



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

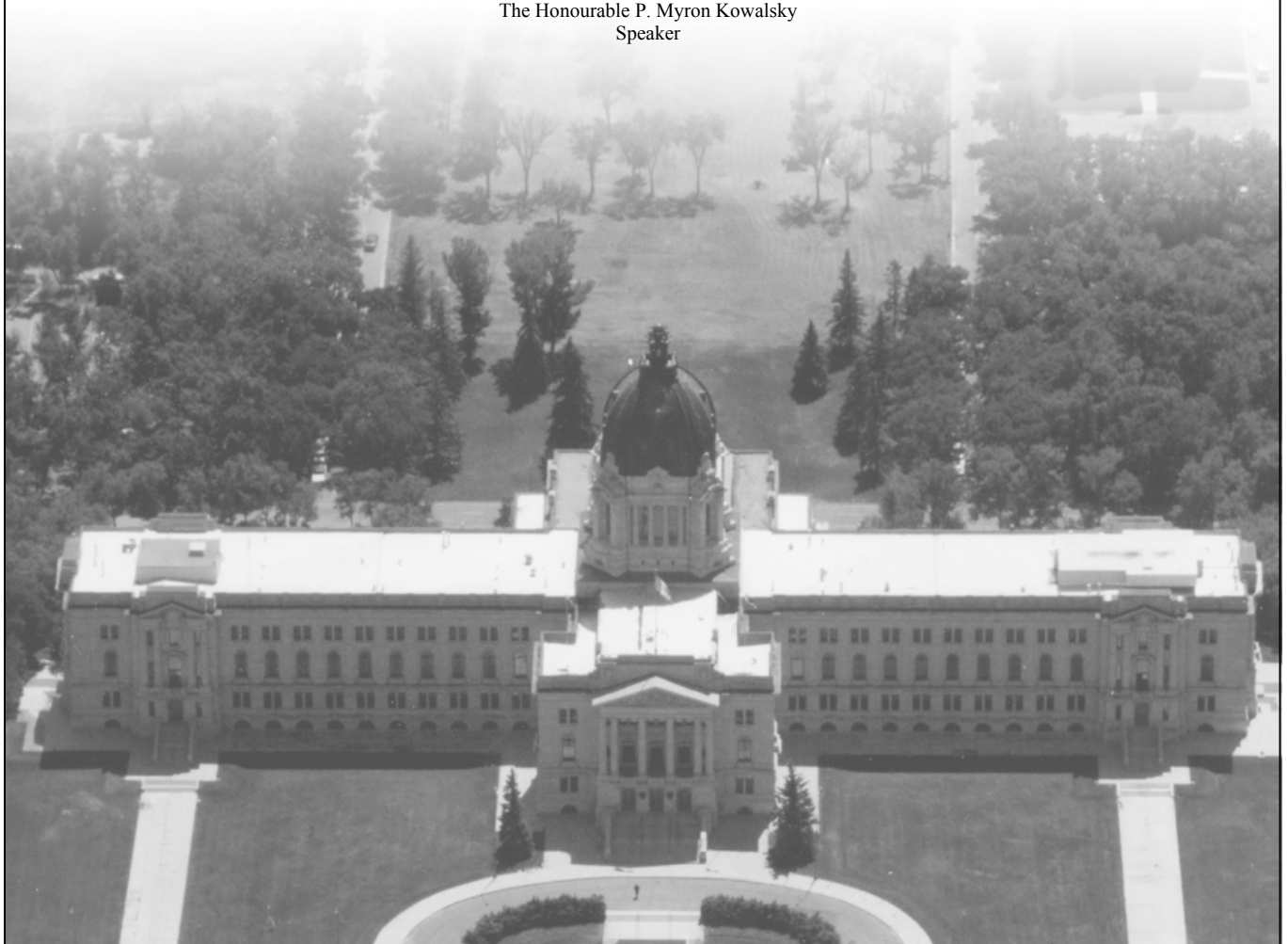
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, again to present a petition presented to this Assembly from the restaurateurs of Saskatchewan regarding the possible taxation of food in the province. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from the communities of Broadview, Kendal, Allan, Kipling.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I too want to add to the thousands of names that were submitted to the legislature this morning, signatures of people who oppose taxation on food. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, I literally have hundreds of signatures here from communities in Invermay and Canora and Kamsack, Mikado, Donwell — just all over east central Saskatchewan.

And I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned with the possibility of a tax on food. The prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the PST

to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the great city of Swift Current, from Waldeck, and from Rheinfeld south of Swift Current.

I so present.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today on behalf of people in my constituency who are very concerned about the possible tax on food:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education recommendations to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

The people that signed this petition are from Invermay, Theodore, Humboldt, Tisdale, Margo, Saskatoon — basically all over the north part of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the many people in Rosetown-Elrose also want the government to know that they are strongly opposed to the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to implement a regressive new 7 per cent tax on restaurant meals. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the communities of Rosetown, Biggar, Eston, and Stranraer.

I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendations to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do

not tax our food.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Esterhazy, Stockholm, Melville, Biggar, Regina, and Yorkton.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon Southeast with regard to restaurant meals and to read the prayer from that:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to exclude restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, in this pile there's nearly 300 signatures from throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have petitions to present regarding the expansion of the PST (provincial sales tax) on restaurant meals. The prayer reads as:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendations to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the people in the picturesque community of Fort Qu'Appelle and Indian Head.

I so present.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition to present on behalf of those deeply concerned with the proposed expansion of the provincial sales tax. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, my presentation today is representative of the views of over 1,000 people — people from Estevan, Bienfait, Lampman, Carnduff, Macoun; various areas throughout the province; as well as British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, North Dakota, and Tennessee.

Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well on behalf of citizens of the Northeast concerned about the potential expansion of the provincial sales tax. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Melfort and communities in the Northeast, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition of citizens concerned about the PST being put on restaurant food. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Humboldt, Bruno, Englefeld, Carmel, Muenster, Marysburg, Invermay, Viscount, Pelly, Watson, Liberty, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy and across the province that are concerned about the expanded PST. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this petition is signed by hundreds of people, Mr. Speaker,

from the communities of Griffin, Pangman, Ogema, Regina, Ceylon, Parry, Minton, Bromhead, Weyburn, Spiritwood, Steelman, Estevan, Hazlet, Stoughton, Lampman, Torquay, Moose Jaw, Pense, Yellow Grass, McTaggart, Radville, Bengough, Macoun, Lake Alma, Halbrite, Indian Head, Saskatoon, Tribune, Fillmore, Kinistino, and Milestone.

I so present.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of, well . . . privilege is mine, I should say, to present a petition today on behalf of literally thousands of Saskatchewan residents from all around the province.

This particular petition, Mr. Speaker, is on behalf of the 18,000 paid members, voluntary members, of the Saskatchewan taxpayers federation. And I'm presenting it today on their behalf. Although there is no prayer, they do ask that the provincial government balance the budget over the next four years without raising taxes.

Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to present this petition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise with a petition from citizens that are very concerned about the possibilities of taxation on food. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens from the southeast corner of my constituency of Wood River.

I so present.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of my constituency and of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's proposed tax on food. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are far wide. They're from Rosthern, Waldheim, Duck Lake, Regina Beach, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens concerned about the sorry state of the health care in this province:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson, Imperial health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum of 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctors' services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, long-term care services available to users in the Davidson and Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson and Bladworth.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens of Biggar constituency who are opposed to increasing taxes on food. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

And is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the citizens of Biggar, Handel, Springwater, and Asquith.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned with the water level in the Qu'Appelle Valley lakes. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to do everything in its power to work with the First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water level of the

Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal levels and end the economic harm and uncertainty this dispute has caused.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the House to present a petition raised by citizens concerned with the expansion of the PST onto restaurant food. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government not to implement the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's recommendation to expand the provincial sales tax to include restaurant meals. Please do not tax our food.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks at Kindersley, Eatonia, Leader, Herschel, Brock, Flaxcombe, Marengo, Eston, Saskatoon, Inuvik, and other spots throughout the province.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning opposition to the increase in provincial sales tax;

A petition concerning the twinning of Highway 11 between Warman and Prince Albert;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 47 and 49.

(13:45)

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: how much has the provincial government spent so far having government lawyers defend the Minds Eye entertainment financial restructuring plan?

Also, Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation: please advise when the paintings of former premiers Roy Romanow and Grant Devine will be hung in the Legislative Building.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization: what studies are being undertaken by your department regarding the potential effects of the completion of the Brazilian superhighway by 2007 on bulk commodity prices and the corresponding effect on farmers' incomes in Saskatchewan?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well today I want to bring to your attention and through you to the members of the Assembly 25 good-looking students from Ruth M. Buck School. And accompanying them today are Marilyn Bernhardt, Tamara Chernenkoff, and Kathy Tiefenbach.

Now being that I was just recently elected to represent this area, I haven't had a chance to meet all the great kids that are in the various schools in the area, but when I get invited I always come so they can be sure to invite me sometime to their school. And we'll be meeting a little bit later for a photo and to have drinks.

And I must say you're all very well behaved. The opening part of the legislature is not always the most exciting time and you all did very well. So thank you very much for coming to see us today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Assembly, it's a pleasure to introduce today on . . . seated on the floor of the Assembly, a Regina resident, Gail Duesterbeck. Gail is currently the vice-president of the Regina Mental Health Association, is a volunteer with the Regina Multicultural board and Soul's Harbour, and she has chaired Mosaic as well.

So I'd ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all of my colleagues here to welcome Gail to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Passing of Aubrey Kallechy

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday family and friends laid to rest an outstanding citizen of the Rosetown-Elrose constituency. Aubrey Kallechy, at just 46 years of age, slipped away after a short but valiant battle against cancer. Aubrey served the Beechy area for many years as a municipal foreman and was renowned as a road builder.

His last and unfortunately unfinished project was reconstructing Highway 342 between Kyle and Beechy.

Aubrey also served capably as the mayor of Beechy for a number of years until he stepped down prior to the last municipal election. Aubrey Kallechy was active in his community, serving on committees, participating in sports — he loved curling and golf — and serving in his local church, just to name a few of his involvements.

We will all remember his infectious laugh and his dedication to his family and his work.

Aubrey is survived by a number of family members including his loving wife, Daphne, and daughters, Ashton and Maddison.

Nearly 600 people attended the funeral as a testimony to deep appreciation for his friendship and his contribution to his family, his community, and the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Youth Action Now

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about youth action now, a great new initiative that was recently launched here in Saskatchewan.

The youth action now program is a joint project of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Saskatchewan Provincial Council, and the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan. The idea behind this program is to give young people from all cultural backgrounds an opportunity to get together and develop action plans, both for fighting racism and for celebrating the cultural diversity we enjoy in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this project will help to increase opportunities for young people to become engaged in multiculturalism and more aware of multicultural issues here at home and globally.

Another important goal of the project, Mr. Speaker, is to look at young people's perceptions and attitudes towards Saskatchewan, and highlight the pursuits and interests of our young people.

I'm sure that all my colleagues will agree that this is a valuable program and will join me in congratulating the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Saskatchewan Provincial Council, the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, and the young people from all across the province who are participating in this project. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Official Opening of Goodeve Community Centre

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, quite often when a school is closed in a small rural community the school becomes almost a liability to that community. There's no useful purposes found for the school and sometimes what happens, the windows are boarded up and eventually the building is taken down.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that that won't be the case in the community of Goodeve. Last Saturday night I was asked to attend the official opening of the Goodeve and district community centre, where over 250 people had gathered to open their new cultural centre.

I was asked to participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremonies, and while one end of the ribbon was held by the oldest member of the community, a 92-year-old, Mr. John Elash, and on the other end, the other end of the ribbon was held by the youngest member of the community, one-year-old Logan Ross, Mr. Speaker.

And after I cut the ribbon, the board of directors — some 26 board of directors chaired by Mr. Cameron Sawchuck — had organized an auction sale. They had over 180 items in that sale, Mr. Speaker. And I'm happy to report that when the auction sale ended near midnight, that they'd raised over \$12,000 that will go towards the operation of their community centre, Mr. Speaker.

I ask all members of this Assembly to congratulate those forward-looking members of the community of Goodeve.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Saskatchewan Writer Recognized

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Guy Vanderhaeghe is one of Saskatchewan's and Canada's finest writers. It is my privilege to be his representative in this Assembly as he lives in the constituency of Saskatoon Eastview. And today I want to take this opportunity to congratulate him for a number of awards he has received over the last few months and for his fine body of work.

In the last 20 years or so, Guy Vanderhaeghe has written three collections of short stories, two plays, and four novels and in so doing, has demonstrated a clear understanding of the history of Western Canada and the spirit of its people. More to the point, I think, Mr. Vanderhaeghe is able to connect his readers to that history and that spirit.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Vanderhaeghe has been nominated for and received numerous awards for his work, including the Governor General's award twice. Recently Mr.

Vanderhaeghe received the Saskatchewan Order of Merit and I was pleased to be there with him for that, and then the Order of Canada. And just a few weeks ago he received the Timothy Findlay award from the Writer's Trust of Canada.

Mr. Vanderhaeghe said he was particularly pleased to receive the Timothy Findlay award because it was named for a friend, a mentor, and a man who had in many ways helped to create Canadian literature.

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to congratulate Guy Vanderhaeghe, who in his turn is creating our literature by telling our stories. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Martensville.

Four Honoured for Bravery

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I had the opportunity to be part of a unique event in the Martensville constituency. It was held in Warman. Four people were given recognition for deeds that are generally considered as acts of bravery.

Edith Fehr of Warman and Helena Peters of Rheinland were recognized for their joint efforts in saving the life of a man who had fallen through the ice, I believe on Blackstrap Lake.

Also David Soron of Saskatoon and Cecil Wasmuth of Radisson were recognized for their efforts in saving the life of a man involved in a multiple vehicle accident at the intersection of 6th Street and Highway 11 at Rosthern.

We would all like to think of ourselves as brave. It is however only when the opportunity comes, and we know the truth about the extent of our bravery. These four people have shown the stuff they are made of. Congratulations. We are proud of them.

Incidentally and unfortunately, the intersection of Highway 11 and 6th Street in Rosthern did take a life in the same accident. Many lives have been lost at that intersection. This life, and all the others, Mr. Speaker, all the others, would have been saved had a left-hand turning lane been installed by this NDP (New Democratic Party) government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Mental Health Program Receives Stellar Award for Quality

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health services in Saskatchewan are always striving to achieve excellence in improving care for patients and providers across the province.

One particular program that was recognized on March 21 at the Partners in Health 2004 conference is GROW, which stands for goals, reframe, options, and wellness. Mr. Speaker, this Regina

Health District program won a Stellar Award for Quality for the effective treatment it provides to patients with personality disorders.

GROW's innovative approach assists patients in developing a patient-team agreement, identifying goals, and connecting with a community worker.

Mr. Speaker, since GROW began last year, the average length of hospital stay has decreased by two days. In fact this program has been so successful that a second outpatient component is now being developed.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating all those people making GROW a success and acknowledging its caring approach to providing more effective and efficient mental health treatments for Saskatchewan residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Student Helps Fundraise for Telemiracle

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a remarkable grade 8 student from the McClellan School at Young. Fourteen-year-old Kole Jack has been an active community fundraiser for years, vigorously selling raffle tickets for a host of worthy causes around Young.

I'm told you can find Kole every winter in the local rink raising money for all the events and local teams. All this, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that Kole is physically disabled but full of community pride and spirit.

This is the third year that Kole has hosted and promoted a local Telemiracle raffle — a raffle originally created by Kole to assist in raising funds for the Kinsmen Telemiracle. Kole begins each Telemiracle season by asking local merchants to fill colourful baskets with products, and follows up by selling tickets to win these prizes.

