . . . membership and speaks volumes as to the questionable ethics of those in positions of power (within Saskatchewan) within the Saskatchewan Party. Nowhere was it stated or revealed to me that the Saskatchewan Party could overturn the results of the vote.

And I will continue, and I start this quote:

In purchasing a membership in the Saskatchewan Party, I

paid a fee in good faith to support a political party that I should have every confidence will uphold the basic rights of Canadians. By its actions the Saskatchewan Party has demonstrated a blatant disregard and disrespect . . .

And that's G.F. Melanson from Melville, Saskatchewan.

And here's another member, I believe, Sask Party . . . And this is in the Saskatoon *The StarPhoenix*: "Sask. Party democracy put to test." And here's the quote:

In his March 7 column, John Gormley says a political party does not need "divisiveness, rudeness, buffoonery and a lack of professionalism." I assure Gormley that the Saskatchewan Party already has its fair share of candidates who possess all of these characteristics.

As one of the "clever voters of Melville," I attended the nomination meeting on March 3. Many Saskatchewan Party MLAs were sitting in the back of the auditorium, and I can guarantee that their behaviour was rude and unprofessional.

Now, end of quote, but I will continue the same letter:

If the party ultimately overturns the voter's decision, it will prove to me and to many others just how corrupt those in power can be.

And that's Hali Oleksyn from Saskatoon.

So again a sad, sad mark on their record. Now here's someone else writing in, Dwain Drew from Carrot River. The "Saskatchewan Party in an uphill battle with the NDP."

And I'll just put this simple quote, I quote:

If they didn't let the nomination stand, they will be seen as a political party willing to run roughshod over electoral democracy. Questions about what the Saskatchewan Party is trying to hide will abound.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps this is the saddest part of all of this. We see how the Sask Party . . . how they value democracy in other parts in our community.

Today we had an earlier debate talking about labour law. And we know how the . . . what the Sask Party record is and how they would modernize labour law. And I think this is an attack on our working people and it's an attack on our community.

And here's an article by Neil Scott in the *Leader-Post* of Thursday, April 3, 2003, "SFL upset with the Sask. Party." And I can understand that . . . why that would be. And here I quote:

The Saskatchewan Party has nothing to teach organized labour about democracy.

And I'll continue:

That decision "clearly shows what kind of respect the Saskatchewan . . . has for democracy," Hubich said, in a telephone interview.

“Certainly the SFL doesn’t need lessons about how democracy works,” Hubich added.

Hubich was responding to a recent speech in the legislature by MLA Don McMorris, the Saskatchewan’s Party’s labour spokesman, calling for changes to (the) labour legislation to ensure that there are always secret ballots before the union is certified or decertified.

And I’ll end the quote there. And I’ll continue:

But Hubich said he might be convinced to support the Saskatchewan Party’s proposal that there always has to be a vote before a union is certified if arrangements could be made so that every worker in every workplace in the province would get a chance to vote on whether they want to be unionized.

(16:30)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you really can’t have it both ways. You can’t have democracy when you want it and when you don’t want it, you don’t have it. I mean really, what you are really talking about then is power. And as I said, this is what the Saskatchewan Party is all about. They are looking for power. They are hungry for power. And they will take power at any cost. And if they dress it up as democracy, well, the people of Saskatchewan know the difference. They can tell the difference. And they see the record everyday and how the Saskatchewan Party goes.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to end my remarks. I know that there is exciting things that we can do to advance reforms or even more electoral reform and this type of thing, and I was excited today to hear about things about Braille, and what they are doing in Saskatoon — very exciting stuff. Reform never stops. And I think that we have to be looking for that kind of thing.

And, you know, this past Christmas we passed the report on the Electoral Boundaries Commission and I was very glad about their work. It’s tough to balance all the interests. I think we need to do some more work there, especially around communities but I think that’s for the next time. We always leave a little bit on our plate to work at and I think this is good stuff.

But we are committed to doing the best work we can in the interests of people. And therefore, I am pleased to second this motion. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with great pleasure I speak to this motion. Mr. Speaker, the previous couple of speakers from the NDP spoke a lot about democracy. And I would like to address the question of democracy.