This year, Kole's efforts resulted in his personally presenting a cheque to Telemiracle 2004 for \$1,205, helping the Kinsmen towards a record \$3.5 million.

I had the pleasure of meeting this bright young man this past January, and I truly believe he is a hero of this community. I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Kole Jack and his outstanding achievements. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Rural Women's Month

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, on March 6, in celebration of

Rural Women's Month, Partners for Rural Family Support of Humboldt hosted the second annual Rural Women's Achievement Awards. Partners for Rural Family Support is a non-profit organization dedicated to developing and maintaining a support system for families that live in rural communities. Mr. Speaker, this organization has supported many families through some of the toughest periods of their lives.

In recognition of the accomplishments of rural women, seven women in the Humboldt and surrounding area were honoured for the determination, passion, and optimism they bring to rural communities.

I ask all members to join with me in thanking Partners for Rural Family Support for its dedication to rural Saskatchewan, and in congratulating the following women. In the category of business, Frances and Karen Blyth of Carousel Fashions in Wynyard. In the category of education, Linda Mattock of Humboldt. For Outstanding Young Woman, Lindsay Urban of Bruno. In agriculture, Shirley Voldeng of Naicam. For arts and culture, Valerie Elder of Humboldt. In sports, Valerie Kowalenko of Cudworth. And for volunteer, Thelma Schedlosky of Humboldt.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Use of Code Burgundy in Hospitals

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two days ago in this Assembly, Cheryl Sim of Rosetown put a face on health care waiting lists in the province of Saskatchewan.

Today, Gail Duesterbeck, who we introduced earlier, is putting a face on code burgundies in Saskatchewan hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, a code burgundy at a hospital happens when all of the beds are full and emergency patients have to either wait, sometimes in an ambulance, or they're diverted from that hospital.

Mr. Speaker, late last month, a day after she was released after having emergency gall bladder surgery, Gail was back at the Regina General in the emergency unit. She was presenting with serious symptoms; she was having difficulty breathing. Mr. Speaker, Gail waited 24 hours on a gurney for treatment of these presenting symptoms.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is this: what is his government doing about code burgundies in Saskatchewan hospitals?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to respond to these questions, and I welcome Gail Duesterbeck from McLean, who's here today. She's somebody I've known for

probably 20 years. And it is a face that I know and I know that has a challenge within the system.

Code burgundies are part of the management of the hospital when there are surges of people coming into the emergency room that effectively overload the ability to move people into the rooms upstairs. These happen now and again during the year and there's no specific cause for them. But what they do look at is, okay, what's the caseload at any particular time. And then they go and make sure that they call in extra staff. They try to do a number of other things before they actually call the code burgundy.

But it's part of the management of the system and we will support that system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

The Speaker: — Recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, as we bring forward these cases and as the people of this province are increasingly willing to step forward and say, here's how the health care system is letting us down in the province of Saskatchewan, we hear things like: well, it's an anecdotal situation; it's an isolated incident; it's someone else's fault. Or today, Mr. Speaker, it's something that we're comfortable with.

I want to be clear with the minister here and get the minister's clear answer on this question then. Is he comfortable with the number and duration of code burgundies that are happening in the province today that force people like Gail to wait 24 hours on a gurney in an emergency unit waiting to be treated?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to remember that the patients are people, the staff who work in these facilities are people, and they care about each other and they work to do the best that they can.

There are situations where, for example, there's an outbreak of the flu or there's some other problem, maybe a car accident or two that come in all at once and they end up not having sufficient space in an emergency room and then to move people into the hospital, where a code burgundy is called. They try to deal with that with calling for extra staff. It's part of the management of the system.

Quite often, it's an area-wide situation. So for example, in Regina, if there's a code burgundy at one hospital, well then the patients will all be taken to the other hospital on the emergency side. Same thing happens in Saskatoon and it happens across the province where people go from hospital to hospital if there's that challenge.

Primarily, these challenges arise in Saskatoon and Regina. People who are working there have developed a system to deal with them and that's how the system works.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health as well. Gail Dueterbeck spent the night in Regina General Hospital on a gurney because of a code burgundy. And as the minister indicated, code burgundies are declared when there are no beds available anywhere in the hospital to admit new patients. Code burgundy means that anyone coming to the hospital either waits or gets shunted off to another hospital.

Mr. Speaker, nurses are telling us that one of the tools used by the Regina Health Region to deal with code burgundies are to cancel some elective surgeries. The nurses are advising that last week Regina General Hospital was in code burgundy, not just in an isolated periodic time but from Tuesday until Friday, inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that Regina General Hospital was in code burgundy for four days last week?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't know specifically. I know that there were code burgundy times in the Regina General Hospital last week, and it may have been those days. And that reflects a challenge around having sufficient space both in the emergency, but also up into the hospital itself.

And in fact the member is correct that in that situation they call for more staff, if that is what's required. But if there's not sufficient physical space for patients, they will cancel some of the elective surgeries and postpone them for a week or two or longer until they can deal with that.

That's how the system manages the ebbs and flows. Unfortunately the health care system, the hospital itself cannot end up predicting with accuracy the emergencies that will show up there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, Gail Dueterbeck went to the emergency room twice in a period of five days, and both times she was faced with a wait because of code burgundy.

And nurses at Regina General are saying they were in code burgundy for most of last week. And it's also the information from nurses that two weeks ago both hospitals were in code burgundy.

Mr. Speaker, nurses are telling us that code burgundies are happening more and more frequently in the health care system and the one tool, or one of the tools that the system uses to deal with code burgundies is to cancel elective surgeries in order to free up more beds for medical emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister give us the number of elective surgeries that were cancelled last week as a result of the code burgundy in Regina General?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information with me, but I assume that I would be able to get it and provide it to the member, should that be required.

And what I would say though is that in our health system in Saskatchewan, we are providing substantial services. And I think people often are . . . forget the numbers of people that are getting services provided to them.

And I just want to provide a little bit of information. We do almost 100,000 surgeries in Saskatchewan. We have 800,000 days of in-patient hospital care in Saskatchewan in each year. We have 4,590,900 visits to family physicians and 993,500 visits to specialists. This is all part of our health system, and I've got a list of other information.

I think that what we have to remind ourselves is when there are challenges in the care that's as identified here, those are clearly part of the things that happen. But there's so many good things that are happening in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is correct in outlining the fact that many, many medical professionals in this province are doing exemplary work, making sure that health care issues are dealt with in the best way possible. But what we have to be concerned about is when the health care system fails citizens as it failed Gail Dueterbeck.

Mr. Speaker, it simply is not acceptable for a client who presents with a serious condition to wait on a gurney for a treatment for 24 hours. Mr. Speaker, the nurses are telling us that code burgundies are becoming increasingly numerous because of the stresses and pressures put on the system.

Mr. Speaker, as part of these decisions, elective surgeries are being delayed. Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to make sure that the incidents of code burgundies are minimized so that needed surgeries and needed treatments are not being delayed?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's a challenge when a patient ends up in the emergency room on a portable bed as opposed to in one of the hospital beds. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm here, this government is here because we believe that the Canadian medicare system that provides care for all of our citizens regardless of their ability to pay is the system we need in Canada.

It's extremely frustrating for me, and I know for all of my colleagues across the country as Health ministers, for all the premiers, when the federal government comes through with a budget which in effect levels off or lowers the amount of money available for health care as part of a pan-Canadian system.

And what we're doing is we are going to continue to fight. The Finance minister and I will be working with our colleagues

across the country in this process that's lined up, but we will not give up until we get sufficient resources to make sure we have a broad, Canadian system. In the meantime, we in Saskatchewan will provide the best care possible for our citizens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Strike Action at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Learning. This morning we learned that instructors at Kelsey Campus of SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) in Saskatoon are on strike. Sources tell us, and as of this morning, the strike is affecting 13 programs, which translates into one-third of the students at Kelsey. That's almost 1,500 students, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the union says that they chose strike action because the government is refusing to negotiate wages. Why is the government using students as pawns in this labour dispute in which they refuse to negotiate, period?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm that this morning 88 members of the staff participated in strike action and have walked off the job. This is affecting 13 programs. We understand it is just over 600 students and about another 200 and some apprentices who are affected, for a total number of about 960.

I want to clarify and make sure the member understands that there are two very important things to understand with this: the government has made it clear to SIAST — to the SIAST management team — that we would anticipate that they and SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union) will go back to the table and negotiate.

To this end the Minister of Labour has called in a conciliator to assist both parties in finding common ground to move forward, and I anticipate that they will do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the minister that collective bargaining only works when both sides are at the table and given a mandate to negotiate. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party is fully supportive of the collective bargaining process.

According to the union reps, it's the NDP government that's refusing to negotiate. They're not even coming to the table to negotiate salaries. Students are caught in the middle, Mr. Speaker. Students are paying the price, and it's students that

deserve an answer from the government today.

What is the minister doing to get negotiations back on track so that SIAST instructors can get back to the classroom?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what to add to my comments that I made a few minutes ago. I have already identified the fact that we had negotiating dates established, that we anticipated both parties would be there. The strike action has taken place. I appreciate the fact that it is limited at this point, and I think that that shows the resolve of both parties to understand that the impact that they have, potentially on students.

I have appreciated the role that the Minister of Labour has played in bringing in a conciliator, named George Wall, who I hope will be able to bring both parties together and will be able to help move this towards a collective agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — SIAST students are calling the Saskatchewan Party and they're worried. They're worried that the strike will postpone their exams. They're worried that it will delay their return to work following apprenticeship programs. And they're worried that they won't get the education that they deserve and had paid for.

Will the minister assure SIAST students across the province today, some of whom may be watching us on television right now, that the government's refusal to negotiate wages will not disrupt their studies or employment opportunities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I can report to this Assembly that there a number of issues on the bargaining table that will need to be resolved; a large number of issues that need to be worked through. This is why we have brought in a conciliator and why I believe that we will be able to see progress in terms of moving forward towards a collective agreement.

I would urge the member opposite to be somewhat circumspect in his comments and to be careful in terms of the rhetoric so as not to cause unnecessary fear among the students.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Canadian Farm Income Program

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, thousands of Saskatchewan farm

families have been waiting to receive their final payment under the CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) program. So far CFIP has only paid out 70 per cent of producer claims.

On Monday the federal government announced that it would pay out its share of the remaining 30 per cent. This program is cost shared 60/40 by the federal and provincial governments, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Minister of Agriculture: will the NDP government be contributing its 40 per cent share to cover outstanding CFIP payments?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because I know there are a lot of people in the agricultural area who are wondering what is going to happen with the CFIP payments.

Those who were at SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) will know clearly that we budgeted \$70 million as a province for the CFIP program, and that was hopefully to cover our 40 per cent share of the program. But at this point though not all of the applications are in — most of them are in now, but not all — it is quite clear that the 70 per cent or the \$70 million that we budgeted will not fully cover and so we will be probably not able to pay beyond the 70 per cent which came out in the first payment.

At this point we are still processing the rest of the claims, but it's our estimation that the \$70 million will be completely used up, and that will not fully cover the 40 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, many Saskatchewan farm families have been counting on this money to pay their bills and to put this year's crop in the ground. The federal government has now agreed to cover its share of the CFIP claims, but once again the NDP government is breaking its commitment to farm families. Why is the NDP betraying farm families once again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry that the member would choose to put it in those terms because I believe that this government has continued to work very, very hard to support farm families through a difficult time.

And we have supplied significant dollars on this front. With about 98 per cent of the claims in, we believe that the \$70 million that we budgeted will cover about 70 per cent of the amount of money that was projected for final amount. We will not be able to, as I said earlier, cover the full portion of our 40 per cent.

We have heard word from the federal government that they are going to increase their amount so that they can cover 100 per cent. And that will mean for us overall, for the producers of this province, that they will probably receive somewhere in the neighbourhood of 88 per cent of the total amount that was applied for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, how much did the provincial government budget for its share of CFIP, and how much has it paid out to date?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated twice now, we budgeted \$70 million for the CFIP program, and in terms of that program alone we will expend that amount of money. And that will cover a good portion of our 40 per cent.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also have to recognize that there were a number of emergency issues that came up during this past year, and we have also put an additional \$55 million into covering the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) cost, Mr. Speaker. So if they're wondering about our support for farm families, it's very clear that it's there. It's well grounded, and it's shown in dollars in these programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, you'd think the minister would be able to answer basic questions about his own department, including how much money has been paid out. According to the provincial budget, the NDP budgeted \$70 million for its share of CFIP, and the minister has confirmed that, Mr. Speaker. However, according to the Public Accounts' documents, the government has only paid out 56.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, where is the other \$14 million? Why is this money being clawed back from Saskatchewan farm families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, it's very important to know that there is no money being clawed back, that the full \$70 million which we budgeted for the CFIP program will go into the CFIP program. The funding will get to the farmers as quickly as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Last year, the Saskatchewan Party questioned Finance minister Jim Melenchuk on this very issue. And he said, and I quote:

Any of the dollars that were put aside for CFIP from last year's allocation that need to be paid out will be paid out.

That's what the minister of Finance said last year. Yet according to Public Accounts, \$14 million has not been paid out, and it was not in the 2003 budget. Mr. Speaker, where is the \$14 million, and why was it not mentioned in the 2003 budget?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I can only answer with the facts. And the facts are that \$70 million was budgeted; \$70 million will be paid out.

And we continue to work to pressure the federal government for significantly more, including we have written to them and are pressuring them for an additional \$10 million that we can apply towards the administration costs. And we hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will get that and that we will be able to return that also to farmers. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, farm families across this province are in desperate straights. Agribusiness, many of them are facing bankruptcy because the bills aren't being paid on the farms. People in rural Saskatchewan are losing their jobs.

Why will this government not live up to its commitment and pay out the full amount of all of the claims from the 2002 CFIP program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I will say again that we are paying out the full \$70 million, and we are increasingly putting pressure on the federal government to provide more.

With this province that handles so much of agriculture in Canada and has a limited population, we have been stretched by their 60/40 programs, Mr. Speaker. But we believe that the federal government will come on board with a little bit more money and, Mr. Speaker, that money will be applied and will go directly to farmers. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I've outlined the problems in rural Saskatchewan for this minister. There doesn't seem to be much of a level of understanding, mind you. But I want to say this; I want to say this. The people are hurting out there. People are really hurting. There are some awful stories. I've had suicides in my constituency, and it's not, it's really not a laughing matter, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder, I wonder how the minister would feel — and I ask the minister this — if he received 88 per cent of the money that he was guaranteed this year. And I wonder how he thinks Saskatchewan farm families are going to feel when he tells them that they're only going to get 88 percent of the money that they've gone to speak to their bankers and guarantee their bankers that they were getting because the government said they would. I ask the minister that.

And I ask him, will you dig a little deeper and try to find a few more dollars for these farm families that are so productive and work so hard in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would remind the members to always ask any questions they might have of ministers through the Chair.

I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been and are in contact with many, many people in rural Saskatchewan. We know that there are very deep concerns there. Through the department and through my office, we are trying to respond to those concerns in ways that will meet the needs.

We also recognize that those needs go beyond the farm gate. Those needs are also for health care and education. Mr. Speaker, in our budget we committed \$70 million to this CFIP program. We will pay that out.

Mr. Speaker, there was an emergency with the BSE, and we have applied beyond what the federal government programs are. We have, we have beyond the budget applied \$55 million to help deal with this hurt, Mr. Speaker — and that from a province that has been stretched very thin by federal government 60/40 programs, on programs that they should be responsible for, on programs of trade which are national issues.

Mr. Speaker, when they carry their fair share, our funds will go a lot further in helping these people who are struggling to make ends meet in rural Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll ask the minister one more time if he thinks Saskatchewan agriculture producers only deserve 88 per cent of the money that the government had promised them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, it's very, very hard for me to understand where that kind of question is coming from when, when, Mr. Speaker, we promised \$70 million, and 100 per cent of \$70 million is \$70 million. And that will be applied

along with the 55 million that has gone out for BSE. Mr. Speaker, we are doing as much as we can do to help the farm families through these difficult times, and we will continue to press for more from the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 — The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 1, The Financial Administration Amendment Act be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

The Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskPower.

Bill No. 2 — The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 2, The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for SaskPower that Bill No. 2, The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

The Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Bill No. 3 — The Certified Management Consultants Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, The Certified Management Consultants Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 3, The Certified Management Consultants Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

The Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — The next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Finance.

Bill No. 4 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 4, The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 4, The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

The Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Finance.

Bill No. 5 — The Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 5, The Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 5, The Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund Amendment Act 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Bill No. 6 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 6, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Next sitting.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

Bill No. 7 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that

Bill No. 7, The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — Moved by the Minister Responsible for SGI that Bill No. 7, The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — And when shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to move a motion regarding sitting hours of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — The Deputy Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion with regards to hours of sitting. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed.

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures* of this Assembly, that when this House adjourns on Thursday, April 9, 2004, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, April 14th at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, and seconded by the member for Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures* of this Assembly, that when this House adjourns on Thursday, April 8, 2004, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, April 14th at 1:30 p.m.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

(14:30)

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't sure if everybody was paying attention yesterday so I thought maybe I would start from the top, go all through it again, and I'm sure the ones that heard it will appreciate it.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go back to health care in the province of Saskatchewan. And all of us have seen in the four days that we've been in session here that the horror stories that are coming out of our health care system, the Regina hospitals, the Saskatoon hospitals, but hospitals all over this province, Mr. Speaker. We hear of people going to emergency and because there's no beds, spending 24 hours on a gurney in a little cubicle. That's not just happening in Regina, that's not just happening in Saskatoon, that's happening in every hospital in this province, Mr. Speaker. And the problem is not getting better. The problem is getting worse under this NDP government.

I want to also talk for a minute, Mr. Speaker, about dialysis, something that we worked hard to get a dialysis treatment unit into the Yorkton hospital, and finally that happened, Mr. Speaker — we got that in. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, there's not enough trained people to operate that unit — or at least that's what we're being told — and from Yorkton to Regina, we still have 19 people that have to come three times a week to drive to Regina for treatment, Mr. Speaker.

And these are the examples of two-tier health we have in the province of Saskatchewan — two-tier health for people in rural Saskatchewan where not just 19 people, Mr. Speaker, have to come to Regina for treatment but 19 families are affected because this government does not deal with common sense problems that could be solved. The treatment is no cheaper in Regina through the dialysis units in here than it would be in Yorkton but because there is no common sense being used within Sask Health and within the NDP, we're forced to have these people drive all the way to Regina, Mr. Speaker. It's something that could be handled, and it needs to be handled very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Another issue, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to light, and it was just a call that I got at noon. And I know a couple of weeks ago we had an example of this — I believe it was the member of Moosomin's constituency in Montmartre — where one member of a couple was in a care home in one community and the other

member of that couple, married for many years, in another community, Mr. Speaker. And this problem, Mr. Speaker, I've just been through it with my own parents and I know how distressing and how upsetting it is to them.

The example I got at noon, Mr. Speaker, this couple has been married 63 years, Mr. Speaker — married 63 years — and the husband is in a long-term care facility in one of our communities in the province. I don't want to use their names, Mr. Speaker. And the mother is 25 miles away in another community, Mr. Speaker. Somehow, some way, we have to start to deal with these issues. And the members, Mr. Speaker, they make light of the issue of this. Should it be their parents that are caught in this issue, Mr. Speaker, we'll see how funny it is at that point, when one of their parents is 25 or 50 miles away, separated after living together 50, 60 years of marriage.

I don't think it's that funny, Mr. Speaker. My parents didn't think it was that funny. And the couple that phoned me at noon, they certainly don't think it's that funny. It's a problem that we should be looking into now because that problem is going to be an increasing problem as time goes on.

Mr. Speaker, we realize that everyone can't be put in a long-term care facility; the needs are not there. But maybe, Mr. Speaker, we should be looking at having additional rooms on these facilities where we're already paying. When we're in a level care 1 . . . or level 1 and 2 care or we're in a private care home, maybe we should be combining two units like that together where both parts of the family can be kept in different rooms, if need be, in the same room. They're both paying, Mr. Speaker. It's not that they want to be in there for free.

But at least then we aren't separating people that have been married for 50, 55, 60 years, Mr. Speaker, something that should be just completely avoided at all costs. Because I can't imagine, Mr. Speaker, what these people go through after living their whole life together and then finding out at this point in life when they're already ill health and need extra care, being separated at that point, Mr. Speaker. It's something I hope the government would deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just talk for a minute on equalization. We hear a lot out of that side of the House, from the government, saying how unfair the federal government is with equalization. Well we agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

But I thought it was noteworthy to find out that it took a professor from Queen's University to find out that equalization was not working for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, where has this government been for the last 12 years? That formula evidently has been in place for 10, 12, 15 years, and all of a sudden the Finance minister's hollering loud and clear, pointing the finger at the federal government. And finally Mr. Goodale gives \$120 million — a one-time payout, I might add — which is right on. It's not fair. We need that money every year. In fact, there should be more money coming to the province.

But why does it take someone from another province to find out that the finances are not being treated fairly by the federal government. It takes someone from another province, Mr.

Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing that this government . . . And they did it all through the early '90s. They blamed the Devine era; they blamed Mr. Devine. They blamed everything on that government, all their woes. Now they've moved on and it's all the federal government's fault. We're finding out all our health care problems in this province are the federal government's fault.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind up, I think it's maybe time rather than them pointing the finger at a Mr. Devine of the past or the federal government, after 12 years you would think that they'd be able to look in the mirror and point the finger at themselves and say, if we've done what we should have done, we will have the health care system fixed in this province; we can help the farmers in this province; we can lower the education tax on property in this province. It's time they quit pointing the finger, started looking in the mirror, and dealt with the problems in this province. They've been there 12 years; it's time, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, as by now I'm sure you're aware, I cannot support the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and be able to enter the debate on the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm . . . be speaking in support of the Throne Speech, but before I go any further, I'd like to congratulate you on your acclamation and I will look forward to Mr. Speaker's and your guidance as we proceed through the twenty-fifth session.

I want to congratulate all members who were returned by the voters of this province, and particularly all new members. It was only a little over a year ago when I, myself, was first elected. And as they say, a year in politics can seem a lifetime. Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all that has occurred in the past year, how true that seems today.

I would also like to thank the voters of Saskatoon Fairview for not only expressing faith in me, but particularly for supporting this government in the work that they have done and for what we will accomplish in the future. All members, no doubt, are partial to their own constituencies but my constituency, Saskatoon Fairview, is special.

It's special because within the constituency live many working men and women who are raising their families and contributing to the province through their daily work, helping make this province the best province in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where I lived in this constituency was a microcosm of the constituency. My neighbours were helpful, caring, and some of the best people you could have as neighbours. The people of Saskatoon Fairview are second to

none in their commitment to their community. And they work as electricians; they are miners. They work in health care facilities and meat plants. They are truck drivers, plumbers. They work for the city police. They are firefighters. They own and work in small businesses. They are retail clerks. They work for the government, the city, the surrounding RMs (rural municipality), and many other occupations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are also many cultures represented in Saskatoon Fairview. And they moved to Saskatoon Fairview, for the most part, because they wanted, as I did, an affordable place to live and raise their family.

Saskatoon Fairview is looking forward to a new medical training facility being established within the old Union Centre on Fairlight Drive. We're working with the city, the local school boards, and the Department of Learning; a new high school's west of Circle Drive. We see new homes and businesses being built.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are a thriving community and I am proud to be able to say that I represent the constituency of Saskatoon Fairview.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was born in Saskatchewan, on a farm in Saskatchewan. Although we left the farm when I was 10, the farm remains in our family and part of me is still out on the farm.

The best time on the farm was spring — open skies, warm wind — and little did I imagine some 43 years ago when I was 10 years old that I would one day be standing in the Assembly speaking in favour of a Throne Speech. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this province is truly one of great possibilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, about two weeks ago I had an opportunity to attend a very pleasant event. That event was a retirement party. The retirement party was for four people, and one of them was me. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to report that despite the roasting and laughter, we all survived and a good time was had by all.

I spent over 21 years working with and for working people in this province. And I spent those years as a union representative employed by the greatest union in Canada, with all due respect to other members in the Assembly who have been or are members of other unions, the greatest union in Canada, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make mention of a truly historic event. In November of 2000 Intergovernmental Affairs, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, at that time SAHO, and CUPE signed a partnership agreement. The agreement was to deal with the aspect of Aboriginal hiring and employment within health care in the unionized sector where CUPE had health care agreements.

The agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to prepare Aboriginal workers by providing knowledge of jobs. And the union, for its part, worked at barriers of recruitment and retainment as well as a support system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, CUPE was recognized by the International Labour Organization in Geneva when they received one of only three awards given out worldwide.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a kid of 10, I didn't even know what a union was. But after all these years I have come to understand what a union is. A union is a group of people meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern, the right of association, and the right to have your grievances and concerns heard. These rights, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are at the very core; they are the heart of what unions are all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, reflecting the hopes and dreams of workers of this province is an honourable undertaking; it is one of the best jobs you could have. And for this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am forever grateful to the people with whom I've had the opportunity to work with during my time at CUPE.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say these things because I love this province, because I'm a part of this province, and I see in this Throne Speech a vision, a direction that will lead this province to a bright future, building on the accomplishments of those who have gone before us and those who have yet to follow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was important to hear in the Speech from the Throne our government's work in agriculture. Let me just quote from some of what was said because I believe it is very important and provides a solid direction for the future.

In partnership with farm families, farm organizations and rural communities, our government will strive to expand opportunities in agri-business . . . for farm families. We will seek to ensure that young people have as one of their choices the opportunity to work . . . the land. We will create an integrated, value-added and research-based new agricultural economy.

This is our hope for the future. Today, however, the highest agricultural priority for our government is to work with the livestock industry and other governments to open the borders to the export of Saskatchewan livestock. Anticipating the reopening of (the) borders, we will vigorously pursue our plans to expand the livestock industry. To further assist the industry in the coming year, the Saskatchewan Research Council plans to develop and apply technologies for disease identification and animal traceability.

Mr. Speaker, our government is on the right track during these trying times in agriculture and I see brighter days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also excited about our new initiatives with our youth, our strategies in the energy sector, our directions for a green economy.

The people of this province have been right on countless occasions, Mr. Speaker, and they have done the right thing again. They have elected a New Democratic government. And, Mr. Speaker, they have elected a New Democratic government so that they could have more child care spaces, see the opening of a new forestry centre in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, the excitement being created in and around

Saskatoon as a result of the synchrotron, and I hear many people beginning to call Saskatoon science city. CO₂ injections. Diamonds near Fort-à-la-Corne. Uranium. Potash. Ethanol in Weyburn and Lloydminster. Wind power. Windmills on the Prairies, Mr. Speaker, and the world's first fuelled . . . truck fuelled by a combination of diesel and hydrogen.

Mr. Speaker, these are exciting times and these are some of the many initiatives which I support in the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I would never forgive myself if I did not mention the motion moved by the member for Regina Walsh Acres. I listened very carefully to the analysis of the Throne Speech by the member. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that was a great speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — And, Mr. Speaker, that was a great historical analysis, Mr. Speaker, unlike the unfortunate events surrounding the analysis of the opposition which degenerated into unfortunate name-calling of a true historical figure — a former leader of this province, former premier, Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Speaker, I must say it does cause someone somewhat unseasoned as myself to steer clear of any ranting — ranting, Mr. Speaker, without some serious consideration of what is being said. Mr. Speaker, I would say a very important lesson for all members in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, following the truly brilliant analysis of the member from Regina Walsh Acres, who will ever forget the magnificent performance of the member from Saskatchewan Rivers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — What a breath of fresh air, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . A song to remember, a song to remember. Quite true.

Mr. Speaker, with the skills displayed by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, is it any wonder that we have a new member representing Saskatchewan Rivers, and is it any wonder that that new member is sitting on this side of the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, may I humbly suggest that the opposition would be well served if they were to read both these speeches in the *Hansard* prior to attempting any further historical analysis of their own.

Mr. Speaker, I mention Crown corporations. I'm uncertain as to what more the good people of this province must say to the members opposite before they are heard.

Mr. Speaker, I totally support our government's initiative of moving forward to provide legislation for public ownership of Crown utilities during this session. This is what Saskatchewan people want. Our government has listened, and that is what we will be doing.

Mr. Speaker, throughout Canada, Saskatchewan is looked at as the leader in occupational health and safety. And I want to comment on labour and the Throne Speech.

In October of 1972, Saskatchewan put forward a new approach in occupational health and safety legislation. The Act passed at that time established certain rights for working people: the right to know about hazards in the workplace, how to identify them, and how to protect yourself; the right to participate in occupational health and safety discussions; and the right to refuse work believed to be unusually dangerous.

Mr. Speaker, this created a base upon which we are building a safer future for our Saskatchewan workforce. Saskatchewan workers and their families require safe and healthy workplaces and I fully support our government's implementation of an Action Plan on Workplace Health and Safety, an action plan that, among its goals, will strive to achieve to have 100 per cent of students receive health and safety orientation before they start work, an action plan that adds six additional occupational health and safety officers to assist in creating safe workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, workers want a safe workplace, and our government is working to do just that. Mr. Speaker, my involvement with the workers of this province for over 21 years has convinced me that working people in this province are second to none in their accomplishments, and they expect to be treated accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, unions are not job killers. Mr. Speaker, I support our government's call for regular reviews of minimum wage. I believe in democracy. I believe in the individual having some control over their lives through meaningful participation in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, workers participating in issues of safety, hours of work, compensation for their work is at the very essence of a democratic workplace. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have achieved a high level of respect for their work ethic. We should all understand that those same workers only want respect for the work that they do. And it is, Mr. Speaker, our obligation to set the standards which send that signal, that we're not out to gouge, or to take advantage of, or to abuse the workers of this province through lack of safe working conditions, or in any other way, Mr. Speaker, undermine the dignity of the workforce.

We must listen to the concerns of the workers. We must be ever-vigilant to protect, Mr. Speaker, the conditions in our workplaces. Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan working families deserve no less.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I must admit that my father has become somewhat of an avid fan of Assembly proceedings. And being that he is somewhat laid up with a knee injury, I would bet that both he and my mother are somewhere near the legislative channel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you. To my partner, Angela Anderson, to my two daughters, Tasha and Alecia, Angela's boys, Justin, Taylor, and Parker, to all my family, friends, volunteers, and supporters, thank you. I wouldn't have made it here without your support.

Mr. Speaker, the days are getting warmer. We've got the makings of a new lake outside the legislature. We've got a new government and a new agenda. Mr. Speaker, I add my support to this government and the Throne Speech of 2004. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise as the new MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for the constituency of Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Saskatoon Northwest takes in the north portion of Saskatoon, a large rural component. It includes Wanuskewin Heritage Park, a buffalo ranch and a large portion of the North Saskatoon Business Association. The riding proceeds west to Cory, south to Pike Lake. The riding also covers the magnificent valley home . . . Valley Road, home to many unique businesses, the Saskatoon Berry Barn, a thriving business and great tourist attraction. Valley Road also has my personal favourite, the Saskatoon berry ranch.