The members seem to forget what happened in 1999; the election of 1999. The people of Saskatchewan spoke. They elected a minority government — a minority government. They didn’t elect a majority government. They elected a minority government. But what did the then Premier Romanow, the

premier of the day do? Well we all know what happened. He suckered the three Liberal members that were elected in 1999 into a coalition government, a coalition government. He gave one of the members the Speaker’s chair and the other two members were in cabinet.

The member speaks about power. Well I think the NDP Party and then premier, Mr. Romanow, knew all about power. It was about power — it wasn’t about what the people of Saskatchewan wanted and what they voted for in the election. The NDP settled that question and took what the people of Saskatchewan had said during the election and basically threw it out the door, into the garbage, and formed a coalition government, and they had the power then with the majority in the House, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we in the Saskatchewan Party value democratic rights. We are a political party that after the next election, after the Saskatchewan Party forms government, will set the next . . . the date of the next election — four-year cycles. We will set the date of the next election so we don’t . . . so we’re not put in this position of playing games and having the people of Saskatchewan wondering when the next election is, like the present government is doing, like the present Premier, kind of leading out there some hints about when the next election’s going to be and playing games with people’s lives. We as the Saskatchewan Party will set the next election date immediately after winning the next election, Mr. Speaker.

And the Saskatchewan Party also has an interesting proposal that members of the Saskatchewan Party caucus has the right to have free votes, to vote their constituents’ views and just not towing the party line. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party official opposition has demonstrated that in the past three and a half years by having free votes, and we’ll continue that in the future, Mr. Speaker. So those are democratic principles that the Saskatchewan Party upholds.

There’s other principles that we should talk about, Mr. Speaker, talking about balanced budget legislation, Mr. Speaker. This government has run three deficits in a row. Saskatchewan Party believes in balanced budgets and the people of Saskatchewan believe in balanced budgets to get the fiscal management of this province under control so that we have the money for health care and education.

And of course we . . . An obvious change that needs to be made in the budgetary process is having a budget based on summary financial statements so the whole picture of the financial state of the province is out in the open, there’s nothing being hid. The debt and the revenues and income for the Crowns are all meshed together with the general revenue so that the whole financial accountability process is there so the people of Saskatchewan can look at the books and see exactly where we stand as a province. And so there’s no monkeying around with the Fiscal Stabilization Funds and all these different terms that the present government uses to hide a deficit, moving money from Crowns when it’s appropriate so they can cover off deficits in the General Revenue Fund.

Mr. Speaker, it’s interesting that the members talked a lot about democratic principles. And the NDP certainly have many . . . have a history of problems they’ve had to deal with, with

candidates or potential candidates in the past, Mr. Speaker. As we know, in 1999 the then nominated candidate there was forced to withdraw his nomination and another candidate was nominated. So it's interesting that the NDP has a mechanism to deal with situations with their own party.

And we certainly have seen in past situations . . . We understand that in Swift Current, the NDP forced a person not to run in their nomination a few years ago. So it's interesting, the government and NDP Party speaks a lot about democratic principles but when it comes down to it, they certainly have a mechanism to deal with circumstances that arise.

As we know on the federal scene, the federal Liberal Prime Minister appointed people to run in various ridings. So it's different parties have different rules and different regulations, but all parties have a mechanism to deal with those situations.

And I believe it's a sign of maturity how the Saskatchewan Party handled a recent situation. We had an elected body within the party, the Executive Council that was elected by party members, come together and make a decision and review the decision and voted two times on the issue and the decision was made. And I fully endorse the decision and I approve of the decision and I support our party and how we handled that decision. I think it was a decision . . . it was a situation where we showed maturity and our leader showed leadership in dealing with that situation.

Mr. Speaker, this motion . . . Actually the basis of the motion should have . . . And the member, the previous member did speak on it very, very lightly, but it's concerning the change in how the House runs. And I'm on the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures. And, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting when the government talks about democratic rights and the rights of people in the province. But there is . . . The committee has been meeting. The first meeting concerning the rules and procedures was December 17, 1999, Mr. Speaker. That was the first meeting. Another meeting considering changes to rules were held in 2001, July and in January. And also a meeting was held in April 27 of 2000; then again January 8, 2002 and February 4, 2003.

So the Rules and Procedures Committee has been meeting off and on for well over three years and there was never any big rush throughout those three years to bring in these rule changes, Mr. Speaker. And suddenly in the last couple of months there was a big push on by the government to get these . . . ram these rules through and change how we operate the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition certainly agreed with the changes that the committee struck but we felt that the timing was all wrong, on a couple of bases.

The reasons why we did not want the rule changes to take place right now during session is because one of the changes in the rules were around having two committees sitting at the same time. And we believe that the people of Saskatchewan should have the right to view both committees while they sit, and have both committees have the technology and equipment in place to tape what was going on so it could be viewed later on the legislature channel so the people of Saskatchewan would have access to what was discussed in these committees.

And right now we see that people watch the legislature channel; not only they watch question period, they watch what goes on in debate. They're watching today, they're watching right now, and they also watch what happens in committee. And people that follow a Bill from beginning to the end should have that right to view what was going on in the committees from beginning to end.

And the way the government is pushing these rule changes through would leave the people of Saskatchewan without the right to see what is going on in one of the committees. And we put forward a proposal that we not introduce these rule changes till after they have a room set up with proper television recording equipment so that the work in that committee could be viewed later by the people of Saskatchewan.

So it's interesting now that the members are, well, they're debating democratic principles but they're hot and cold on these rule changes. And they could have had these passed two years ago if they wanted to, but suddenly they're in a big rush to do it right now. So it makes you wonder what the government is thinking about, if the government's thinking anything other than how they're going to talk the people in Saskatchewan into trying to re-elect them, which I don't think they will have the opportunity to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. The member spoke about the government having a plan and going out and speaking to the people of Saskatchewan as a form of a democratic principle. Well I'd like to remind the members on the opposite that the Saskatchewan Party has a plan, the Grow Saskatchewan plan. And we held public meetings and they were well received. We asked for input from people concerning our Grow Saskatchewan meetings and we listened to their concerns and we implemented many of their concerns into our Grow Saskatchewan plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the opposition . . . or the government will be hearing more about our Grow Saskatchewan plan as we proceed closer and closer to the next election, Mr. Speaker. And it'll be very interesting how the government will see how this Grow Saskatchewan plan has connected with the people of Saskatchewan and how well received the Grow Saskatchewan plan will be during the election campaign. And we certainly will look forward to the next election, whenever, and the government gets the nerve up to call an election.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the motion and the amendment is:

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

calls upon the Premier to give the people the ultimate democratic voice by immediately calling a provincial general election.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to the motion today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But before I get into the rule changes, the same rule changes that this government's had 12 years to make . . . And we're at the very last window before the election and they bring them on the floor of the legislature, their own rule

changes, and for some reason they're bogged down.

(16:45)

The member for Swift Current as an example would like to see the Crown Corporations Committee sit. And the member for Regina Victoria doesn't seem to have the intestinal fortitude to call the Crown Corporations Committee because what . . . Maybe this government's got things to hide over there.

I find it interesting today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many times we've heard the word democracy used, and how many times the member for Regina Dewdney talked about the new Melville-Saltcoats riding and Grant Schmidt and the nomination process. I should mention to that member, Mr. Speaker, I think Grant Schmidt can organize NDP members better than the party on that side. He got more out for a nomination meeting than that party can get to any of theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about democracy from that side of the House. They talked about what the Saskatchewan Party did to Grant Schmidt and how we were undemocratic. Well think about this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What about the member for Saskatoon Meewasin? Does the name Sam Sambasivam ring a bell over there? Did anybody mention that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Oh, no. The government on that side or the members on that side would never consider doing anything like that.

What about the constituency of Morse in the past? I think the name, if I remember it right, was a David Green. What happened to that gentleman? That same government on that side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, saw fit to make sure that that member didn't run for them. Where did democracy go?

I would say democracy will go out the window if Grant Schmidt decides he's going to run for that party and the NDP, just like the Leader of the Liberal Party did when Grant Schmidt decided for a couple of days he'd run for the Liberals. He ran for cover as fast as he could go, just like the government members will do on that side, Mr. Speaker.