Another great tourist attraction, The Maze made of Saskatchewan corn. Coronation Park and Floral Acres, a business which I have toured — indoor growing areas in excess of three football fields. A thriving community, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Speaker, the Valley Road does have some concerns regarding the 500-year water level legislation, and I am working with the Hon. David Forbes, to resolve this issue to allow continued growth in this beautiful area within Saskatoon Northwest — a great riding with a blend of both rural and urban which allows me, Mr. Speaker, a better understanding of the issues facing us in both rural and urban Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, before starting to run as a candidate, I evaluated my qualifications and skill sets for the position of MLA. I asked myself the question, what do I have to offer my constituents to perform the job they expect of me? I also consulted my constituents and asked them what they would want to see from their MLA.

What I heard, door after door, was the same. Regardless of political affiliation, my constituents want to create a thriving province that allows our children and our grandchildren to remain in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my personal background and social background started in Toronto, Ontario as one of eight children. We lived in a two-bedroom home in the inner city of Toronto. My father worked many jobs to keep our family fed and clothed. My siblings worked for Canada Post and Safeway.

Upon graduation I started my working career in the printing industry. I continued my work career with such firms as Kodak and Xerox of Canada.

Change was in the wind, and I started a new career in the sales for a medium-sized company and within three years became president of the organization. I was responsible for an operation at branches in Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Victoria — branches everywhere, Mr. Speaker, except Saskatchewan. The recommendation of my management team was that with a lack of head offices and a strong government presence in the marketplace, Saskatchewan did not support opening a branch here.

Mr. Speaker, this company had revenues in 1980 in excess of \$300 million and more than 600 employees. I later became the vice-president of our New York region office in addition to my Canadian responsibilities. This international experience and my business travels to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, and many European countries allowed me to better understand the global marketplace, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan needs to be a much larger player in.

In the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I note that the government has finally pointed to immigration as part of a solution to our provincial challenges. I would agree, assuming that they don't simply gloss over this opportunity as they've done so many times before. We need to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity to grow not only our population, but to complement our growth in the business sector.

In 1987 I was offered a position as vice-president of sales and marketing here in Saskatchewan. Travel and time away from the . . . from home helped to make the decision to ask my wife Marie, my two children, Kelly and Paul, to follow and trust me that this would be a great move for our family.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm one of those few who came to Saskatchewan and stayed, because, Mr. Speaker, we knew the great strengths of this province, its beauty, its people. And I knew there was in Saskatchewan the chance to create a lifestyle we sought for our family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — We arrived in Regina on August 15, 1988. Three years later we were asked to move back to Toronto to establish an Ontario branch. In discussions with my family it became clear we were hooked on Saskatchewan and this would be where we would make our permanent home.

In 1992 a good friend, Mr. Joe Donlevy and I made a decision to become business owners. We put everything we owned, Mr. Speaker, on the line and purchased a Saskatoon business. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, this was done with no government assistance or monies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Since 1992 we have, Mr. Speaker, started new companies here in Saskatchewan — some successful, some not. We found that the new business here in Saskatchewan in

some cases had strong competition. Competition never bothered me before in my extensive career. The difference, Mr. Speaker, is that in many cases in Saskatchewan, the competition was from my government through its Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I was immersed in my business activities when I was asked to join the Canadian Progress Club. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Progress Club, founded in 1927, is a national club that works with Special Olympics and local charities. There are Canadian Progress Clubs in Regina, Moose Jaw, and Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Progress Club Saskatoon Downtown, which I am a member, worked with Mr. Wayne Wiens, director of Big Brothers. The Saskatoon Downtown Club built the Big Brothers' home there on 33rd Avenue. And in 1995, the mortgage was retired, and the relationship continues today.

In 1996 I became president of the Saskatoon Club and in December of that year, my wife asked for assistance for our club to provide a Christmas lunch program. It was agreed that the money for the event . . . And I would attend with two other members. What we saw changed our lives forever.

(15:00)

We saw very young children eat so much that we thought they'd burst. We saw children who had never seen carrots or cranberries. We saw children in need of food, clothing, school supplies, and books. And other materials that we took for granted were missing. We left that lunch and committed that the next year we would mobilize the business community and assist where possible. Care & Share was born in the next year and we fed over 6,000 children in 16 community and inner-city schools.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Today, Mr. Speaker, Care & Share supports 20 schools with a program that not only includes a Christmas meal, but a series of other programs.

Mr. Speaker, we have developed a Dignity Fund which allows every school to have a Wal-Mart credit card to purchase emergency aids such as clothing, personal hygiene, and even a toy if it's deemed an emergency. Mr. Speaker, what's unique about this program is that it has no paperwork, no prior or signing approval. We, Mr. Speaker, have put the decision making on the front lines with the great people who are community coordinators within our school system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, Care & Share provides today school supplies to all schools twice a year, books, microwaves, dishwashers, coolers, and transportation of 150 children to an indoor soccer centre. We supply uniformed coaches, an annual banquet, which every child receives a medal. We now have a junior program in the schools with another additional 150 children playing soccer.

We also started a curling league with Curl Saskatchewan. We have 80 children who curl once a week. We again, Mr. Speaker, provide transportation, coaches, and supplies. Because this

league is after school, we also provide a hot meal before sending them home. We've constructed two hockey rinks, and now Mr. Sid Katzman, our sports director, is working on a bowling league for inner-city children.

It should be stated that all donations and assistance are done anonymously. Mr. Speaker, this program is run mainly by the business community in Saskatoon. It provides one mentor group . . . company to every school — over 300 dedicated business people who care and share.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — We wonder why, in this day and age, are so many children hungry. Why is there such a need for basic living essentials? Why is St. Mary School alone serving over 5,000 meals a month to hungry children? Why do we only graduate 15 per cent of our Aboriginal children from high schools in Saskatoon? Why do we have an 80 per cent turnover of students in community schools annually? Why do we have larger lists of people at our food bank in Saskatoon? And why, why are none of these issues being addressed in the government's Throne Speech?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — All of the above issues, Mr. Speaker, exist throughout Saskatoon and I'm sure in other Saskatchewan communities but most are prevalent in the riding of our Premier and our cabinet ministers.

Mr. Speaker, I've been honoured with many awards and I'd like just to mention a few that I'm so proud of. I'm a Big Brother and I have a little brother, Joel Hameluk. Joel and I were honoured as the Nissan Award winner for Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I've been honoured with the B'Nai Brith Proud of You award winner, Saskatoon Citizen of the Year, and recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal.

But my greatest reward, Mr. Speaker, was not recognition of a medal or an award. It was a Christmas lunch at King George School, Mr. Speaker. I watched 15 businessmen serve a lunch to around 400 children. These men wore Christmas hats, spread the joy of the season. The difference, Mr. Speaker, in this instance, is that these 15 businessmen were all members of the B'Nai Brith, a Jewish men's group.

Mr. Speaker, I knew then that we had something special — people working together on behalf of all children, regardless of religion or social position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, we have over the last number of years cut government spending to education and the results of this tragedy are here. How can children learn when they're hungry? How can they produce when they're missing the basic essentials? How can we elected representatives not understand that education, educated youth will one day be our entrepreneurs and our tax base from which will allow us to provide the necessary services? Yes, Mr. Speaker — entrepreneurs, taxpayers.

Today we have one in eight net taxpayers in Saskatchewan, the highest ratio in Canada. I heard how business men and women are only interested in profits. Mr. Speaker, this is not true. The business community contributes in every aspect of social conscience.

Mr. Speaker, the business community came, it saw, and it didn't wait for a report. It got down, got the work done, and got results.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I have no political experience. What my constituents elected is a businessman with a proven track record — one who has managed large organizations with revenues of the millions of dollars, and hundreds of staff; one who has proven that with energy, innovation, and the right priorities, miracles can happen. Miracles like Care & Share.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the private sector will be a major contributor in turning around this province, given the opportunity. My social experience shows that no one group can achieve this alone. Aboriginal groups, educators, union, social groups, business, labour, and politicians will have to work together to achieve what we all desire — a province of opportunity for everyone, regardless of current social position, Mr. Speaker; a have province that is open to all.

Let's work together in this illustrious institution to achieve what we say we all want — a have province that will be a place that citizens want to stay and a place that other individuals and family want to come to.

I wish to thank all the people in Saskatoon Northwest for participating in the electoral process, and I will serve you all in the same professional manner. Thanks also to my family: my wife, Marie; my son, Paul; my daughter-in-law, Cari; my two grandchildren, Courtney and Carter; and my daughter Kelly for allowing me this important time away from them to participate in this illustrious institution.

With respect to the Speech from the Throne, I remain disappointed with the government's one-dimensional approach. I see the same upside-down priorities with legislative time and efforts spent on enshrining Crown corporations as opposed to dealing with the real problems of Saskatchewan — problems we see every day, including hungry children, desperate families, waiting for health care, and ongoing exodus from this great province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — The government approach is not supported by my experience in business or my work with social groups. And with my colleagues, I will be reminding the government of another way, one that releases the goodwill, innovation, and drive of our people to create the province we all want. Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't appear to want to change a system that hasn't worked, that will not work until it makes government the instrument of guidance and not the only instrument of growth.

As such, I will not be supporting this motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a sincere and an extreme pleasure to be able to rise in the Assembly in my place, as the elected member for Regina Wascana Plains for the fourth term of office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — I want to begin by thanking the electorate of Wascana Plains. Over the years I have grown in service to them and with them, have met and made many friends, and had many people contribute with great debate. And their ideas and questions and concerns to me have helped me to better represent them here in my place.

I also want to take a moment to thank those men and women who organized around me to be a strong team, to be able to return me to represent the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains. Their support and their continuing strength has meant much to me.

And of course, as others have done, because it's the kind of support we all need to be here, I want to thank my family — my spouse, Bob, who over the years has played double duty as a parent, who has been patient and supportive even at times when he sang, I just don't understand it.

And to my two children — my daughter, Amber, who is now 24 and my son, Noel, who will be 29 — who have over the years been able to at some point understand why I would want to be serving other people in the Assembly, even though it means time away from their activities and the time that I could be spending with them. I'm very proud of their contributions to Saskatchewan as well, and I'm very proud to call them my family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — While we're working hard at constituency, of course, we don't do this alone. We have a person who serves in the constituency office and many times during a session has to take the instant evaluation of the electorate, must respond to issues and concerns when we're not there, and a lot of the time work without any support or guidance from us as we spend hours within the Assembly.

And they rise to the occasion and do that work to represent us all well — to in essence be us out there when we can't be present and to keep in constant touch with us. So of course we develop a strong, a loving relationship for the people that serve us in that capacity. And I want to thank someone who's out there serving me well now in Tammy Watt, my CA (constituency assistant).

I want to, on the debate of the Speech from the Throne, say that it's always of great interest to me to hear all of the speeches in return to the Throne Speech for two reasons.

First, of course, it gives us all a chance to profile the constituency, the people; take time to thank them for all of the work they've done to have us be here and represent them; and to also let people know, as others have done, what are some of the occupations that are represented there; what are some of the kinds of things that the people we're representing are involved in on a day-to-day basis.

The other thing that the speeches do is give us all an opportunity to highlight on behalf of the constituents those things that have a direct impact on their lives, and of course to hear from around the province of all the peoples of the varying landscapes and some of the issues that are constants across our province, but some of them that are also very unique to the areas that are represented.

And with that I want to join with other colleagues who have congratulated the mover of the Throne Speech, our member from Walsh Acres who with passion and conviction gave her maiden address; and the seconder, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers who with a song and a poem in his heart, a bit of lilt to the voice, has taken that opportunity to show us what it's like to represent two different ridings and to bring common spirit to the Assembly. So I thank them for their contributions.

I want to say a welcome and a thank you to all the members who are new to the Assembly for the role that you will play, and certainly in your return speeches to the Throne Speech give us the opportunity to hear what brings you to this place.

I want to ask them all to take advantage in the future of the many, many ways that we're afforded the privilege of debate on behalf of constituents in the Assembly.

(15:15)

And then speaking of course of democratic principle and debate, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge you — a colleague and a member from Prince Albert Carlton — but someone who has to play a very independent role in this Assembly to make the House run smoothly, and the House respect the principles of British parliamentary democracy. And I'd like to acknowledge the contribution you make in that way to the Assembly.

Of course some of that then brings out a desire, when you've seen a role model, to also take a role. And I also thank you for the respect that was given during our recent race together for the role of Speaker.

I know also that outside of this Assembly the Speaker must play an important role in upholding the principles of British parliamentary democracy by informing and by instructing. And I know the students of Pilot Butte School in my constituency — I'm sure many other constituencies — have had you, Mr. Speaker, into their classroom setting to have a mock parliament or a mock legislative assembly, and you've been able to lead them through that.

In my case, in Pilot Butte, they've been prepared; they're enjoying what they're doing. They at times have had a beautiful Speaker's chair as well. They love the opportunity to wear the

three-cornered hat and to be lead in by their sergeant-at-arms with the mace, and all dressed up to be the leader of the province and the leader of the opposition. So they have been great times of learning and of fun as well.

And I know that you will also further the relationship that we have to form and keep strong in the midwestern legislative assembly to understand the issues that are common between both our countries, but both our parts of our countries that would see us talking about opening the borders to be able to understand issues on both sides of the borders. And you will be a strong part of hosting that group to be in Saskatchewan in our centennial year.

So I thank you and congratulate you on the democratic role you play, but also the hospitality role of welcoming other legislators to our Assembly and to our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — While the rules and customs of this legislature have evolved democratically through decisions taken by all members of the Assembly, past and present, I hope the excitement is shared by all of us on going into a new system of doing our work, and the enthusiasm for the new reforms that have been adopted by all of us. There will be bumps and wrinkles. But I believe the goal for all of us is to achieve greater public participation; to have a greater chance to, within the committee format, debate and discuss and look into the laws of the province and also the budgets that are set forth by the government of the day. And I'm hoping that that important role will add a new dimension to the way we all serve the people of Saskatchewan.

So I know these new procedures will require an even greater effort of co-operation on all parts. We co-operatively developed this new system of service and, working co-operatively, we're going to put them into practice and in doing so, I hope earn the pride of those we represent, our constituents. So again I'm humbled and honoured to be able to, in this fourth term, have a new role or a new way to represent the people of our province.

It's always a pleasure at the beginning of each session to be able to welcome all of those people who are not profiled many times during our workday, but are here working and supporting us. And of course it's the Clerks at the Table and the staff that are helping with their work, our Pages. I welcome all the new Pages to the Assembly. There are others that work behind the scenes as well in service, from *Hansard*, from library services, the broadcasting services that make it possible for others to enjoy the proceedings, such as the member has mentioned. His family will be watching, and certainly with great interest there are many who watch the question period debates on a daily basis.

So all those people that pull together a day here to make it as public as possible and to have as many people understand that . . . the law-making and the budgetary implications of the day, I thank them very much on everyone's behalf, I'm sure.

Election time in Saskatchewan is always a very exciting time. It's an excellent time to get out, all of us to get out, walk door to door, walk through many gatherings of people and hear from

many, many people across the constituency, but across the province — and more importantly, I think from our own constituents — the feedback we get, those people who put faith in all of us to give voice to their priorities and concerns.

So I'd like to give a few moments to profiling Regina Wascana Plains as one of those growing number of rural-urban constituencies, but on the growing edge of the capital city of our province. Because of boundary redistribution this time, we've welcomed new residents, some of them, most of them rural residents north of Pilot Butte and Zehner, up to the Qu'Appelle Valley, which includes for the first time ever, Piapot First Nation.