And the members on that side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like to talk about democracy. Well let's talk about the present day Premier. That Premier was elected by 6, 700 NDP members. The Premier was never elected by the electorate of Saskatchewan. In fact it seems he's scared to let them have a say or he'd call an election. We probably won't see an election this spring. We probably won't see an election this fall. In fact the Lieutenant Governor may have to call it herself because the Premier on that side doesn't want to go to the electorate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know how many times since this government's been elected in '91 have we actually seen the democratic process where there's been a free vote? Never on that side of the House. The members on this side have had in the past, have experienced having a free vote. They've saw it happen on this side. Have we ever saw that happen? They're like, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're like puppets on that side of the House. When there's a vote, one after another, they look to the Premier or the House Leader — the guy that hid things from this electorate in this province for six years; that's how democratic he is — they look to the Premier and say, what do

we do, yes or no? And then like puppets they all get up. That's a dictatorship, Mr. Speaker; there is no democracy on that side of the House.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, I read a comment once that Tommy Douglas, and I quote from Tommy Douglas, and this is what Tommy says. And we know how the members on that side believe everything that Tommy did . . . Tommy Douglas did was saintly. And listen to what Tommy said. Tommy said, when everyone thinks alike, no one is thinking very much.

That's the members on that side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the members on that side of the House to get up and talk about democracy is hypocritical. If they want to see democracy work, it works on this side of the House. It works when the members are on this side of the House. And, Mr. Speaker, in about two months, should the Premier get the intestinal fortitude to call an election, democracy will be shown on that side of the House by the Saskatchewan Party when we form government, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, and the list can go on. Just little things. What about like the SaskEnergy rate hike we've had just lately? How does that work with democracy? We have a public utility rate review panel but before that review panel gets to take a look and see whether actually the public wants an increase to SaskEnergy rates, that cabinet on that side approves it. Now that's a little backwards, Mr. Speaker, isn't it?

If democracy worked, they would let the rate review panel — which they never let that function properly — but they would let that process at least go through. They go out to the public and they listen. And they listen at some of their meetings to two, three, four, usually NDP members; and even they don't say, we want to hike the utility rates. Everybody that goes to those meetings say, no, we can't afford higher utility rates.

But when democracy works on that side of the House, the government comes along and said, ah, we'll raise them anyways because we're the dictatorship and power today. We're the government that had a minority government in '99 and we had to buy two Liberal members to prop us up, two members who right now don't even know who they are; two members from the past Liberal Party who don't have a clue where they fit.

You've got the one member, the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, who now is pretty sure he's a solidified member of the NDP, think he's going to run there. You've got the present member for Melville — the seat that I'm going to win in the next election, Mr. Speaker — you've got that member. He hasn't a clue where he's going to run. He hasn't got a party to run for. He thinks maybe he'd run NDP but then oops, maybe I shouldn't.

So where does democracy work, Mr. Speaker? Democracy, if you want to see it in action, to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, take a look over here. Listen up for a while because this side of the House we've had such things as free votes. Not one member on that side of the House can stand up and say they actually voted what they thought. They voted what the Premier

and the powers to be on that side tell them to do. It happens every time there's a vote.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing that after elections in this province, when the people of Saskatchewan elected an NDP government, we're stuck with a dictatorship for four or five years. Wouldn't it be nice for once in the last three and a half years to have a premier that was elected by everyone in the province, not just a small group of NDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the time is coming very shortly where people are fed up with dictatorship. They want to see a little democracy. They want to see small business survive. They want to see big business create jobs and expand.

And I think how they're going to do that, Mr. Speaker, is that they're going to elect a Saskatchewan Party government that knows what democracy is all about, knows what free votes are all about, knows what fall sessions would be. They know that we wouldn't mind calling a fall session because we won't be hiding from anything, Mr. Speaker. We'll be upfront with the public because we will be doing what the public wants us to do, and that's bring people back to this province, keep our young people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, things are looking good. In fact the WOW (Wide Open Week) campaign over there isn't that far off. It's going to be wow, we finally got a Saskatchewan Party in government, and wow, this province is going to take off.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I've got a lot more that I'd like to say, but at this point I would adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:55.



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