In coming to know the new constituents of Piapot First Nation, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I have found them to be people of great warmth; they've been welcoming. I've found they have a wonderful sense of humour; they've helped me many occasions to lighten up a bit because certainly they can see the humour in many of the things of daily life around them. But I also found the people of Piapot First Nation to have a strong sense of tradition and heritage, and pride in their past and their elders and the ancestors.

And the thing that has most impressed me recently is, the times that I've been there, that they are also wanting to profile the things that we are within this Speech from the Throne — and that's working for the future of young people within their First Nation. There have been gatherings on Friday evenings and during the weekends to have young people come together, talk about issues important to their lives; to support them in being prepared for jobs and contributing to their community. And I'm extremely proud of the work of the people who are putting forward the programs for the young people there.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Piapot First Nation are joined by, I would say, the majority of residents in Regina Wascana Plains in wanting to see us make Saskatchewan ready for the future generations. More young people came out this election than ever before to help work in the constituency, and they came because they knew we had a vision of what their Saskatchewan will mean for them. First they're hoping that this is a meaningful career for them here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan for the next generation and for young people that I talked to has a strong concern not only for the economy, but an economy that's providing jobs within a setting that says we care deeply about sustainability of our environment that goes with the jobs that would be provided for them. Our young people see the fields, the forests, the natural resources. They see the open sky of our province and they value those things, and hope that those are the bounty that will provide for them for jobs in the future.

I found that the people of the next generation that we are all striving to serve here offer us much — much creativity, flexibility, courage, and determination; much care and concern for others around them. And of course that's mixed with something that Saskatchewan people always mix into their character and their progress, and that's pragmatism — the balancing of dreams with the day-to-day realities; the understanding of diverse culture with an energy and enthusiasm that comes with having from many peoples, strength.

Mr. Speaker, the next generation is welcoming the opportunities to contribute to informing public policy and being involved in programs. And I saw that toward the end of our last term when the Premier's youth council got together and said, well what can we do to do just that, inform public policy.

They worked with the Children's Advocate office and they decided to look at education, and brought forward an excellent document with many recommendations on how to improve education for them, but the next generation coming after them too, so they would feel more comfortable, more able to achieve within the education system in the province. So I take pride in the work that they've done and know that within the Throne Speech that's before us, there will be many, many opportunities for young people to do just that.

The Green Teams. It's an important initiative that will help the next generation to come forward and to be involved with those things that we talk about that are important to them.

CareerStart: working toward helping them understand what careers are available, and that they are prepared for the careers of the future in Saskatchewan.

There's the opportunity to work with young people in the Young Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan program. And within the Crowns and government . . . And we're asking now for the broader public service and the private sector, for First Nations to join us in allowing for a youth recruitment strategy to recruit and retain young people in the province where a recent Rotary says:

Our future is wide open and your future is here.

The youth of our province will also be able to get involved in the Saskatchewan summits that will occur, and the first one to occur this fall. And they will add that enthusiasm and the energy to those discussions and debates.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that our flagship goal is to have Saskatchewan become more youth friendly and have Saskatchewan the first choice of opportunity for young people.

But very closely tied to that on the election hit parade for Wascana Plains was health care, and we've heard that is an important consideration and concern in the Assembly already.

When I walked and talked with constituents, I shared with them the update on the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Health Care. And without a word I think every one of them has said that they didn't know or understand half of what was happening within the action plan for health and they were so pleased to look at everything that's going on. And most of them, when you talk to people, said if there's an emergency or if they're prioritized in the system for emergent care, it's there for them when they need it. And people who come into the system in that way have outlined to me many times where they're put into that system very quickly.

And of course the Minister of Health and the department and all of the authorities have been working on assessing of patient health and the progress they have in the system and to try and reduce the waiting lists for people in the province. And first

what they did last year was look at a way to have patients assessed and then broken into categories.

And I heard this system working very well when I talked to constituents. They said if you're in that number one category, the emergency category, we know that 95 per cent of people have their issues addressed, their health concerns addressed within the first 24 hours.

In the same way the second category of urgent has 95 per cent of their concerns addressed within hours of approaching into the system, and a few within a few weeks. And there are other categories in the system that require the physicians to be able to move the people along in that process.

So we are looking at the Saskatchewan surgical registry that's just been announced that's going to set optimum times for surgery to occur. We're hoping, in the ways that we've looked at the system and worked with the care providers, that we'll be able to have a maximum of anyone waiting for surgery in this province the . . . a maximum of 18 months.

Our Health minister has talked about the challenges of that, but we also have to remember that 100,000 surgeries a year are performed in this province. And that when we look at the new advances and techniques for those surgeries, the kinds of advances we have in laser surgeries, and the equipment and the diagnostics that are put in place, that we have an excellent system that needs to be through the action plan made even better by all of us working together.

Now with the surgery list, I asked, well where could I find out more information because I love giving information to my constituents. And I was provided with saskurgery.ca., Mr. Speaker. So if people wanted to have more information on that, they could look at that, and I know we'd be glad to get out to them the update on the action plan in health.

(15:30)

And the commitment within the Throne Speech is to do even better in health care in the term ahead of us. And we're all committed to working together to do just that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, you didn't go anywhere in the constituency this election and not talk about what Crowns mean for Saskatchewan. The strong Crown sector means a lot to the next generation of people here because they know that because we own our utilities, that we do benefit from that ownership. We do benefit from not being into the private corporate sector in the way that we see the lowest utility rates, the bundle of utilities and services to people being the lowest anywhere in Canada.

And speaking of the next generation, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel is connecting more communities than ever before. Not only through cell services, the telephones, but Internet connections. And just today I was reading from *The Radville Star* — "A View From the Deck" it's called, by George Hay, and he says:

It is here! Radville finally has cell phone service and it is

fantastic. Thank you to SaskTel for bringing this essential service to our community. Not that long ago, SaskTel committed high speed internet service to our area and now with cell phone service Radville is an even better place to live and do business.

Only in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we have better connectedness through our publicly owned utilities than they do in many major cities across America. I speak to young people, and young people are really pleased that within SGI they have rates that allow our young people to have their first vehicle and to learn to do that in a responsible manner. And the list goes on of why young people understand why generations past and our pioneers built up this system of publicly owned utilities.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to just take a few moments to talk about something that has been near and dear to my heart and I've been working on with great enthusiasm, and of course that's the Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative. Our first report came about, and it outlined the vision for the Voluntary Sector Initiative, the principles and the values to which government in all areas would adhere to and honour, the working relationship we have, and which part we would play in the initiative.

And the year's work ahead will help us to continue on in three major areas. The voluntary sector, we're saying it's important for us to have people understand and to recognize the achievements and the accomplishments of the voluntary sector but to be aware of everything they do to make our communities such great places to live and to do work. And the member from Saskatoon had just mentioned some of the opportunities that he's been involved in that help to do that.

The second area is capacity building and to help those groups and organizations who come together to better develop and train the people who want to provide in their community's programs or services, be it to young people or to elders.

And the third area is of course building and strengthening the relationship between the voluntary sector and the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair and Legislative Secretary for the Voluntary Sector Initiative, as a mother, as a person who has been elected for the fourth term to represent the people of Regina Wascana Plains, as someone who looks forward to the future with vision, with creativity, enthusiasm, I stand in support of this Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask your leave to introduce some guests.

The Speaker: — The member for Batoche has requested leave for introduction of guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce up in the gallery, my wife of 28 years, my soulmate, and the lady that stands not behind me, but beside me.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Also with her is my second daughter, Tracy, and she's a university student pursuing her second degree here at the U of R (University of Regina). Not able to be here are my oldest daughter, Roxanne — she's chief resident at the Alberta Children's Hospital — and my son, Jonathan, a first-year university student. So please join me in welcoming these people.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I represent the new constituency of Batoche, and I'm a little nervous being in Regina because the last bearded gentleman from Batoche that came to Regina was hanged.

Mr. Speaker, I am humbled with tremendous honour and privilege that has been bestowed on me by the people of Batoche. I accept that responsibility and will now speak on their behalf.

Batoche may be a new constituency, but it is a very old land — a land that is older than Canada; a land as old as its Native people, its Métis people, its early settlers; a land where oppressed people pushed to desperation retaliated. This constituency still holds the descendants of these same people.

In Batoche constituency, we have two First Nation reserves: Muskoday and One Arrow. These reserves are no different than any other in Saskatchewan. They have many issues, all of them which are well documented. The real problem is a shortage of solutions.

I had a conversation with an Aboriginal gentleman in Duck Lake, and he said he had a sister-in-law from Alberta. And every three months she returns to Alberta to get her tribal share of the oil money. He says she returns and quickly blows her money, and her situation never improves. He said money is not the answer; people, programs, and education are the answer. We need to arrive at a solution with the Aboriginal people, not for the Aboriginal people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Batoche is a collection of small places. The spirit of its early people is strong.

Kinistino, population approximately 700, boasts the largest Ford New Holland dealership in North America.

Lake Lenore, population 300, operates the most successful independent co-op in Saskatchewan.

My own hometown of Middle Lake, with a population of about 300, looks with pride at Bethany Pioneer Village, which is a model retirement home that delivers some of the highest health care quality in Saskatchewan.

Cudworth, another small town with a population of approximately 760, had their hospital decommissioned, but moved forward. They remodelled and renovated and opened the place as a seniors' enriched housing complex.

Another inspiration in my constituency, in fact in all of Saskatchewan, is St. Brieux with a population of over 500. St. Brieux has never asked for assistance. They've done it on their own, from Bourgault Industries to Tillage Tool, from Dry Air to their own car dealership, from apartment houses to lakefront lots and development dreams for the future.

St. Brieux truly is a thriving community. And at the centre is Bourgault Industries, a worldwide company with branches in USA (United States of America) and Australia. Each year they bring in millions of dollars of iron, and each year they haul out many million dollars more cultivators, air seeders, and sprayers. All this is done on broken-down Highway 368. They desperately need a highway, Mr. Calvert. Give them a highway. They've given so much to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — The communities show the strength of the people of Batoche — a place where a man's word is his bond, or a deal closed with a handshake is a done deal. Mr. Speaker, these are my people, and I proudly represent them. These are the people who built Saskatchewan.

In 1905 the population of Saskatchewan was at the million mark. Today it is less than that. In 1905 Regina and Saskatoon were but mere towns. Regina and Saskatoon have been built on the influx of the rural people. Now we, the rural people, are growing weak in numbers. We cannot afford to lose more people. We cannot maintain the rate of decline and survive.

Mr. Speaker, last week comments were made on the other side of the House that the economy of Saskatchewan was okay. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that those comments not be made in a rural coffee shop with a group of livestock producers. If someone intends to do so, please let me know. I would love to witness the response. And after all, somebody has to dial 911.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, and members of the other side of the House, let me now get very serious. Today is your wake-up

call. We are not rural or urban Saskatchewan; we are Saskatchewan. Our economy is still agriculture based, and agriculture is in crisis. This is the darkest hour of agriculture. Agriculture is slipping into a black hole from which there is no return. The situation is more desperate, more desperate than the dirty thirties.

A neighbour of mine shipped some boar pigs, and because they're not slaughtered in Saskatchewan they were shipped to Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, when he received the envelope that should have contained a cheque, he got a bill for the freight that exceeded the cheque for the pigs. He had a bill owing. This is not an isolated incident.

From a loaf of bread a farmer receives 6 to 8 cents. That same loaf, as toast in a restaurant, brings in \$24, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-four dollars. And I'm saying \$24 is maybe not too much at the restaurant. I don't know. But what I am saying is 8 cents is not enough for the farmer. Eight cents . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Eight cents does not cover land tax, seed, fuel, spray, labour. And show a profit? Impossible.

Times were tough in the dirty thirties. But if you had some horses, a few cows, chickens, and a few pigs, you might make it through. Farming was more self-sufficient then, but today it's not. There are fuel bills, the fertilizer bills, utility bills, and bank loans. Let us not forget the bank loans. If you want to make a farmer's blood boil, mention the millions of dollars of profit made by the big banks.

Today's young farm families often have two or more jobs besides farming. And with their alternate income, they are struggling to cover the farm expenses and survive. Agriculture is the cornerstone of Saskatchewan. It is the cornerstone of society. In Saskatchewan, no matter what your profession, it is connected to agriculture.

Politician and statesman Daniel Webster once said:

When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers therefore are the foundation of human civilization.

To put it plain and simple, when farmers prosper, the rest of society will prosper. If this province is to be rebuilt, it has to start with agriculture. If agriculture flourishes, so does the economy and the people of this great province.

Mr. Calvert, the hour grows late for agriculture. Act now. Some say, why save Saskatchewan agriculture; someone will still till the land. They are right. But at what cost?

In 1949 the average Canadian wage earner paid 22 per cent of their income for food. Today you pay only 9 per cent. In Europe, 30 to 40 per cent of their income goes toward purchasing food. To prevent this same fate for yourself, you must save agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, another issue Saskatchewan

people are facing is water. I don't mean water rights because that's federal jurisdiction. The problem I'm speaking of exists in small towns, villages, and hamlets. They cannot afford their own water supply.

Crystal Springs, Saskatchewan has 20 water connections and their water supply has never had a problem. Now Sask Water says they have to upgrade, or they will be shut down. These people are retired and living on meagre, fixed incomes. They cannot afford to upgrade. They can hardly afford today, much less tomorrow.

This is not a unique situation. All across Saskatchewan, small villages and hamlets and towns, even RMs are asking: what is the government going to do about water? These people need your help, not your rhetoric.

If you drive from Saskatoon to Prince Albert, you pass through the Nisbet forest reserve and it is, metaphorically speaking, just the tip of the tree branching out across Saskatchewan. More than half of Saskatchewan is forest. Forestry contributes \$750 million to the Saskatchewan economy, and about 9,000 jobs. Forestry is relatively a fledgling industry in Saskatchewan and is just beginning to realize its potential, but it has issues that must be addressed.

(15:45)

The small independent operators have to go through too much red tape to get a contract, and once they get a contract it is so short-term that they cannot plan for the future. For instance, when contracts are offered for small clean-up jobs after a fire, the bugs have beaten the loggers to the trees by the time the paperwork is done. Who can sell worm-eaten lumber? Cut the red tape for these small contractors. Help them turn . . . help them and in turn they will contribute a larger portion to our economy.

The key to Saskatchewan's problem is to increase our tax base, not increase our taxes. We're already taxed to the limit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — If we increased the population, everyone could pay less tax because more people are paying. This is basically a very simple plan. The government says it won't work because you can't grow the population. In response, I would like to quote Ford Motor Company founder, Henry Ford:

If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right.

What have we got to lose by trying?

To increase or even maintain the population we need to have employment for people, and therein lies the problem. Government doesn't need to create jobs. Let business create jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Government should be in the business of government, not in the business of business. To simplify this,

let's compare business to a football game. The government's job in the football game of business is field maintenance. Make sure there are no business potholes. Make sure the lines and the rules are marked out clearly. Make sure there's a level playing field so that no one has an unfair advantage.

Second step of the government is referees and officials. The government makes the rules and the government enforces the rules. The government does not field a team.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — Let business field a team. Who would come to play against the Roughriders if the Roughriders were their own officials and made their own rules? The league provides the officials and the league makes the rules.

Let business do government and government govern. To illustrate this point very clearly, to show beyond a shadow of a doubt that the government does not belong in business, to sum it up all in one word — SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company).

Mr. Speaker, a wise man once said, there are three sides to every story: your side, my side, and the truth. Let's put this to the test. Your side says the economy is okay. My side says the economy is a disaster. The Provincial Auditor says Lorne Calvert inherited . . .

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

Mr. Kirsch: — The Provincial Auditor says the Premier has added approximately 1.6 billion in new debt. Mr. Speaker, the NDP says prosperity is just over the hill and I agree with him. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree with him. The problem is the NDP is going the wrong way on the hill.

The NDP claims to be the party of the little guy, the protector of the downtrodden, the friend of the working class. Look at the facts. For people with less than 29,000 income, Saskatchewan pays the highest income tax rate in all of Canada. And this from the protector of the little guy.

Lotteries. Statistics have proven that lotteries are a tax on the poor. Nobody spends more on lottery tickets than the poor. And this from the protector of the downtrodden.

PST is charged on used merchandise. Nobody buys more used merchandise than the poor. And this from the friend of the working class.

The key to the future is not more government, it is more prudent government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — The key to Saskatchewan is the people of this province. I would like to quote a young man that I have a tremendous amount of respect for:

We have built one province and we can do it again. This time will be our own.

That young man is the next Premier of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I feel Batoche is a very unique and historic place, a very beautiful place — a land with a strong, resilient people who are committed to rebuilding Saskatchewan. And I have now spoken for them. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand in proud support of the Speech from the Throne, but before I begin I want to first of all welcome all the new members that have joined us. Of course being fair, as part of the government benches I want to first of all welcome all the new members on the opposition side; there are a few.

But more importantly I want to recommend . . . or I want to recognize and recommend to the opposition to watch the new ones on our side, Mr. Speaker, because the Throne Speech talks about energy, it talks about vitality, it talks about vision, acknowledgement, and hope, Mr. Speaker. And we have all the above, Mr. Speaker, with people that have joined us most recently from Regina Walsh Acres, from Saskatoon Meewasin, from Cumberland, and certainly from Saskatchewan Rivers, Mr. Speaker.

And what I would point out, Mr. Speaker, is these new team members, and there are others throughout the building, that have joined this government to bring forward a radical change and a most impressive change on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And what I would also point out, Mr. Speaker — I think it's quite important — is that listening to the members opposite, there is some days where I feel that their sense of doom and gloom and fearmongering doesn't work any more in 2004.

On this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to aspire to become a good government on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and to inspire people to continue building this great province for many, many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with a bit of interest, and I point out a bit of interest to the member of Wood River yesterday, Mr. Speaker, speaking about how he fought communism throughout his career, Mr. Speaker, about what he'd done to protect our great country.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in trying to portray one as a fighter for your country against communism, I would point this out, Mr. Speaker. First of all, my father, who I lost just over a year ago, was a World War II veteran. He served his country. And he served it with pride and brought those kind of values back to our home and back to our community and inspired many people. And many of those people aspired to become greater things and greater people than they could have been, because of the sacrifices that he made.

I had a younger brother, Mr. Speaker, that served almost 23

years in the army and is now a warrant officer, Mr. Speaker. And he's done tours in Bosnia and seen the ravages of war. I've got an older brother who just recently retired, who also retired in the air force as a warrant officer and he'd done some of the humanity tours, if you will, to places like South Africa where there was some famine and some war and so on and so forth. And all of these three people, that were a part of my life, they spoke of the freedom that we enjoy.

They didn't talk about the politics of, well I fought for our country so you'd believe my position, Mr. Speaker. You don't do that to freedom; you don't that to democracy; and you don't do that to the rest of your comrades whether they served in the army, in the air force, or in the navy. This is not something that you politicize.

And I say sometimes that many times to a lot of people that have done similar speeches, we thank you for your service but don't make politics the basis of making your presentation that you defended and fought communism because you have a difference of opinion when it comes to politics, Mr. Speaker.

And the other point I would point out is when you attack, when you attack the message of the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker . . . And I'll give you a good example of the attack on health care. This government is going to continue defending health care, Mr. Speaker. We're going to make sure that the health care system is publicly administered and it's going to be a publicly delivered health care system, Mr. Speaker.

And what I'm afraid of is that opposition there, is that they have an agenda. And I ask them, what is their agenda? Why is it you're spreading doom and gloom and fear, Mr. Speaker? Because they have an agenda and people out in Saskatchewan are saying to the Throne Speech, we have made our presentation very clear. We are going to support health care all the way. And we have new members who are going to continue defending that particular aspect of this government, Mr. Speaker. And while they're all showering all these negative shots toward the government, the question that I have and the people of Saskatchewan have is, what is your position?

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would remind the member from Athabasca that all remarks should be regarded through the Chair in the third person and not directed in the second person.

I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to ask the question is what is their position, Mr. Speaker? Our response to the . . . our Throne Speech talks about commitment to health care. We want to make sure that the birthplace of medicare that we are going to lead the nation to continue building on the success of the health care system.

And granted, Mr. Speaker, there are many challenges. We're not denying that there aren't challenges. We aren't denying that our system isn't perfect. We're saying that there have to be some more resources, some more effort, and we always must be on guard to making sure that the system is getting to be as best as possible given the resources that we have, Mr. Speaker. And we've heard from the Minister of Health on countless occasions.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to support and defend and fight for a publicly administered and delivered health care system on this side of the House.

And I ask again, Mr. Speaker, the reason why that they fight against the Throne Speech is because they have an agenda and they will not come clean, Mr. Speaker. So I would say this, I would say this. The Throne Speech that I'm standing in for today, which I'm going to defend, it is very clear on this side of the House we know what we stand for. A big question mark on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. What is their agenda? That is the number one question that I have.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member from Batoche, a great historical place for the Métis people of Saskatchewan, and Batoche of course has a long, great history, Mr. Speaker. And I point out that many occasions the Aboriginal people need to see some fairness, Mr. Speaker. That member spoke about a fair, level playing field, Mr. Speaker. I agree. We should have a fair, level playing field.

But, Mr. Speaker, every time we try to do something on this side of the House that talks about the Aboriginal people, then there's some complaints from the opposition, Mr. Speaker. There shouldn't be no special deals; there shouldn't be no special deals. And then we heard during the election, Mr. Speaker, about a \$50 million cut to social services being proposed by the then leader, Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosetown.

And Mr. Speaker, then we talk about training opportunities. We talk about forestry and every time we try and do something, Mr. Speaker, to bring the Aboriginal people on stream — the First Nations and Métis people — right away there is opposition from the opposition, Mr. Speaker. So I say today, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk the talk, then you'd better walk the walk, Mr. Speaker, and stop . . . Words are cheap, Mr. Speaker.

Amongst the other things that I noticed, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what the Crowns are all about, they turn around and say oh, no no, our opinion counts more than you because all . . . some of us fought for the country. Oh no, our opinions are greater than you because some of us have been around longer than you. Or our opinions are greater because we feel this is the right way to do things, Mr. Speaker.

Well in this particular Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan, on this side includes northern Saskatchewan, it includes the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan, includes the agricultural-based people of Saskatchewan, it involves the farm family of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if I can borrow a phrase, which I want to modify a bit. I've heard one time that one of the, that one of the most significant phrases that I heard in my political career was the phrase that this is not a good province for any of us unless it's a good province for all of us. And I think that message should be resoundingly clear and made obviously clear to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have on

this side of the House is we need to recognize, we need to recognize the challenges that the farm families have, there's no question about that.

As a member of this government, we often hear on the cabinet table, on the caucus table, some of the challenges. And many of the new members have certainly picked up that challenge and brought forward many of these, these concerns, Mr. Speaker. And absolutely throughout our tenure as a minister we have spoken about some of these challenges, and people of the province, whether it's north, east, west, or south, have to recognize that particular challenge.

(16:00)

What we want to add to that, Mr. Speaker, is not the doom and gloom and the fear that the opposition wants to attach for their political purposes; what they need to do is offer a system of hope and some clear direction, because can the treasury of Saskatchewan compete against the American subsidy or the European subsidy, Mr. Speaker? The obvious answer is no.

We have the . . . We have foreign governments that are heavily subsidizing food production. Now we need the federal government to come on board. If they're going to subsidize their producers, then we need to also do the same thing in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, we are simply not.

So on this side of the House, when we talk about the Throne Speech, we want to talk about what we are doing right, and offer vision and hope.

But we also need to provide to the people of Saskatchewan what our challenges are. And then every day they get up and say, oh no and it's all your fault; stop blaming the federal government. But, Mr. Speaker, whether it is health care or the agricultural file, we do need a strong national government to help the province of Saskatchewan counter some of the other foreign governments in what they're doing to subsidize the whole issue of food production. And it's time those guys realize that and move on, Mr. Speaker.

The other point I would make, Mr. Speaker, is the constant attack on our Crowns. You see this steady — the Crowns this, the Crowns that. Well, Mr. Speaker, after this past election I think the message is clear. The people of Saskatchewan do not want to sell their Crowns.

The people of Saskatchewan want to keep their Crowns, and that's why the Throne Speech talks about keeping ownership of the Crowns for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And what is wrong with that concept and what is wrong with that opposition if we're not getting it through their heads that that's what the message of the people of Saskatchewan are. And that's what the message is, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And they talk about a level playing field. But, Mr. Speaker, we have heard our Premier talk about the lowest rate for all the utilities given to the Saskatchewan families. Why, Mr. Speaker? Well because we own these Crowns. That's why, Mr. Speaker. That there is an accountable

system here. And why, Mr. Speaker? Because we should be proud of these Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

But no, the opposition has a privatization agenda – they want to sell them off. And why do they want to sell them off, Mr. Speaker? So that at the end of the day when they're done they can simply primarily point out, hey, you know, our work is done here; we've privatized everything and now it's time for us to take another walk for another 20 years. And in the meantime, we have to come along and clean up the same mess again.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan said no, our Crowns are not for sale; they never will be for sale. So my message to them is, it's time you get it through — the people of Saskatchewan want to keep their Crowns under their ownership and not some foreign ownership, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I look across the way — and I talk about hope; I talk about opportunity; I talk about diversity in our community — and I look across the way and I say, well who in the heck do I see across the way, Mr. Speaker? I can't figure it. Are they the Alliance, Mr. Speaker? Are they PCs (Progressive Conservative), Mr. Speaker? Are they Reformers? Are they disaffected Liberals? Like what is this group? What is their group? Who is their national party, Mr. Speaker?

People out there are all saying, who are these guys? There's some Reformers there, there's . . . you know I can almost take a pen . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker, and I draw around a block of seven or eight of them. Oh, those are Reformers over there, and over here we have disaffected Liberals. Over here we have PCs, and over there we got the Alliance. Oh no, no, no, we're the Saskatchewan Party.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think they need to define to the people of Saskatchewan who in the heck they are. And secondly, they need to define what they are, Mr. Speaker. What are they going to do to Saskatchewan. And that mistrust I think the people of Saskatchewan have is well placed. And the answer of course is nothing, Mr. Speaker. Nothing.

So I point out, Mr. Speaker, again I listened to the member from Saltcoats talking about his great friend, Ron Osika. Well Ron Osika is a good friend, Mr. Speaker. And he was a darn good MLA, Mr. Speaker. He done a lot for Melville, just for Melville alone, I know we got hospitals built there. He talked about the 25-year gaming agreement that Minister Osika signed on behalf of this government, some of the road work that he got done in that area, Mr. Speaker. And this was a good MLA, Mr. Speaker — a good MLA.

And now all of a sudden along comes the two opposition members and they gang up on him in the middle of the night, Mr. Speaker, and have done some of the . . . (inaudible) . . . through some private deals. So I would say this, Mr. Speaker, I would say this, that on this side of the House it's very, very important that we recognize our friends and will continue recognizing our friends for the contribution that they made to this legislature, and certainly to this province of Saskatchewan.

So, I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, that I'd like to recognize Mr. Osika for his fine work, and to point out to many of the people out there that worked against him, that he done quite a bit, he

done quite a bit for that area, and I think that they should be very proud of him. And that's why sometimes we hear from the other way, oh, he was a friend of ours. Well I'm sorry, you know, with friends like you, sometimes who needs enemies?

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, you look at some of these challenges we have, and the Throne Speech talks about making Saskatchewan ready for the next generation. And on this side our party and our government, and our government talks about publicly administered and publicly funded health care system. We're going to defend that till the death, Mr. Speaker. No private agenda, none of that. We don't want none of that, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, is if the things are so bad, Mr. Speaker, if things are so bad, why do we have a low unemployment rate, Mr. Speaker — all the while being fully aware, being fully aware, Mr. Speaker, that there are challenges in the agricultural sector, that there are farm families that are suffering. And on this side of the House we feel that pain, Mr. Speaker. We feel that pain, Mr. Speaker. It's almost every day we feel that pain.

We want to emphasize to the farm families that on this side of the House, and maybe on that side of the House as well, that there is a joint effort to try to make sure that the farm communities, the farm families are protected in Saskatchewan. And we will do all that we can to help out, Mr. Speaker, on every occasion, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — So, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne talks about categories of education and opportunity. And I say let's move forward, Mr. Speaker. The Speech from the Throne talks about building a green and prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker. I say let's move forward. Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne talks about quality of life, and I say let's move forward. Let's turn our attention to all the people of Saskatchewan and say, hey we're a province of 1 million people; we're going to work together. We're going to involve everybody. We're going to work hard to make sure to recognize our challenges and build from this day forward, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the Throne Speech mentioned which really touched certainly my constituency, which is a great constituency, Mr. Speaker, it talks about the road to Fort McMurray to La Loche, Mr. Speaker. And last year the people of La Loche and the people of the Northwest said, hey, why don't you guys build us a road to Fort McMurray? We'll all kind of go to work there and do some stuff and it will bring tourists this side. Hey great opportunity for Saskatchewan.

And one of the Saskatchewan Party members went on the radio and said, oh what are these guys doing? They're promoting jobs now in Alberta. I'm sitting there thinking, well my goodness, we try and help them with training. They don't like it. We try and help them with social assistance, which we don't like doing; we'd rather see them working, which is our plan on this side of the House. Well they don't like that either, want to cut that. So now when we're talking about jobs, they say, oh no, we

don't like that either. So if we can't train them, we can't help them with social assistance, we can't provide them with jobs, what do we do, Mr. Speaker?

Well on this side of the House we told them, your opinion . . . you can keep that little opinion to yourself. We're going to do things that we think is important for Saskatchewan — important for all of Saskatchewan and that's why, Mr. Speaker, that road link from Fort McMurray to La Loche is so very important.

And this government, Mr. Speaker, this Premier, this cabinet, this government again, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House said, yes, we'll build that road and yes, we'll work with all the governments involved and yes, that road will provide opportunities for work there and work back to the tourism trade, Mr. Speaker. And what is wrong with that? What is wrong with that? That is good news, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And finally, Mr. Speaker, as my wrap-up . . . as my wrap-up, I listened to the federal speech last night. In ten years, Mr. Speaker, in ten years, our national government which has downloaded on our province — and that's some of the challenges we face on this side of the House — in ten years, they hope to provide a debt to GDP (gross domestic product) ratio of 25 per cent.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, our debt to GDP ratio for government debt is 23 per cent. Mission accomplished, Mr. Speaker. Have we got more work? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We have more work. But my point today is that there's some tough things that we have to take care of, and this side of the House are more than prepared to do what we have to do to make it happen.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would point out this. Every day we hear the opposition members: oh, don't tax that, don't tax this; give these guys a raise; put more money into that; oh, don't tax that; no, we can't take that back; do this, do this — spend, spend, spend, but don't tax, tax, tax. Well how does that work, Mr. Speaker? How does that work?

Well on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, facts are facts. We have some challenges ahead of us. We're going to meet those challenges head-on. And that's why today I say to them in opposition, you can promise to be everything and do everything, to be everything to everybody, but sooner or later you will get caught doing that.

And when that chicken comes home to roost, then I think that they're going to have a visit from Colonel Sanders, Mr. Speaker. I think they're going to have some Kentucky Fried Chicken on that side of the House — well, Saskatchewan Party fried chicken, Mr. Speaker.

So that's why I say today, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech talks about challenge. It talks about acknowledgement. It talks about vision. It talks about hope. All the four cornerstones of a good government that's trying to balance all our needs, and enough advice from the other side, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I stand in proud support of the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We should probably all take about 10 minutes and just see if the last speaker's actually going to survive after all that. It's been a long time since we've seen someone speak for 15 minutes and not breathe, but we'll let that go as it is.

It was interesting listening to all the new MLAs give their first addresses and would like to welcome all the new MLAs to the House. There were some good speeches. Would also like to welcome you back to your position, Mr. Speaker. And we look forward, in our close proximity, to sharing some ideas on how the House is operating throughout the next year or so.

Back to the speeches given by the new MLAs. They were I think outstanding as a group. I think if we look at specifics, I would have to say without a doubt that this side of the House, we're extremely proud of our new MLAs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — The speeches they gave, they gave with class, they gave with thought, and they gave with hope. They represented their constituency well and the people back home that were watching are very proud of them.

A few speeches on the government side of the House from new members weren't that bad either. The speech from North Battleford was acceptable. We had a fellow from Sask Rivers who actually sang a little bit. With a name like Ben Heppner, I'll have to say it wasn't all that bad even, that singing that he did.

And I would have to say though there's one speech there that I was rather surprised at to have as a first speech, and that's the speech from the member from Walsh Acres. It was probably a very acidic kind of a speech and I was rather surprised to hear that at the first. Not overly surprised a little later on when I got the feeling that that really hadn't been written by that particular member, probably written by someone in the office who finally wanted to get some words on the record.

I recall some of the things from that particular speech that do need to be addressed I think. There's a statement there about 60 years of socialism, what that had done for Saskatchewan. Well let's just look at a few things, and we're going to get chirping from the other side. First thing, he said it was progress. Yes, there was progress.

The very first bit of progress started after the first CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) was elected and all the oil field outfits progressed down to Alberta. They left Saskatchewan. It took a long time to start having them move back in. That was CCF progress. That was CCF progress.

What have they done for us? There's a statement made earlier on about the people of this province having built up a great province. Unfortunately they were doing it elsewhere — in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, down to the States.

There's not a single person in this House that doesn't have numerous, very close relatives that are not living in Saskatchewan. Just remember what happened last Christmas outside your house, remember the licence plates that were out there. That's the progress that was created by the CCF and the NDP. They've exported people from Saskatchewan.

One of the questions we asked earlier on this week, 19 quarters of population drop — 19 quarters. Now a quarter sounds like two bits, which isn't much any more. But let's figure this out in what that actually says. That's getting very close to five years, five years of consistent, continual population drop. Our children, our grandchildren are leaving this province.

(16:15)

And who do you think, Mr. Speaker, who do they think is going to pay for their welfare, for their medicare, when those members in that house get old and they start putting extreme demands on the health system? Because they've exported all of our children and grandchildren elsewhere and they are paying taxes in other jurisdictions instead of over here as they could be and should be. And, Mr. Speaker, the most unfortunate part is they would like to be.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Those people would love to be back in Saskatchewan because they love this province as much as we do. But there were no jobs; there were no jobs. There were no opportunities. I just spoke earlier on this week with an individual who was very upset because his daughter has just graduated from nursing and cannot find a full-time job in Saskatchewan.

We've just heard all sorts of horror stories about our health care in Saskatchewan. We have a shortfall of people and here we have, Mr. Speaker, a young lady who has just graduated from nursing, can't get a full-time job in Saskatchewan as a nurse, wasn't being fussy about being in a particular town or city, just wanted to be in the beautiful province of Saskatchewan. And the work wasn't there because this government, this CCF-NDP (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) government continues to export people.

I said a little bit about health care. And I'll have to just go down that road for a moment or two, come back and probably head down it again later on.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to . . . It's going to be a tour. I have a letter in front of me, Mr. Speaker. It's signed by the Saskatchewan Minister of Health, written March 17 — that's this year, 2004. It's in reply to two letters I sent on behalf of one of my constituents.

One of the letters was sent on February 17 — February 17. Mr. Speaker, that's a whole month that it took for this Minister of Health to answer that letter. Someone in my constituency who needs help from the health system in Saskatchewan, our medicare system — the system that Tommy Douglas created and these people are busy destroying, Mr. Speaker — it took a month to answer.

But that's not the serious part, Mr. Speaker, because I had written two letters. The other letter was written in October 3, 2003. This was the answer to that. The first letter written on October 2003; the second in February 2004. Finally we get an answer in March. So from October to March this Health minister sits on the problem and does absolutely nothing. No wonder we have so many concerns about what happens in health care in this province.

Now there are two other ministers in this government who I will not mention because we haven't passed any whistle-blower legislation yet. One of them I contacted about a very serious situation in my constituency about a business that's being threatened by some of the government action. I got a phone call — I believe it was the next day — from this minister inviting me to his office in Saskatoon to talk about that situation.

That's the kind of response we need from the Health department. That's the kind of response we need. I would like to mention who that person is, but this government would probably fire them. And they wouldn't want to rehire him.

Wrote another letter. I got an answer within two days. So there are some cabinet ministers who at least try.

Health — which is one of the key ones — where we should get the best response, we get the worst response, Mr. Speaker. The worst response. It's absolutely shameful. We have people waiting a year, a year and a half, for surgery. And it's easy for us to say as we sit here in the House, and most of us enjoy fairly good health. But it's not that easy to say when we're the ones who are suffering or our families are suffering.

We had people just sitting over there behind the bar up in the gallery earlier on this week who are people who have waited not days, not weeks, not months. They are waiting years for surgery in this province. Years.

And this minister gets up and his only excuse is, well we've asked the feds for more money. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have asked the feds for more money and they haven't stepped up to the plate.

But here's a question this minister has to answer: why, when we have 10 or 11 other governments in this country who've received the same lame help from the federal government, do we have to have the longest waiting lists in Canada? The worst health system in Canada — why does it have to be here in Saskatchewan where we've had the longest experience with health care? We should have been able to devise the best plans and the best systems to make that health care work for the people of this province. Why is it working so poorly? It's because of that CCF-NDP mentality.

They've been in charge of that system for longer than anyone else has been in charge of a health system in Canada and we have the longest waiting lists, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful. That's what they need to answer. That's what they need to answer. In 60 years they should have had a solution. In 60 years they've given us the worst health care in Canada. That's what we need to answer.

Mr. Speaker, while we're dealing on some of the major areas of

this particular government, we're going to have to say a little bit about justice, a little bit about justice. Mr. Speaker, we are a province of under 1 million people. We probably have a dozen or two dozen cities in Canada that have a population many times what we have in this province, and I just mentioned where the fault lies for that one.

But in this particular province with just a few one hundred thousand populations, what do we have? We have a Milgaard situation. We had a Martensville situation. We have a Klassen situation. This is in a province, Mr. Speaker, with less than 1 million people. Half or a third the population of Calgary having those kinds of major, major justice issues and the people in that city would be livid with what's going on. Why do we have these problems? Why do we have them in Saskatchewan? There's something systemic and we need some justice leadership from the people in the Justice department on that side of this House, Mr. Speaker. We're not getting it. We're not getting it.

We just asked some very serious questions the other day of this Justice minister. His answer was, well when we said there's been some information sent to you, after he tried to hide behind the part that, well it's behind the court or it's in the court so I can't answer. But finally he came out from behind that closet and he started answering a few other questions of what he knew before that.

When we told him that he had received some information and we wanted him to comment on it, he said here in the House, oh, I haven't seen it. Then he went out and talked to the media and suddenly he knew all about it. We need the ministers from that side of the House to come in here and tell us what they know, not to hide behind some other weak excuse for not knowing what's going on.

That particular concern was a major concern, Mr. Speaker. It was a concern about Mr. Hillson getting his job back, and heaven knows there's no love lost on this side of the House for Mr. Hillson. He's been on that side of the House and so they know what he's like. He's one of those Liberals, turned NDP, turned Liberal. But what is the difference, Mr. Speaker, between a Liberal and an NDP? We're not sure. We're not sure.

But anyways, Mr. Hillson has been unelected. And I can see the member who's now representing smiling broadly. He's quite happy he's unelected, and that's fine. We didn't mind him not coming back either. Any House that has no Liberals is good. Any House that has no Liberals and no NDP is better. But anyways . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Hillson left public service, Mr. Hillson left public service to serve the people of this province in this House. There's a standing tradition — in fact this is enshrined in law — that when you leave those kinds of positions, you get them back.

Mr. Speaker, I was principal of a school when I decided to run for MLA. And I knew that I could serve as MLA for a month, for a year, for 10 years, for 20 years and go back and that job was guaranteed because that's how we operate in this province.

We tell our public servants that if you want to run for public life, we appreciate that and your job is there when it's over.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, a year or two after I was elected, I wrote a letter to my school board and told them to cancel that particular right. I didn't want it because first of all it would create some difficulties for them in their staffing because every time my position was staffed, the people kind of said, well who knows when Heppner will come back. My constituents think I'll be here forever, and sometimes the people across the House worry about that as well. And so I wrote them a letter and said just cancel that right. I don't want . . . I will not be exercising it any more.

Now we have on the government side of the House — and we're not quite sure — between 13 to 15 people who have left government service of some sort or other, jobs that should be guaranteed to them that this government, through some strange twist of fate, has decided they're going to refuse to Mr. Hillson, which means it could be refused to every one of those 13 to 15 on that side of the House. That is no way to treat our public servants.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — I should have had a good round of applause from the government side, but I think they saw the Premier watching and weren't going to do it. Those are the kinds of difficulties we have in our justice system when we have — and by the way, Mr. Hillson, as you know, was working in the Justice department — when that very department is the one that breaks the laws of this land.

I've said earlier on, Mr. Speaker, there was something systemic wrong. We shouldn't have had the Milgaard cases. We shouldn't have had the Martensville cases. We shouldn't have had the Klassen cases.

The Klassen cases very recently showed what was going on. They would have been happy . . . And by the way, Mr. Rick Klassen, and I spoke to him on numerous occasions, would have been glad over the past two, three, four, five years that he was working on this issue — and we admire him, Mr. Speaker, because he represented himself in a very sophisticated venue, and that's a court of law and did very well for himself — he would have been glad, and he made many efforts, to speak to the Justice minister or to the Premier of this province to see if something could be worked out.

But they wouldn't speak to him. They wouldn't speak to him until it was in the courts, and then they came up with, well it's before the courts. Had they done something when they had the opportunity, they could have settled this with dignity to the families, in a timely fashion, so that those families would not have had to suffer throughout that whole time without work, without dignity, without anything else.

That's the NDP-CCF (New Democratic Party-Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) way, is drive these . . . (inaudible) . . . people into the ground. These were not people with lots of money. These were not people with lots of resources. They were the people that needed the help.

And for the people on the other side who think that I'm exhausted, I can assure you it can take a whole lot longer than this before we're done.

I have to go back to a few things in my constituency because it's not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne has very little in it of any consequence. There's nothing in it to deal with those health issues I've just been discussing. There's nothing in it to deal with those justice issues that I've been mentioning. There are a lot of other things that aren't in there. In fact, there's virtually nothing in there except for repetition of the last two years of fuzzy wuzzy.

And all that the last two, three years gave us, Mr. Speaker, all that the last two, three years gave us . . . And I would hope the member from Walsh Acres is now listening, is now listening, because the member from Walsh Acres said she was quite upset about paying interest on some 1980s' debt.

Well let's remember the debt that's been added up at about \$1 million a day by this particular government. This Premier who took over, Mr. Speaker, who took over with a one-half billion dollar surplus, that surplus was arrived at without federal money for health care, and our waiting lists were shorter than they are now. They were achieved without all of that, with some better management from Mr. Romanow and Ms. MacKinnon. They were NDP. Lots of things, I didn't agree with them. But at least they had some fiscal sense and responsibility.

(16:30)

Then this particular Premier took over and started running this province into debt at a million dollars a day. The previous administration had actually reduced that debt, that Allan Blakeney debt of \$6.8 million. The member from Walsh Acres should keep in mind, 6.8 — \$6.8 billion. We've paid debt . . . tax on that, interest on that throughout the whole time. We've paid the interest on that during the '80s when interest hit 20-some per cent. We were paying the interest on that all that time.

This Premier added, didn't keep on reducing it as his predecessor had. He's added on to it a million dollars a day and keeps on adding to it. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. He couldn't throw up his hands and say, well it couldn't be fixed, we couldn't do any better because the Romanow administration had done much better.

Unfortunately it had a lot to do with off-loading on to RMs and other towns. This government hasn't changed that, hasn't changed that. We remember just a few days ago when we were all at SARM, Mr. Speaker, and the promise came up that this Premier had made over there, that we are going to deal with the education portion of tax on farm land. So he walks up there this year and says, well we can't do anything; we just changed our mind — changing their mind.

That would be, Mr. Speaker, a whole lot like agriculture . . . You recall what happened, Mr. Speaker, when farmers some time ago signed up on a program for farm called GRIP (Gross Revenue Insurance Program) and the NDP-CCF (New Democratic Party-Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) changed their mind and just tore it up. Just said, we deem it not

to have happened.

There's a lot of deeming going on in this government, Mr. Speaker, and it's hurting the people of this province, a million dollars a day plus, that this Premier is putting on the debt of this province. And we wonder why we are in such a sad state, and we can't deal with education and health and the education portion on farm taxes the way we ought to be able to.

But as I said, Mr. Speaker, I need to go back to a few things from my constituency. Highway 11, I think that stretch of highway from Saskatoon to about Duck Lake has probably killed more people than any other short stretch of highway in this province ever has. And this government refuses to work on it.

Now there are some easy solutions. The ideal solution is obviously twinning the whole highway. It's very expensive. They haven't done it in the past number of years, and it'll probably be a few more years before they do it. However, Mr. Speaker, there are some solutions that would have saved almost all the lives. There are some lives you can't save; someone gets drunk, rolls their vehicle in the ditch, and gets killed. You can divide the highway 17 times, and it's not going to help.

But there are some you can. Most of the people who have died on Highway 11 on that stretch have died while they want to make a left-hand turn, and they're stopped in the lane. They can't move out of the line of traffic because there is no left-hand turning lane. So they're stuck right in traffic lanes, and that's a heavily used stretch of highway, Mr. Speaker, one of the heaviest-used stretches of highways in this province. And so you're sitting in that lane waiting to do a left-hand turn. Traffic comes from behind you. Probably 999 times out of 1,000, people see you and they manage to get around. The other times, you have an accident that takes lives.

In the member's statement today, I referred to that. Some lives were saved in a very heroic way, but there was a life lost. That life would not have been lost because there was a van stopped right there waiting to make a left-hand turn. And that's what caused the accident. A few left-hand turn lanes is going to cost a few million, but it's going to save lives that would save SGI and the hurt in this province. It'd come back many times over in that sort of way. But they refuse to look at it.

I need to also say a little bit about high-speed Internet. For some strange, obscure reason, this government has put high-speed Internet into communities of under 100 — and I'm not going to say they shouldn't have had it — to serve the schools that have populations of around 60 and less. And yet there are in my constituency a few towns that have populations in the vicinity of 1,000. They have growing schools. They have schools that are being built to meet the needs, and they refuse to put in high-speed Internet. They refuse to put it in.

There are, in the one community of Waldheim, three multi-million-dollar businesses there. One there's a fertilizer business that has outlets I believe in about four or five other communities, multi-million-dollar business. There's a fire insurance company there that works throughout this province and in other provinces.

And that's where, Mr. Speaker, something in the state of Denmark is starting to smell. And this time it's in the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm a little suspect of this government, at their little concern that this insurance company is competing with their insurance company, and so they say we'll keep them out of the market. We'll make business difficult for them by not getting them high-speed Internet. That's what the NDP-CCF would do, because they're doing it right now. And there is another business in there, a trust company, also doing a multi-million-dollar business, but they won't do it. They won't put in the high-speed Internet. No good excuses, no reasons whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak more about the population drop. I'd like to say more about the *Regina Manifesto*. The member from Walsh Acres mentioned that one. But I'll save that for another speech because I'm sure I'll be able to find some time.

This Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, as I said, is full of fluff. There's nothing of consequence in there. It's similar to the ones we've had over the last number of years which didn't do anything for this province except bring the population down. And this government says, guess what? Our population is shrinking a little less quickly than it did the month or the quarter before. Aren't we fantastic? Just look at us. We're dying more slowly than we did a quarter ago. Aren't we good? That's no kind of an excuse. I cannot and I will not support this Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm going to just bring things to a slightly different tenor I think for awhile here. I'm going to start by congratulating all members who are newly elected in this House. We've heard some passionate and inspired speeches, and I feel that if you're not passionate about this work, you shouldn't be in it. So that's a very good thing.

I want to as well congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his election as Leader of the Opposition, and yourself, Mr. Speaker, on being re-elected as Speaker for this session.

And I just want to speak briefly about the constituency of Rosemont. I wasn't particularly happy when the Boundaries Commission ripped my old constituency apart and divided it up amongst other, now smiling, people.

But I will say that as I got to know the constituency of Rosemont, I'm very happy to be representing this area. It's a community of wide open spaces with very large yards, lots of parks, and walkways. It's a very family-oriented place where there's lots of schools, lots of schoolchildren, and very down-to-earth people that are concerned about day-to-day issues. And I'm very honoured that these high quality of folks have placed their confidence in me to represent them.

You know with everybody mentioning their spouses, I felt compelled to mention my husband, Vic, because he would feel

left out if I didn't. And I can tell you that Gormley has nothing on my husband when it comes to reality check time. Whenever I get home and something has happened, I say, Vic, you know this happened today; what do you think? He always has a way of just shooting in a zinger than brings it all into perspective. And I'm sure that a lot of us depend on our spouses to give us a reflection on the work that we do. So thank you to all the spouses who've managed to keep your objectivity intact while we're in the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now being the fourth time I've been elected, I'd like to confirm to all the newly elected people that it is possible to make a great deal of difference in people's lives as an elected person, and I'm sure you wouldn't have run for office if you didn't believe this. But I just wanted to mention three examples of some of the things that I've worked on since I've been elected that show the range of things you can work on.

One of the very first projects I took on as a backbencher was to help get a Grow Regina garden project established, and that garden is still there today and still producing food for residents and providing gardening opportunities for people who may not have had them otherwise. And I still feel very good when I drive by that.

I was involved in different ways in the fine arts building out at the university, in the First Nations University building, and I thought these were both very worthwhile endeavours for both our cultural community but as well for the very important role that the First Nations University plays in creating the next generation of working people in Saskatchewan.

And also I had a little bit to do with the petroleum research centre in some of the initial discussions. And one of my particular passions has been diversity in government and in community, and that's another thing that I have pursued from all different perspectives.

So these are some of the kinds of things that you can work on and have success with, and I'm sure that everybody will have their own passions for what they want to work on. But what I would urge for new members is to find that thing that really matters to you and do some work on it because there's a very good chance you'll be able to accomplish that.

Particularly I'd like today to encourage young women to take a stand in their communities, whether in civic, municipal, or federal politics. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I've seen a dropping off of the involvement of women in elected politics. And I'm very upset by this because women are 52 per cent of the population in Saskatchewan and really need to be better represented in the halls of all levels of government, because we're all affected by the decisions the government make — whether it's economic development, daycare, education, health, equal wages, or promotion opportunities. Women need to be heard, so if any of the folks here in the Assembly today are thinking of retiring, look around you and see who those capable women are who might possibly replace you as you leave and do everything you can to encourage them to take an interest in this kind of work because it's very rewarding.

You know, Mr. Speaker, just recently the new member from Batoche said that there's three views on any subject: yours, mine, and the truth. And I know we all have a little bit of fun in the Legislative Assembly debating our views of the world. Some have more fun than others, but I do have to mention a couple of things.

We have had an open-for-business government in the recent memory of people here, from 1980 to 1991. And what happened during our open-for-business phase? Well the economy went down. The largest number of youth in the history of the province left, and the government of the day — of which some of the members opposite were members of, and many more worked for, and the current leader certainly worked for — added debt at the rate of about a billion dollars a year. And I just think it's important to get some of those facts out front.

And I don't blame them for all of that because when an economy goes down, sometimes there's nothing a government can do to totally overcome that. And so I think it would be nice if we got a little less of this open-for-business stuff and a little more practical discussion about what things you can do when there's economic challenges — under trade agreements or under unexpected cattle diseases — and realize that even with an open-for-business philosophy, we didn't see any dramatic improvements in the province's fortunes during that time period.

In fact it's been our government since 1991 that has restored our credit rating, has given the largest income tax cut in the history of the province, and has the highest number of people employed in the history of the province. So you can be critical, but history does have a story to tell on these matters.

But I'm not going to dwell on that. I'm going to move to the Throne Speech which I thought, Mr. Speaker, was filled with hope and opportunity. And I think as a result of this Throne Speech that there will be more hope and opportunity in this province. I think in a difficult time, one of the roles of leadership is to create hope and opportunity and not to further drive people into despair, as some folks are inclined to do.

And I want to particularly focus on the part of the hope and opportunity that I'm responsible for, Mr. Speaker, the Building Independence. Since we adopted our Building Independence approach in social assistance, we had social assistance rates that just continued to climb in the province no matter what we did. So we determined that we had to find a different way of doing this and to create opportunity with dignity for families. And there's two ways we really did it: one was the Building Independence Jobs First model, and the other one was integrated services in the community.

(16:45)

In government we moved to more interdepartmental ways of working where Justice, Health, Learning, Community Resources and Employment, Aboriginal Affairs, and Culture and Youth worked together to combine their programs to have the greatest impact for folks in the community; but also in the Department of Community Resources and Employment when the Premier did his restructuring — combined income support, housing initiatives, as well as the career and employment

centres. So we had three of the areas that really affect people's lives: their income sufficiency, their housing, and their employment and career opportunities all brought together in one place.

I noted with interest in the Sask Party's platform in the election that they said they were going to adopt a policy of work first, and they were going to reduce the number of employable people on welfare by 25 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say — hello, we've been doing that for several years. And in fact we have reduced by 41 per cent, since we began this process, the number of employable people on welfare. So this has been very good.

And I would just mention that since 1997-98 over 6,000 families, including 13,800 children, have been removed from the welfare rolls. This is 6,000 families and 13,800 children with more opportunity.

Now I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it's not good for children to grow up in a home where the parents aren't working. Now that doesn't mean both parents have to work, but certainly children need to see that people are working, providing for themselves.

You know sometimes I have this debate with people that people shouldn't have to go to work, but I feel differently about it. I know that in families that are working, it's more likely that the children are up for school, that the kids have good role models, and that they feel proud. Because when someone say, well what does your father do, what does your mother do, they have an answer to that question. And I think that's very important for young people to have that ability to have pride in their family and their family's role in the community.

And I think as a result of these changes we see a lot more of this opportunity. Not only that, but we now spend \$86 million less on dependency. The money that we spend today is helping people to cross the welfare wall.

And let me just describe this for a minute. I think the reason why our rates were increasing so much over the years was because it was more beneficial to be on assistance than it was to be off assistance. So what we did was we started creating more supports for people to move out of the assistance area.

Things like retained earnings. The Saskatchewan employment supplement, where if people's income isn't high enough, there's an income supplement. Family health benefits, so you didn't lose your health benefits when you leave assistance. The Saskatchewan Child Benefit, which gives extra recognition of the cost of child rearing. The provincial training allowance.

Improvements to child care. I know my daughter used to complain bitterly that the subsidies to parents weren't high enough, and that's one of the things that were done in recent years is to improve those subsidies. And as well, considerable supports to the disabled for income, employment, health benefits; and as well they'll be included in the new housing developments that were mentioned in the Throne Speech.

I'll just mention that this can only work if there is opportunities in the economy. And there are 1,500 more people employed in

this month this year than there were in the previous year in the same month.

But I think we may have to have a discussion at some point about the minimum wage with the new members opposite to see how they feel about that, because we've had many debates in this House where people felt that it wasn't possible for people to pay improved minimum wage. And we will never have the appropriate incentives for people to not be on assistance unless we have a minimum wage that causes people to feel that it's better to work.

And I'm prepared to have that debate with anyone here on any given day because I'm a strong believer in the need for minimum wage to keep up with other increases in people's wages and the economy.

I might just mention some of the principles on which the Building Independence is based. It recognizes that people need support, but it also recognizes people's right for opportunity. Unlike other provinces, we haven't just kicked people off support. We haven't given them bus tickets to leave the province. We actually believe they have a right to have opportunities. But we also believe they have a responsibility to contribute, and that's a large part of the Jobs First approach.

We do recognize that some specific groups have labour market disadvantages. As I mentioned, only 36 per cent of the people on assistance today are actually employable. And that does not necessarily mean easily employable. But our program supports are all to support mainstream participation.

Now in doing this work, we didn't just make a decision and do it. We consulted extensively with advocates in the community, and we've done follow-up interviews with clients and people who use these systems, and they say that they have more pride today and more dignity in the way these services are delivered. And I would, I would not be being completely factual if I didn't say that people still wish that some of the levels of support were higher. And certainly as finances permit, I think that's an objective we share. But the fact is that we have very good system out there today that supports people to become independent and they are supportive of it.

We did in the Throne Speech mention phase 2 of Building Independence where we have improvements to child care, improvements to the safety, the quality, and the affordability of housing.

I'm hugely looking forward to budget day so I'll be able to talk about some of these great improvements in housing. And I think one of the things that may surprise the members opposite, that we intend to pursue our new housing policy with much more partnerships with the private sector. Because we think that the only way we're going to solve the quality housing problem is to work with all of the people who are providing housing in the community. And that involves both the private and the public sector, as well as all the housing groups that work with the community.

There is some emphasis on support for 16- and 17-year-olds who are not in school, to ensure that they have supports and skills to join the workforce, and as well, community and

northern initiatives. Did you hear that? Northern. There.

So when you add it to the tax reforms that have taken place in Saskatchewan, the largest personal income tax, as you may have heard me mention a little earlier, Mr. Speaker — 55,000 low-income were removed 100 per cent from income tax rolls, PST rebate instituted to low-income people, increased child tax credits, and increased senior tax credits.

And as a result of these changes, in 2001 the rate of low income among children was ten point eight per cent after taxes and transfers, down from seventeen point six per cent in 1991. And, of course, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to get that down to zero. But we are making substantial improvement.

From 1993 to 2001 the number of children under 18 living in low income, after taxes and transfers, declined by 20,000 — still a higher number than we would like, but definitely making progress. And in 2001, after taxes and transfers, Saskatchewan had one of the lowest rates of poverty amongst seniors at three point six per cent.

So I want to just thank the most excellent staff at the Department of Community Resources and Employment, as well as the ministers who came before in this portfolio — the members from Moose Jaw North, the member from Regina Douglas Park, and the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. As well, to recognize all of my colleagues over the last two governments who have fully supported these improvements and opportunity, and as well the staff of my office who have been so diligent over the years I've been elected in supporting the work that we're doing together.

I don't know if I have time to speak much on this topic but I wanted to mention fetal alcohol syndrome, Mr. Speaker.

We've largely entered into dealing with this issue on providing supports through the Kids First strategy. It applies to children under six who are most vulnerable and their families; pregnant women living in circumstances of risk. And what happens is home visits to pregnant women at risk and their families. And I know this is an issue of great concern to the opposition because they have mentioned it before, so I did want to mention what is happening.

Babies are screened in Saskatchewan hospitals to determine the challenges faced by their families. And as well there's an expansion of child care and early learning opportunities, and enhancements to mental health and alcohol and drug services.

I'm sure we'll be talking more in this session about this, but certainly we've made it a priority. So I just want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that we'd be willing to have the federal government come and visit and learn about Building Independence, because then when they construct their next equalization program they perhaps would not be taking away \$1.25 for each dollar that we grow in this economy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And it would seem to me that regardless of who sits on this side of the House, that the federal government is responsible for crafting policies that encourage

economic growth and independence of all Canadian provinces.

That being said, I would affirm that this is a Throne Speech of hope and opportunity for improved quality of life and a green and prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker, and I will be supporting this Speech from the Throne.

And at that I will have to adjourn debate for today because we've run out of time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Rosemont that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion's carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion's carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:57.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Toth	105
Krawetz	105
Wall	105
Draude	105
Hermanson	105
Bjornerud	105
Morgan	106
McMorris	106
Eagles	106
Gantefoer	106
Harpauer	106
Bakken	106
Elhard	107
Huyghebaert	107
Allchurch	107
Brkich	107
Weekes	107
Hart	107
Dearborn	108

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk	108
--------------------	-----

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Dearborn	108
----------------	-----

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Crofford	108
Wall	108
Kirsch	127

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Passing of Aubrey Kallechy	
Hermanson	109
Youth Action Now	
Morin	109
Official Opening of Goodeve Community Centre	
Hart	109
Saskatchewan Writer Recognized	
Junor	109
Four Honoured for Bravery	
Heppner	110
Mental Health Program Receives Stellar Award for Quality	
Hamilton	110
Student Helps Fundraise for Telemiracle	
Brkich	110
Rural Women's Month	
Borgerson	110

ORAL QUESTIONS

Use of Code Burgundy in Hospitals	
Wall	111
Nilson	111
Gantefoer	112
Strike Action at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology	
Cheveldayoff	113
Thomson	113
Canadian Farm Income Program	
Stewart	113
Wartman	114

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 — The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004	
Van Mulligen	116
Bill No. 2 — The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004	
Quennell	116

Bill No. 3 — The Certified Management Consultants Amendment Act, 2004	
Van Mulligen	116
Bill No. 4 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2004	
Van Mulligen	116
Bill No. 5 — The Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund Amendment Act, 2004	
Van Mulligen	117
Bill No. 6 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2004	
Van Mulligen	117
Bill No. 7 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004	
Sonntag	117
MOTIONS	
Hours of Sitting	
Atkinson	117
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
SPECIAL ORDER	
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
ADDRESS IN REPLY	
Bjornerud	118
Iwanchuk	119
Merriman	121
Hamilton	124
Kirsch	127
Belanger	130
Heppner	133
Crofford	137

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. L. Calvert
Premier

Hon. P. Atkinson
Minister of Crown Management Board
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. J. Beatty
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary

Hon. B. Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources

Hon. J. Crofford
Minister of Community Resources and Employment
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
Minister Responsible for Gaming

Hon. D. Forbes
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of Energy Conservation

Hon. D. Higgins
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. J. Nilson
Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. P. Prebble
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. F. Quennell
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. C. Serby
Deputy Premier

Hon. M. Sonntag
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Hon. L. Taylor
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. A. Thomson
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Information Technology

Hon. H. Van Mulligen
Minister of Finance

Hon. M. Wartman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization