



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

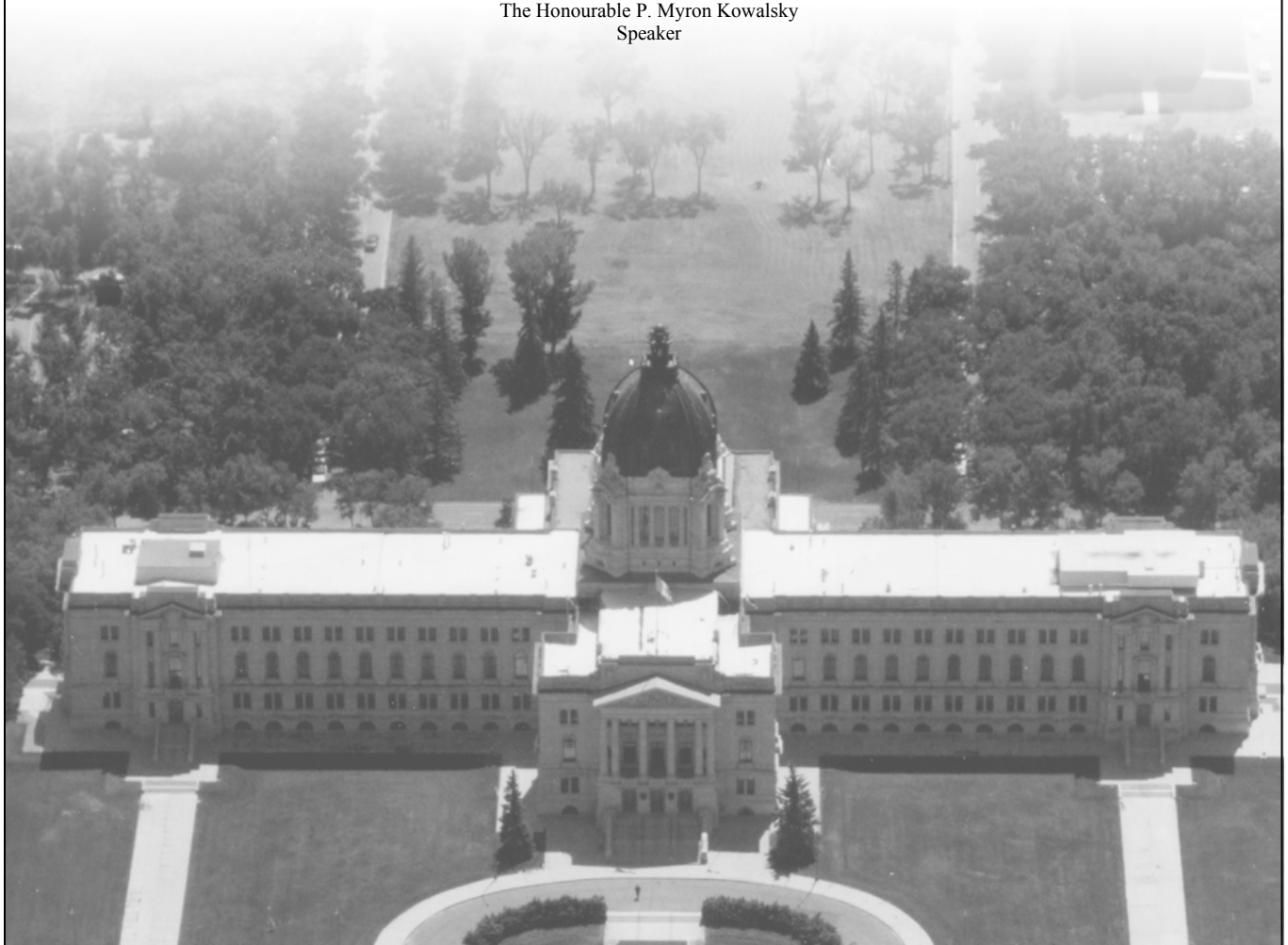
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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

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Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
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Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
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Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
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Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
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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 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have this morning a petition regarding the amalgamation of school divisions, the forced amalgamation, Mr. Speaker. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions as a strictly voluntary basis or on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by the good people Burstall. And I happen to note one of the names on the petition is from a lady who used to live in the area of Kennedy. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I rise to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills concerning forced school district amalgamation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this four pages of petition is signed by constituents from the communities of Frontier and Claydon. I so present.

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a number of petition pages to present today on behalf of people in the Hudson Bay School Division. Mr. Speaker, the petition reads:

The Hudson Bay Board of Education is opposed to mandatory amalgamation and requests the provincial government reconsider their position on this issue and continue with the process of voluntary amalgamation. The government should focus directly on those individual school divisions that relate to eliminating zero grant boards.

Mr. Speaker, there are 24 pages of petitions, signatures here, that I present today that contain well over 650 names. And I'm pleased to present on behalf of those people in Hudson Bay School Division.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people from my constituency who are concerned about the CAIS (Canadian agricultural income stabilization) program:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, that the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and to contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

The people that have signed this petition are from Archerwill, Rose Valley, Wadena, Kylemore, and Yellow Quill. I so present.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to do with the CAIS program and the underfunding by the provincial government. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and that the provincial government contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Lipton and Grayson.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I rise with a petition from citizens in the Wood River constituency that are very concerned about the forced amalgamation of school divisions. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of McCord,

Glentworth, Fir Mountain, and Wood Mountain. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here calling the Government of Saskatchewan to repair and resurface Highway 15:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that this portion of 15 Highway be repaired and resurfaced immediately as to remove the safety hazards to all motorists who rely on this vital road for transportation and economic purposes.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition to revisit the effects of the TransGas Asquith natural gas storage project. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately address the concerns of all individuals affected by this project, pay 100 per cent of the cost involved to rectify disruptions to water supplies, produce an environment assessment study encompassing a larger area outside the scope of the project, disclose the project's long-term effects on these areas, and consider alternative sources of water for the project.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Grandora, Vanscoy, and Asquith. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to again rise in the Assembly and present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the forced school amalgamation, the loss of local autonomy, and the potential for deterioration of the education system. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of the school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by citizens from Kerrobert and Dodsland, Saskatchewan. 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 this government's underfunding of the CAIS program. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and that the provincial government contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Earl Grey, Raymore, Edenwold, and Markinch. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby received pursuant to rule 14(7) as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 72, 107, 180, 637, 638, and 640.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 11, The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — To which . . . Pardon me. Pardon me. When shall this be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on this Bill. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 11 — The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of

Learning that Bill No. 11, The Department of Post-Secondary Education Skills and Training Amendment Act, 2004, be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on House Services.

Standing Committee on House Services

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its fourth report and therefore, I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North, that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services, the member from Melfort, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North, that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on day no. 69 I'll ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskWater: in 1998, what quantity of genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes did SaskWater, SPUDCO own at the beginning of the year? How much did SaskWater, SPUDCO pay for these genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes? To how many producers did SaskWater, SPUDCO sell genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes as seed potatoes? What quantity of genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes did each of these producers buy?

How much money did SaskWater or SPUDCO receive from each of these producers for these genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes? What quantity of genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes did each of these producers grow under their agreements with SaskWater, SPUDCO?

On what date did SaskWater, SPUDCO become aware that these genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes were under review of Agriculture Canada? On what date did SaskWater, SPUDCO make this Agriculture Canada review known to each of the producers to whom it had sold genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes for seed?

How did SaskWater, SPUDCO sell or otherwise dispose of all the genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes it owned in 1998? What quantity of genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes were sold to potato packaging and processing companies for human consumption? Which potato packaging and processing companies bought genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes from SaskWater, SPUDCO to be sold for human consumption? For each shipment of genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes that were sold outside Saskatchewan, was a ministerial exemption obtained from the federal Department of Agriculture, and did each of these ministerial exemptions identify that shipments contained genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes?

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I have a second question. I give notice that on day no. 69 I'll ask the government the following question:

Again to the Minister Responsible for SaskWater: in 1998 did SaskWater, SPUDCO receive any compensation from Monsanto for any of the genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes? If so, was any of this compensation from Monsanto provided to any of the producers who grew genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes? What quantity of genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes did each of the potato packaging and processing companies buy? Were each of these potato packaging and processing companies informed by SaskWater, SPUDCO that they were buying genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes? What steps did SaskWater, SPUDCO take to inform consumers in Saskatchewan and other markets that they were eating genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes? Were any genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes ever mixed with other varieties of potatoes before being shipped and sold by SaskWater, SPUDCO? And if so, which producers received this compensation, and how much did each receive?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 69 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many orthopedic surgeons are currently practising in Yorkton, and is the region's

health authority currently recruiting additional orthopedic surgeons for the Yorkton hospital?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice, the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you, a delegation from Ukraine visiting our province with the juvenile justice study tour and seated in your gallery. This tour is a partnership between the Canadian International Development Agency and the Ukrainian Supreme Court. Its objective is to initiate a process of reform for Ukrainian juvenile justice, including changes to legislation, policy, programs, and services. This delegation includes members of the Ukraine Supreme Court and courts of appeal, Ministry of Justice, State penitentiary department, General Prosecutor's Office, Juvenile Justice, the All-Ukrainian Committee on Children's Rights, and the Ukrainian Centre for Common Ground.

The delegation arrived in Regina on November 10 to learn about our experiences here in Saskatchewan with developing the youth justice system. While in Regina they have spent time with officials from several departments and with members of the judiciary. They also had the opportunity to visit the Paul Dojack Youth Centre, the children's justice centre, and to spend time at the Regina alternative measures program.

(10:15)

I would now like to take the opportunity to introduce members of the Ukraine delegation to this House. From the Supreme Court, we have Mykola Korotkevych, Yaroslava Machuzhak, Valentyna Zhuk, Vasyl Bryntsev, Yuri Donchenko, and Oleksandra Melnychuk.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — From the Ministry of Justice, Inna Emelianova, the head of this delegation.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — From the general prosecutor's office, Victor Lobach.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — From the juvenile justice RFP, Oleksandr Rybak.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I would also like to acknowledge interpreter Peter Pohrebennyk and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) project officer Patricia Maruschak.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Last but not least, Dave Wiebe and

Mario Thomas who are assistants to Regina Justice Consultants, and Florence Driedger, Canadian consultant to CIDA.

I would invite . . .

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — . . . all members of this House to provide a warm Saskatchewan welcome to this delegation from Ukraine and to wish them a safe trip home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the members of the opposition and welcome the officials of the Ukrainian Supreme Court and the other justice officials that are visiting our court today, our legislature today.

We face many challenges with our youth in the next generation and it's a pleasure to see that members of other countries and other jurisdictions are here and that we're facing a lot of those challenges together to make the world a better place for the next generation.

And I've spoken with my colleague, Mr. Krawetz, the member from Canora-Pelly, who has instructed me and taught me to say . . .

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Ukrainian.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would just also like to take a moment to add my words of welcome to the delegation from Ukraine.

(The Speaker spoke for a time in Ukrainian.)

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a very great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a young woman who's seated in your gallery, and I'll ask her to stand. Her name is Janique Marshall. And Janique comes to us today from Johannesburg, South Africa.

Members will recognize when she stands, incidentally, that she's a Rotary exchange student near the end of her trip here to Canada. And those jackets just get heavier and heavier as the trip goes on. I'll have to get her a centennial licence plate before she's done. And she's being hosted in Moose Jaw by the Wakamow Rotary Club, which I know will be of special interest to the Premier.

Janique has arrived here in Canada back in February. She'll be

staying until January where she'll return and take up post-secondary studies at university in her home city of Johannesburg. And while she's been here, she's just growing in her Saskatchewan citizenship because she has become a passionate Saskatchewan Roughriders fan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, many of the members of the Assembly will have had the experience with Rotary exchange students over the years and will recognize that it's typical of Rotary exchange students that they are bright young people with many leadership skills, who are destined to go home and be leaders in their own chosen fields. And Janique fits that description to a T.

I'll ask all hon. members to join with me in extending a warm Saskatchewan welcome to Janique Marshall.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Christopher Lake Volunteer Award Night

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I had the pleasure of attending a celebrity curling match and volunteer award night in Christopher Lake, in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers. The event was dedicated to the memory of Pat Anderson, a curling enthusiast and tireless volunteer in the community of Christopher Lake who passed away earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, Pat passed along her passion for curling to her children. Sherry Anderson, whose rink has been a major force in Saskatchewan and Canadian curling for over a decade, is her daughter.

Mr. Speaker, the hard fought main event involving local residents Murray Smail, Kim Anderson, 11-year-old Kate Brooks, 12-year-old Kalli Roth, and the Sherry Anderson rink — consisting of Sherry, Heather Walsh, Kim Hodson, Donna Gignac — ended appropriately in a tie. I say appropriately, Mr. Speaker, because this was an event where everyone was a winner.

After the match there was a banquet and the evening closed with the first annual Pat Anderson Volunteer Award, an award that will be granted every year from this time forward to honour local volunteers.

Most of Pat's nine children still live in the Christopher Lake area, so it was only fitting that Jacqueline Swiderski, Rick and Brenda Anderson, Susan Anderson, Avis Halcro, Randy and Gail Anderson, Kim Anderson, and Sherry Anderson were named the first recipients of this award.

Mr. Speaker, it was a classic Saskatchewan event with good food, music, stories, and humour — all centred on the volunteerism and community spirit. I had the pleasure of

knowing Pat Anderson and I know she would have loved it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Nathan Kuhn Named Saskatchewan Junior Citizen of the Year

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to applaud the achievements of Nathan Kuhn from Unity, Saskatchewan. Nathan was named Saskatchewan Junior Citizen of the Year.

Nathan is a strong but gentle leader; he comes from a very large family, as the oldest of nine children, and he's required to be a leader every day. He helps out with many things from tying shoes to doing homework. He's been his father's right-hand man doing farm work daily, helping with the animals, driving tractor, hauling grain, and much yard maintenance.

Nathan leads by example and is not swayed by negative peer pressure. His manner has a positive influence on others and he often notices the looks of distress on the faces of those who feel excluded, even in the hallways of his own school.

Last year Nathan began a personal quest. He approached everyone who looked lonely or distraught and just struck up a conversation that invited them to share their feelings or just plain talk, and his efforts are never complete until they're left laughing about something. Nathan feels his project may not make much difference to the world, but to that person he has made their day.

Nathan's example has inspired others to join him on his venture. Nathan loves sports and is involved in almost everything, including midget and senior baseball, volleyball, basketball, track and field, badminton, curling, and hockey.

I'd ask all members of the Assembly to applaud the outstanding optimism of this young man.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

New Facility Planned for Ile-a-la-Crosse

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great excitement, Mr. Speaker, and great emotion and a great level of thanks that I stand here today to thank this NDP (New Democratic Party) government for its recent announcement approving the plans for an innovative shared-use facility to serve Ile-a-la-Crosse and the surrounding communities in the constituency of Athabasca.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long wait. And this facility will provide many services currently delivered by St. Joseph's Hospital, and in the interests of providing communities with services in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible, this planned facility will also include space for a high school and other educational and health services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank this Premier; I want to thank this Premier, I want to thank the Minister of Learning, the Minister of Health, this caucus, and this government for working very closely with everybody that was involved at the local level in Ile-a-la-Crosse . . . also deserve credit.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people who only can be described as champions of the facility who deserve very special thanks in this Assembly. These include Irene Desjarlais, Dorothy Dubrule, Maryange Gauthier, Delphine Corrigan, Alec Bouvier, Marie Adele Desjarlais, Monique Bouvier, Vicky Durocher, Frieda Daigneault, Sister Lucy, and Sister Therese, and of course the two representatives from Ile-a-la-Crosse on the health district board, Rose Daigneault and Yvette Morin.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that these people have done so far and proud of the work that people of Ile-a-la-Crosse and the surrounding communities, and I look forward with excitement at taking the next step together to bring this project to completion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Action Swift Current Receives National Award

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some time now in Swift Current there has been a local group that has come together representing stakeholders in the local economy, to form an economic development partnership to pursue growth in my hometown. It's called Action Swift Current. Action Swift Current has again been recognized for its excellence in encouraging development, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to report to my colleagues that the organization Action Swift Current is the recipient of the Economic Developers Association of Canada's Royal Bank Economic Development Achievement of The Year Award, Mr. Speaker. The award is given to one community in all of Canada that has implemented the most successful community-driven economic development project.

Mr. Speaker, my successor in the position of director of business development for the city of Swift Current, Marty Salberg, was asked about this particular award and here's what he had to say:

The award is saying we have the best community initiative in the entire country. At the end of the day, if you're going to grow your community (he says), you do have to . . . (work through your community, all the partners working together) with positive feelings and with confidence that your economy is going to grow. With that comes investment and (he says) we're seeing that daily.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Salberg received the award at the Economic Developers Association of Canada on behalf of Action Swift Current on October 19 in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, this partnership, Action Swift Current, is bearing fruit for the community of Swift Current and this kind of

approach, of course, is what the opposition is proposing. After the next election, it'll bear similar fruit for the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Recognition of Foster Families and Saskatchewan Foster Families Association

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, foster families are a vital resource in our communities and since tomorrow is National Child Day, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the valuable contribution that they and Saskatchewan Foster Families Association make on behalf of the children of this province.

Mr. Speaker, while foster parents come from all walks of life and from diverse cultural, economic, and education backgrounds, what they have in common is a spirit of compassion and generosity and a desire to provide help and support to children and youth of Saskatchewan who require it. Foster families give the children in their care understanding, supervision, and guidance during the time they are unable to live at home, and also provide long-term support for children who for a variety of reasons are unable to return to their families.

A critical element of foster care in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association. For over 30 years the SFFA has been helping to improve the quality of care for foster children by encouraging, promoting, and supporting the development of healthy foster families. As well, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association helps to develop community understanding of the need for foster homes, the needs of foster children, and the need for community to accept and work with the foster family group so that foster children will be accepted without discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing the good work of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association and the foster families all across the province whose dedication and commitment to children and youth is evident 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Christa Lawrence Named Miss Rodeo Canada

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that once again a resident of the Cypress Hills constituency has received national recognition. Just a week ago, Ms. Christa Lawrence earned the right to represent the professional rodeo circuit when she was crowned Miss Rodeo Canada at the Canadian Finals Rodeo in Edmonton. Ms. Lawrence, who was also Miss Rodeo Maple Creek in 2003, competed against eight other young women from British Columbia and Alberta. And Christa's skill as a horsewoman held her in good stead during the competition as she was

awarded first place in the horsemanship category, and also did very well in public speaking, both prepared and impromptu, and rodeo knowledge. She passed a horsemanship exam with flying colours, she participated in modelling, and was rated high in overall appearance and personality.

Now this young lady's accomplishments are even more outstanding as at 18 years of age I believe she now holds the distinction of being the youngest woman to ever receive the title of Miss Rodeo Canada. In addition to the opportunity to travel, representing the Professional Rodeo Association, Christa has also been awarded the use of a new Dodge Durango for this year.

One of the new queen's first duties will be to attend the Canadian Western Agribition right here in Regina, and I hope I have an opportunity to introduce her to the legislature at that time. Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to know this young lady's parents, Eric and Anne Lawrence, who are ranchers in the Maple Creek area. I know they are extremely proud of Christa's accomplishments, and I'm certain that she will be an excellent representative of her community, our province, and the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association.

Mr. Speaker. I'd like to invite all members to join with me in offering our congratulations to this outstanding young Canadian lady.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Comments Regarding Word Usage

The Speaker: — Members, before we proceed to oral questions, I just want to make a statement. I was able to . . . I made a couple of rulings yesterday in the Assembly. In order to maintain consistency, I had an opportunity to go back through the record and review some statements. It was difficult to hear at some times, but there are a couple of comments I'd like to make.

With respect to the use of the word deceive or deception that was called to attention once, but also used again by the member for, I believe, Arm River. The definition of the word deceit in the Oxford dictionary is, to believe what is false or to mislead purposely. With misleading . . . we are often misled, not whether it be intentionally or not intentionally, but using the word deceive then implies intention. So I would ask members not to use that word in this Assembly.

Further, I noted that the member for Yorkton used the words hypocritical and referred that to an individual. When it comes to personal comments, I go for guidance to page 522 from Marleau and Montpetit, where it says that:

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.

So I'd ask members to keep those in mind during the course of

the debate, and I thank you for your indulgence at this time.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize . . . First I'll recognize the leader of the . . . pardon me, the former leader of the opposition, the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sale of NewLeaf Potatoes

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Flattery will get you everywhere. Yesterday I asked the Minister Responsible for SaskWater a number of questions about the SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) debacle, and he was unable to answer those questions. However on at least three occasions he gave me the assurance that he would give me answers today, and on a fourth occasion he expressed his commitment that he would very soon answer my question.

So the minister knows the questions I asked yesterday. And so I would ask him if he would inform myself and members of the House the answer to those questions about SPUDCO today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, let me first speak to the general points that the member opposite raised and then speak to some of the specific details. But first of all on the fundamental question of whether or not SaskWater and SPUDCO was selling a product that was deregistered, I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that that was not the case.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, with respect to sales by SPUDCO, there were two types of sales. One was for seed potatoes, and the other was for table stock. Mr. Speaker, as it pertains to table stock, there were no requirements in place at the national level at the time these sales were made with respect to labelling, and there are not today.

And, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the sales for seed potatoes, Mr. Speaker, I can report to the House that the customers who purchased these seed potatoes would have been aware of their genetically modified nature — on the seed, not specifically on the table stock. And, Mr. Speaker, I would also say that SaskWater was following industry practice of the day. There was nothing unusual about what SaskWater was doing in relationship to what any of the other sellers were doing at the day, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to point out to the member opposite that in 1998 SaskWater was contracting . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed. The member had taken notice of four questions, and I allowed a little extra leeway so he could deal with that. But I go to the next question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I recognize the member for

Kelvington-Wadena . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm sorry. I'm sorry — I made an assumption which may have caused some confusion. Are we pursuing the same line of questioning because I do believe the member wanted to respond to others, to other questions. So I'd like us to clear this issue at this time. I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to be succinct on the various points. First of all, Mr. Speaker, the question was asked about who, Mr. Speaker, who SPUDCO contracted with or entered into crop share agreements with to grow genetically modified potatoes. And I can report to the Assembly that first of all, there were of course crop share arrangements with the Dolmans. And in total there, Mr. Speaker, there were some 337 acres of genetically modified Russet Burbank potatoes that were being grown there. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I can report that there was a contract with Jim Massey for another 65 acres of genetically modified Russet Burbank potatoes that were being grown, and that SPUDCO, in partnership with Barrich, was also growing some 130 acres of potatoes.

I was also asked, Mr. Speaker, to report back, as I promised the member I would, on the question of the amount of the actual sales of genetically modified potatoes by SPUDCO. And again, Mr. Speaker, I can report that some 132,164 hundredweight of genetically modified Russet Burbank potatoes were sold.

Now I should explain, Mr. Speaker, that they were produced in 1998. They were sold by April 1999. The serious questions, Mr. Speaker, about genetically modified potatoes and the concern around them of course came when McCains made a decision to no longer purchase genetically modified potatoes. That happened in the year 2000, Mr. Speaker. So SaskWater was simply following industry practice of the day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Crystal Methamphetamine

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, Jean McGillivray comes from a small town in Saskatchewan, and she's with us today in your gallery. Jean knows first-hand the damage crystal meth can do to a life. She said the first time she tried meth she was addicted — it was instantaneous. Before a good friend rescued her from her path of self-destruction, Jean spent two years starting with three or four hoots from a pipe, then a gram of meth, and then up to an eight ball of meth a day.

Jean says crystal meth in this province is far more prevalent than this government is willing to admit. And according to her, it's easier to get meth than a package of cigarettes in some communities.

Earlier this week I attended the Western Summit on Crystal Methamphetamine in Vancouver where experts echoed and underlined what Jean said. Crystal meth is spreading to urban and rural centres right across Western Canada. And we all know the first step to solving a problem is admitting there is one. Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of courage to come forward and tell a

personal story.

Does the Premier and his NDP colleagues have the same collective courage to acknowledge that meth is a growing problem and start taking action right now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this government has for many years been monitoring this problem, and we do acknowledge that it is a growing issue in this part of North America. In July 1998, I was on my way to a conference of attorneys general in Durango, Colorado, where crystal meth was a topic. I had received a phone call on that trip announcing that in the dead of the night the Sask Party had been formed. Mr. Speaker, that's how long I've been working on this particular issue.

At the conference in Vancouver this week, we had one of our senior officials there. We had somebody there from the Prince Albert health . . . Parkland Health Authority. On Wednesday of this week, the deputy minister of Health was in San Francisco working with officials from right across the United States around crystal meth issues and the bigger and more important problems that are raised by the member opposite as to when people are addicted to crystal meth, how do you get them into, back into life and back into . . . integrated in society.

That's something we've been working on for quite a number of years, and this government does take this seriously and we've been working on it for many, many years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, if this government has been working on this issue for many, many years, then why haven't they done anything? They haven't done anything to acknowledge that there is a growing problem, and they haven't done anything for the . . . (inaudible) . . . One of the issues that the more than 200 delegates at the international conference on crystal meth in Vancouver agreed on is that there is a need for a clear and comprehensive strategy to not only deal with the prevention and the spread of the drug, but to deal with the existence. Such strategies must be developed at a provincial level and must involve a number of human services departments. Health, Education, and Justice must work together to get out a clear, precise message.

Next door in Alberta, that province has developed an interdepartmental strategy. British Columbia has developed a province-wide strategy. And yesterday Manitoba announced it was gearing up to fight the spread of crystal meth. Manitoba Justice minister, Gordon Mackintosh, who was at that conference, said it seems to be moving towards Manitoba from the West, and we have to batten down the hatches.

My question is, why is Saskatchewan the only western province who does not have a provincial strategy to deal with meth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the member opposite didn't listen to the answer to the previous question. We have been working on this a number of years. We know that in British Columbia in this summer that they've compiled together, in one document, the things that they've been doing on a broad basis. They are the leaders in Canada because it has come up from the West Coast to California towards British Columbia. That's why in 1998 I was in Colorado. Why, in Winnipeg in December 1998, we as justice officials, attorneys general, police, looked at how we could co-operate with North Dakota and Montana and Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in dealing with this on a prevention basis.

We're continuing to do all of that kind of work. We have information throughout the regional health authorities. We have information on our Web site at Saskatchewan Health. In the Department of Education, this is part of their studies as it relates to addictions issues. We have information. We're watching as it goes right through the whole province, and we will continue to work on this issue, Mr. Speaker. I resent the fact that the member opposite seems to want to attack this government when there are many, many capable people doing a good job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, over the last six years it appears this government has done a lot of meeting and a lot of watching and a lot of monitoring, but where's the provincial strategy? What can you table? What can you tell the people in this province? What can you tell the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the member to put her questions through the Chair. I recognize the member.

Ms. Draude: — What can the people of this province expect from this government, in the communities like Kelvington and Preeceville and Weyburn and Saskatoon and Regina, where they need help? They're holding meetings right now, and there's no strategy. There's no overarching umbrella from this government saying this is what you can do and this is what we're helping you with. You're holding little meetings all over the place, and nobody knows what's going on. It's up to you . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I just remind the member once again to put all of her questions through the Chair. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The conferences that are happening in various parts of this province are part of a general education around crystal meth. We were participants in this Western Canada conference. As I indicated one of our senior officials was there and a part of that. We know that in the regional health authorities that they have been working with communities. There are different levels of concern in individual communities across the province. We're continuing to work with them.

I would like to quote the Chair of the conference in Vancouver, who said:

"I don't think there's a crystal meth crisis, I don't think we need to sound the alarm, but I think we should be aware and on top of this drug . . . We need to continue to be proactive and keep in front of this drug until we have a solid base of research (about it)."

That's what we're working on, Mr. Speaker — research about how we deal with those people who are caught up in this particular problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this summer in Saskatoon, we saw firsthand the incidence of violence that can occur when someone is on crystal meth. Linda Duvall's son was shot by Saskatoon police this summer, and she blames this incident on her son's addiction to crystal meth. And she says . . . in October she talked to *The StarPhoenix* and said: I think there's ". . . a major problem . . . (and this is going to) continue unless we (actually) address . . ." the problem of crystal meth.

Another concerned parent said, and I quote:

There is absolutely no way one kid, in a community . . . (the size of Melfort can be messed up and be only the one child.) We . . . (won't) sit by and watch as . . . (we see a child) put a loaded gun to their heads and pulled the trigger, and we can't stand by and watch them kill themselves with crystal meth.

These are the parents, and these are the people that are dealing with crystal meth on a daily basis. There is a clear need for education for students, for teachers, for parents, and for community members. Mr. Speaker, what we're asking this government to do is send a message that we as elected people are responsible and we take responsibility.

Can the Minister of Learning tell the House today what his plans are to ensure that we have a strategy on the table for the whole province — for every child, for every youth, for every person in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do in fact have an interdepartmental strategy in place to deal with crystal meth, and there are a number of different issues that we are addressing around drug education. Certainly I can review for the Assembly a number of those.

Starting in grade 4, we begin dealing with youth and children in terms of making sure they avoid dangerous situations — say no to smoking, alcohol, and drugs. In grade 5, we deal with assertiveness and peer pressure issues. Grade 6, we deal with drug addictions and gambling specifically. Grade 7, we have

alcohol and other drugs that we deal with — reminding of course that alcohol remains a serious plight for many young people in our province. In grade 8, we deal with family and community violence issues which often stem from this. Grade 9, we deal with safety at school, at home, and in the community, as part of that is of course allowing our young people to understand the pressures there.

And then as we move into grades 10, 11, and 12, we continue to work with young people to identify healthy lifestyle choices and issues in terms of saying no to drugs of all variety, not simply crystal meth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Availability of Addiction Services

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Jean McGillivray describes her addiction to crystal meth as absolute hell. Eventually she was so high all the time that she could no longer work or even function and then she became suicidal.

Mr. Speaker, Jean was fortunate enough to have a friend who forced her to go to the hospital. Jean says it angered her that when she finally admitted she had a problem and needed help most, she was turned away. Mr. Speaker, Jean finally got into treatment because her friend wouldn't take no for an answer and wouldn't give up even when she was told Jean wasn't stoned enough or suicidal enough to get into treatment.

Mr. Speaker, Jean says if her friend had not been there to fight for her, she would be dead today. Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister of Health doing to ensure that when people are crying out for help that they have access to timely treatment in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, right across this province, in each of the regional health authorities, they have addictions counsellors and people who are dealing with these particular problems. And I know that one of the challenges around crystal meth is knowing all of the information. The World Health Organization has given information out about how you treat crystal meth, and they say, at this point we don't have a full understanding of how to deal with it.

But what we are making sure that we do in Saskatchewan is that we do provide the services right across the province. And if there are any challenges around that, I'd be pleased to hear about it, but I know that this is a high priority item for people in a whole array of addictions problems.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken: — This government's record in addiction services is deplorable. They have laid off an addiction service worker in

Estevan. They closed the Recovery Manor in Regina. They closed a centre in Saskatoon that was for youth. They've never put in a youth centre in Saskatchewan since they closed White Spruce. And this minister has the nerve to stand up and say that he is addressing addictions properly in this province.

At the detox centre in Saskatoon, in the last year, they've turned away 1,500 people, and they've only been able to serve 900. That is at one centre in this province. Mr. Speaker, Jean says that there are not enough beds; the treatment time is too short, and there needs to be continuity of care. Mr. Speaker, Jean says that the cracks in the treatment process pose a danger for addicts that are going to reuse if they do not have the proper treatment.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Minister of Health is: with the growing incident of crystal meth in this province and the lack of treatment for all addictions, what is this minister going to do to address the lack of long-term treatment beds and detox beds in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to address this problem right across the province. This weekend there's . . . the Brief Detox Centre in Saskatoon will be opening, I guess not this Saturday but eight days from now. That's part of an overall strategy within the Saskatoon Health Region where there's been co-operation across a broad base of the community. Right across the province, we continue to look at and address the changing needs to deal with addictions problems. And it's always a challenge; we know that. But we are continuing to work very hard in dealing with that.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many people in the province who are getting services through these counsellors. And we, Mr. Speaker, will continue to make sure that we get the right services for people at the right time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company Litigation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was just last May this NDP government filed a \$10 million counterclaim against the plaintiffs in the SPUDCO case. It's a classic case, Mr. Speaker, of the pot calling the kettle black. The NDP alleged that the plaintiffs had circulated false and misleading financial information; that both the plaintiffs and their accountants had, quote, "negligently and wilfully misrepresented the economic potential of the potato venture."

Mr. Speaker, these are very serious allegations the NDP was making. Would the minister responsible for SPUDCO please table all the evidence he has to back up these very serious allegations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskWater Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight about one thing that the Saskatchewan Party's been saying on this matter of SPUDCO being the biggest loss in Saskatchewan history. And I just want to remind members opposite, the biggest loss in Saskatchewan history was the privatization of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan in 1989, with an asset write-off of \$441 million, Mr. Speaker, which the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Moosomin, Mr. Speaker, were very involved in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the counterclaim, with respect to the counterclaim, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that there were two counterclaims. One, Mr. Speaker, was around . . . (inaudible) . . . and maintenance, Mr. Speaker. And the second counterclaim, Mr. Speaker, the second counterclaim related to concerns that we had, Mr. Speaker, about the accounting practices of Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation and all . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP were pretty much accusing the plaintiff and their accountants of fraud. They said they had evidence of these serious accusations. In fact, the NDP's handpicked lawyer, Fred Zinkhan, said and I quote:

Let me put it this way, I didn't put this information in the statement of claim because I dreamed it up.

I am confident . . . the government was not responsible for the failure (and) I have the evidence to prove it.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's pet lawyer made some very serious accusations. The minister, Mr. Speaker, in his statement went on to further substantiate that and I quote . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please, front bench on both sides here. Member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister in the House said and I quote: "There has (come) . . . enough information . . . come to light that we feel there's a sound basis for . . . (this) counterclaim."

Will the NDP government table that evidence?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskWater Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — First of all . . . Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Have you formally recognized me? Thank you.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear that with respect to the second counterclaim, Mr. Speaker, the second counterclaim was partly recognized and partly thrown out. And we respect Justice Ball's decision in this regard, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we believe that there were a lot of reasons why Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation failed.

There were problems, Mr. Speaker, with respect to its lack of expertise in potato marketing. There were problems, Mr. Speaker, with respect to its management practices, and, Mr. Speaker, there were problems with respect to it sharing with SPUDCO in a timely way, financial information about how, Mr. Speaker, it was doing.

And we believe, Mr. Speaker, at the time that that lack of timely information impacted decisions that SPUDCO made. Now, Mr. Speaker, the judge concluded that there were provisions in the

. . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well there certainly were problems. But isn't this exactly how the NDP got into trouble with SPUDCO in the first place? They made stuff up. They would say whatever they want without regard to the true facts, Mr. Speaker, and then when it falls all apart the NDP . . . excuse me, the taxpayers are left to pick up the tab.

The NDP paid their pet NDP lawyers nearly \$2 million of taxpayers' money to make allegations that are simply not true. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that these allegations are not true and that he has no evidence to back it up, and will he call a public inquiry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, first of all let me say that when government was being . . . The plaintiffs were claiming, Mr. Speaker, and demanding from government a payment of \$102 million. That was a great risk to taxpayers. We took it very seriously, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, when you're being asked for those kinds of monies, you need to seek information yourself . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the Minister for SaskWater Corporation to continue.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, government was being sued for \$102 million. We settled this suit for \$7.9 million. That should tell members opposite something important, Mr. Speaker, and that is that clearly, Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of reasons that Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation failed that had nothing to do with government, Mr. Speaker, and the nature of the settlement reflects that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please.

(11:00)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 81 — The Municipalities Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 81, The Municipalities Act now be introduced and read the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 81, The Municipalities 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: — 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. Taylor: — Next reading 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.

Bill No. 85 — The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 85, The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister . . . Order, please members. Order. Order, please. Thank you. It has been moved by the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation that Bill No. 85, The Film Employment Tax Credit 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. Ms. Beatty: — 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

Bill No. 86 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 86, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill No. 86, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2) 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. Ms. Higgins: — 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

Bill No. 87 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 87, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill No. 87, The Trade Union 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. Ms. Higgins: — 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.

Why is the member from Rosetown-Elrose on his feet?

Mr. Hermanson: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Would the member from Rosetown-Elrose please state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House the Minister Responsible for SaskWater used a procedure saying that he would take notice and respond to questions the following day.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in *Hansard* on page 1794, two of the questions stated were that these . . . regarding the questions asked that day, were about informing which companies were buying GMO (genetically modified organisms) potatoes from SPUDCO; were they informed and was the public informed they were eating GMO potatoes from SPUDCO. And the minister said that he would answer tomorrow and said, I will take notice.

The subsequent question: the minister was asked if he would table ministerial exemptions and he responded that, myself, asking the question, deserved clear answers and that he would have a response and make sure that I get accurate information.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that the minister used the take notice provision in the rules but did not answer, specifically, any of those three questions.

The Speaker: — To the point of order, does anybody wish to speak to the point of order? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity to address the point of order. Mr. Speaker, it's not the . . . It should not be the questioner who determines how the answers shall be provided in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Because as we know, looking at some of the ways in which questions have been framed, we obviously have to answer them in the way that is appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Why is the member on his feet, the member for Saskatoon Greystone?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if it's the wish of the House, and if I'm in order, I'm happy to answer those questions. I just didn't have time in question period.

The Speaker: — First of all I would like to deal with the point of order and then I will give the member the opportunity to raise his item again.

With respect to the point of order, this really . . . The response that a minister gives to any question is really up to the minister. The timeline on when the notice is taken and when the response is given is also really at the jurisdiction of the minister, not of

the Speaker. Therefore the point is not well taken. But I do recognize the member if he wishes to ask for leave to make a statement.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I have leave, I will endeavour to answer those questions for the member opposite.

The Speaker: — . . . requests leave. Is leave granted.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Response to Questions

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me just say that with respect to the companies to which sales were made, and first of all I'll list the companies, Mr. Speaker, but I also want to indicate whether the sales involved seed potato or fresh-packed sales.

But first of all, Mr. Speaker, sales were made to Pak-Well Pro, and that was a fresh pack sale; to Riverhurst, and that was also a fresh pack sale; to Pak-Well Alberta, that was a seed sale; 4S Farms, that was a seed sale as well; B&M Turner was another customer, that was a seed sale; Bassano was sold to, Mr. Speaker; Brian Loosli was sold to, and that was another seed sale; C.J. Hohnhor — so that H-o-h-n-h-o-r, Mr. Speaker, is the spelling of that last name — and that was for seed potatoes. Then, Mr. Speaker, there was a sale to a company called Intermountain, and that was also for seed. Lukey Farms, that was seed, and Midwest Food, Mr. Speaker, and that was seed.

Mr. Speaker, these were the companies that were sold to. There were also sales made to Vauxhall Food and Midwest Food, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me just check to see . . . I'll tell the hon. member. He's asking were there . . . were those seed sales? And in the case of the last two, Mr. Speaker, the Intermountain sale was for a seed sale and so was the Midwest Food.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me also say to members opposite that it is my understanding to the very best of my knowledge, these sales, Mr. Speaker, that were made for table stock were made, Mr. Speaker, on the understanding that there was no need for labelling of the potatoes. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's also my understanding that there was . . . that these were registered products in Canada at the time. In fact, Mr. Speaker, with respect to at least one type of Russet Burbank potato that Monsanto has been dealing in, Mr. Speaker, that is still registered in Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I want to say is very clearly that there was no need for a ministerial exemption on these sales, Mr. Speaker, because to the best of my knowledge the company was selling a duly registered product in Canada.

Now if the member has evidence to the contrary, Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to look at that evidence. But to the best of my knowledge we were selling a registered product and acting in accordance with industry practice.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I should just say is that the timing here is important, Mr. Speaker, because the member asked questions that related to losses that growers sustained by virtue of growing these potatoes. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the House very clearly that in 1998 when growers were approached to grow genetically modified potatoes — in relatively small acreages, Mr. Speaker, but still over 300 acres altogether — when growers were approached there was a very significant interest right across North America in the growth of, and sale of genetically modified potatoes. And you had more than 50,000 acres being grown in the United States, Mr. Speaker, just as an example in that year.

And so when it came to the intentions of SaskWater, I think it was very clear, Mr. Speaker, SaskWater thought at the time that they were basically on the cutting edge of something new; and Monsanto was doing very well in its sales; and there were an increasing number of growers who were growing genetically modified crops. And it was not at all unusual to find a grower that would have 20 to 25 per cent of their crop as a genetically modified crop, Mr. Speaker. So when we were entering into these agreements in 1998, that was the understanding.

By 1999, Mr. Speaker, first of all, prices had declined substantially for potatoes generally, Mr. Speaker. Prices had declined very substantially. And that hurt growers and it also hurt SPUDCO obviously, but it hurt growers and we're very sorry that that happened. But, Mr. Speaker, in 1999 when those sales were being made, while there was some questions starting to be asked about genetically modified potatoes, there was not a single company, Mr. Speaker, that had decided to pull genetically modified potatoes off their stock.

It wasn't until the year 2000 that McCains notified growers that it was no longer interested in buying genetically modified potatoes. And, Mr. Speaker, I should point out that in the year 2000 SaskWater wasn't selling any genetically modified potatoes at all. So, Mr. Speaker, we were simply following industry practice and I do not think it can be said that, in any way, that SaskWater deceived growers. That was simply not the case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Rosetown-Elrose on his feet?

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, leave to ask a follow-up question.

The Speaker: — The member from Rosetown-Elrose has requested leave to ask a follow-up question. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Leave has not been granted.

Leave not granted.

The Speaker: — Why is the member, why is the House Leader on his feet?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we're all anxious to get to the debate that's on our agenda and we'll get to it in a minute.

Mr. Speaker, with reference to the *Rules and Procedures*, in particular rule 14(3), it states that:

On the presentation of a petition no debate on or in relation to the same shall be allowed.

Mr. Speaker, I had opportunity this morning to review *Hansard* from yesterday and I would ask, Mr. Speaker, if you could also review the *Hansard* for yesterday with respect to the presenting of petitions, and in particular the comments by the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy and the member for Wood River. I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that in presenting their petitions they were inviting debate. And I would ask you to rule in this matter at an appropriate time.

The Speaker: — Why is the member, Opposition House Leader on his feet?

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, to respond to the point of order.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been in this House a good number of years and I have yet to see the government lower itself to more pettiness than to complain about the wording of a petition. Mr. Speaker, the petitions are presented in proper order. They express the concerns of citizens who signed those petitions and, Mr. Speaker, if the government is sensitive about it, maybe they should do something about the issues that citizens are raising.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:15)

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Generally . . . Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. On the issue of petitions, as a general rule the members have been following the format outlined. There have been specific cases where a member, instead of using a nice brief sentence to introduce it, has added to it with another sentence. I have tried to discourage that into the past and I would like to do into the future as well. And there were a couple of incidents last year that I actually found that I didn't comment on earlier.

But I do want to bring it to the members' attention that it would be . . . it is out of order for debate to take place during the presenting of petitions. And I don't think that should be difficult to understand.

Why is the member from Regina Walsh Acres on her feet?

Ms. Morin: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Walsh Acres has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, through you, and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, three guests seated in the west gallery. We have with us today Barb Cape, from the SEIU (Service Employees' International Union). We have beside her Larry Hubich, from Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. And Gary Schoenfeld, from CEP, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union.

These three individuals work very hard for the members that they are affiliated with, not to mention on behalf of all working people within Saskatchewan. And I'm very proud that they are here to visit their legislature today and I'd like everyone to welcome them. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the guests in the west gallery, Mr. Hubich and the other labour leaders. It's certainly a pleasure to see him here today. And I hope they enjoy the proceedings of the day. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Saskatchewan Transportation Company

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks today, I will be moving the following motion:

That this Assembly recognize the essential role that the Saskatchewan Transportation Company plays in delivering transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Transportation Company has been a Crown corporation that's had a great deal of controversy around it over the last number of years, created largely by the members opposite. They fail to see, Mr. Speaker, the integral role that the Saskatchewan Transportation Company plays in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company) provides services to more than 275 Saskatchewan communities. These are communities ranging in size from just a few people to our major urban cities, Mr. Speaker. They have agents in more

than 200 communities in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And they are the backbone of what many of us believe is an integral part of our rural economy. Mr. Speaker, STC exists as a Crown corporation in Saskatchewan today to provide necessary services to our citizens in rural Saskatchewan.

I'd like to, just for a few minutes for the education of the members opposite, talk about some of the services that they provide to those rural communities and the importance those services play to those citizens, Mr. Speaker.

Blood for blood transfusion in rural hospitals across this province is delivered by STC services. They provide a vital, vital network of transportation to our rural communities, providing essential services, Mr. Speaker. They bring back and forth between labs and major urban areas, Mr. Speaker, test samples taken by hospitals throughout the provinces. They even deliver services like dentures to rural communities. And they provide those very same services for veterinary services across the province, Mr. Speaker, to rural communities.

They provide a transportation link for students to attend universities in our urban or larger urban centres, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and even community colleges in many cases.

STC sells 600 medical passes a year allowing residents of rural Saskatchewan to come to larger urban areas for needed medical treatments, Mr. Speaker. This is of particular importance to the communities in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to point out, in just one month, in July 2002, STC moved 60,000 — Mr. Speaker, 60,000 — machinery parts throughout Saskatchewan, rural Saskatchewan, to help farmers in delivering their service to this province, Mr. Speaker. These facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

STC is a very integral part of our rural community; in fact, Mr. Speaker, it is part of our social fabric of this province. STC also supports financially many, many communities in our province. It spent \$15.6 million in 2000, in the year 2000. Mr. Speaker, 14.9 million of that total expenditure was right in the province of Saskatchewan. This represents 96 per cent of its total spending was right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

The economic impact of STC on the province of Saskatchewan is more than \$24 million, Mr. Speaker, a year. To put this in some sort of perspective that the members opposite may understand, \$3.4 million grant to STC represents about \$6, Mr. Speaker, of every dollar put into the economy. Of the \$24 million economic impact, 4.29 million goes into rural communities. Just about \$5 million goes to rural communities. That breaks down as 1.96 million on wages and salaries, 350,000 in local purchases, and 2.61 million in associated businesses in small rural communities. This business is essential to those rural communities to remain viable.

Many, many businesses rely on STC for the parts they receive and for shipping their inventory out of rural communities. Many, many farmers depend on STC getting parts to them so they can take and put in their crops, Mr. Speaker. It is a service that is delivered at a very low cost so that these viable operations in rural Saskatchewan can in fact remain viable.

Mr. Speaker, polls show everywhere that 75 to 80 per cent of Saskatchewan people believe STC should remain in place and, Mr. Speaker, funded by the government.

Mr. Speaker, yes, STC loses money, but there is a very simple reason for this, Mr. Speaker. STC serves 275 communities. It is about a network of transportation for all of our communities in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, so that people can travel a very short distance to get on a bus and travel to our major urban areas. Mr. Speaker, it's about part of our social safety network, so that people can travel from rural Saskatchewan to communities to get services that may not be available locally.

Mr. Speaker, what does the Sask Party have to say about STC? And I'm quoting from a newspaper article, Tuesday, November 9, 2004, just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker. And it's the member from Cypress Hills, Mr. Speaker:

STC may no longer be a viable company, he said.

"If we could find private sector bus operations that would undertake the passenger and freight service that is provided by STC, we would recommend that would happen," said Elhard.

"The question (is) always . . . to come back for this, how long should a government continue to subsidize a money-losing service?"

Mr. Speaker, the member from Cypress Hills today — today — is saying that they should privatize the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. And, Mr. Speaker, the members on this side don't believe that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote a number of statistics. STC carries about 260,000 passengers per year. Of these riders, 28 per cent are over age 60; 63 per cent are women; 51 per cent have incomes under \$21,000 per year. And Mr. Speaker, I want to stress again that STC also carries large, large amounts of important freight to rural communities. And in a single month, in the year 2002, STC moved 60,000 pieces of farm equipment in addition to its normal parcels to help rural Saskatchewan . . . farm parts, Mr. Speaker, parts to help farmers maintain and continue to take and put in their crops, Mr. Speaker.

During the provincial election one year ago, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan voters rejected the Sask Party plan to sell the Crown corporations. Overwhelmingly, Saskatchewan citizens rejected the concept of selling our Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, clearly, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has learned nothing, has learned nothing from the intent of the voters of this province because today, Mr. Speaker, today the Crown corporation critic for the Saskatchewan Party still says he would privatize the Saskatchewan Transportation Company regardless what the people of Saskatchewan say, Mr. Speaker. They are driven by a blind, ideological idea that the government should not operate Crown corporations. Mr. Speaker, they would privatize our valuable Crowns that are part of our social safety network for this province. Mr. Speaker, that is not what the people of this province want but, Mr. Speaker, it is what the Sask Party wants.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from an article in the *Leader-Post* of Regina, Friday, July 24, 1998. And it's a quote from Sinclair Harrison, who at the time was the head of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. And it says — and this is a direct quote, Mr. Speaker:

The Saskatchewan Party is on the wrong side of the road on this one, says Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) president, Sinclair Harrison.

Keeping STC afloat is a matter of providing equal access to rural citizens who need to visit cities for services like medical specialists or diagnostic equipment and bigger hospitals, he said.

Rural Municipalities don't expect a hospital in every centre, but residents want to be able to get to a hospital by bus if they have no other means of transportation.

It goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

Traditionally, cities subsidized public transportation from the public purse. We expect STC to operate prudently, but to say that private operators could replace STC . . . that's not the case (Mr. Speaker).

Mr. Speaker, so Sinclair Harrison, a rural resident, the head of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities at the time he made these statements, agrees that STC must remain in public hands and must remain operated by government.

And he goes on to point out something that most people do understand, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite don't. Public transportation — regardless of if it's in Regina, Saskatchewan; Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Moose Jaw; or any of our communities — is subsidized by the public purse, Mr. Speaker. It does not pay for itself. It is part of a vital social safety network in communities, and STC provides that same important role to our province, Mr. Speaker, and we should be proud of it. Mr. Speaker, we should be proud of it.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I have to say to you that after going through an election in which the people of Saskatchewan soundly said that they do not want our Crown corporations privatized, and the Saskatchewan Party went on at length that they had heard that message, that it was loud and clear that the people wanted public ownership of our Crown corporations, and their new leader said they'd moved on a new direction, what do we find, Mr. Speaker? Tuesday, November 9, 2004 — just a few days ago, just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker — the Saskatchewan Party critic on Crown corporations says this, and I'd like to repeat it again, Mr. Speaker.

STC may no longer be a viable company, he said.

"If we could find private sector bus operations that would undertake the passenger and freight service that is provided by STC, we would recommend that would happen" said Elhard.

"The question always has to come back for this, how long should a government continue to subsidize a money-losing

service?"

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, a year ago they said they'd heard the message of Saskatchewan people. Today they're still saying they would privatize that vital service that Saskatchewan people want, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, a new leader, they say a new direction, but we see the same old thing, Mr. Speaker. No change, no change.

(11:30)

And, Mr. Speaker, they won't even acknowledge what Sinclair Harrison will acknowledge, that bus services, public transportation in every community, not only in Saskatchewan but every urban community in Canada, is in fact subsidized by the public purse. They don't break-even. And there's a reason, Mr. Speaker, because it's a vital public service provided to those citizens in those communities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — And we are doing the very same thing for our rural citizens throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've introduced a Bill. We've introduced a Bill that's going to come before the House over the next few days against the privatization of those very Crown corporations. And, Mr. Speaker, we need to do that because we have an opposition party who will go and publicly say out of . . . on one hand, Mr. Speaker, that they learned their lesson from the last election, and they won't privatize those Crown corporations, but yet their Crown corporation critic says the opposite. He will privatize those corporations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, how do we know what they're going to do? How do the people of Saskatchewan know what they're going to do? So, Mr. Speaker, because they can't decide what they're going to do and they can't tell people what they're going to do accurately from day one to day two here, we need to ensure that they can't do that without the public having a say.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate. It's unfortunate that the people of Saskatchewan can't, can't take the word of the opposition on these types of issues because they can't say on one hand they're going to change their position and then recite the exact same position they had before the last election when the people rejected their program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite may be confused about where they stand on this issue, but the members on this side of the House are not confused at all, not confused at all. We took our position solidly to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election. Our position hasn't changed. There has been no wavering in our position, Mr. Speaker. We clearly support the public ownership of our Crown corporations and those services that they deliver to the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the member from Regina Coronation Park:

That this Assembly recognize the essential role that the Saskatchewan Transportation Company plays in delivering transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Dewdney, seconded by the member for Regina Coronation Park:

That this Assembly recognize the essential role that the Saskatchewan Transportation Company plays in delivering transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first words are words of gratitude and thanks to my colleague, the member for Regina Dewdney, for raising this very important matter and for speaking so eloquently to the issue of rural, primarily rural bus service, but service for all Saskatchewan citizens that has been provided since 1946 through Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation — a corporation that was set up, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out for members opposite, at a time when my grandmother sat on the government side of this legislature. And we Trews are very proud of that, and we're very proud of STC, and a whole amount of the legacy that has taken place.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask this one question as I see this . . . and I hear the heckling. I see the quotes. I have to ask: whose side is the Sask Party on? Who do they stand up for? If I were a resident of rural Saskatchewan, I would be somewhat concerned that MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) that represent largely rural Saskatchewan are saying do away with STC.

They're saying do away with the ability to transport 50,000 pieces of agriculture machinery in one month alone. They're saying do away with it. They're saying do away with the nearly 225 STC employees. Do away with them. They're worthless, is what they're saying, Mr. Speaker? What a shame. We have got 200 and . . . roughly 225 employees, direct employees at STC, that I guarantee they get up every day and they work hard for the people of Saskatchewan. They work hard delivering those agriculture parts.

They work hard delivering the 260,000 passengers that ride STC every single year. They work hard on behalf of widows and widowers in rural Saskatchewan — many of whom frankly do not own a vehicle, some of whom don't even have a driver's licence, some of whom don't have family that has the ability to take them to medical appointments or to take them shopping. It's Christmastime; it's a great time of year. Some of these people would like to get to a larger centre to do some of their Christmas shopping.

Mr. Speaker, I again ask whose side are they on when they say, do away with this service? They say, it's gone. What a shame, Mr. Speaker. We are proud on this side of the House to stand up for rural Saskatchewan and for all of Saskatchewan. We are very proud of STC's bus service, and we are determined to make it continue to the point that we have even, even said.

Like urban transportation, bus transportation that is subsidized, as my colleague pointed out — subsidized in every major city

in Canada and beyond — like urban bus transportation, we have set up a rural bus transportation subsidy, and that seems to me to be fairly reasonable, especially when you recognize that all people use the buses.

Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker — just to put a little bit of a personal note on it — earlier this week I spoke with a young woman who shared with me that she had ridden the STC bus from her home to university for the four years she was attending post-secondary education. And her recollection was that she was on that bus three weeks out of four most of the time that university was on, and she valued that service and she, to this day, values the ability for people from that town to still use the STC bus service.

And I say what a tremendous, tremendous way of putting the rubber on the road, so to speak, where services absolutely affect individual people because that's what governance, governing is all about. It's how we introduce goods and services that will affect the good people of Saskatchewan. STC is one of the goods and services that we are the most proud of and will continue to be.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard members opposite chirp us saying, well others could provide that bus service. I want to relate back to when I was a very young lad growing up in the town of Beechy. I know it seems like a long time ago, and sometimes it seems like, sometimes it seems like more than the 15 years it is. Well all joking of my age aside, I recall riding the Beechy bus from Saskatoon to Beechy and getting into Beechy around midnight. But that was a private bus, and my point is STC had worked with connection to a Beechy bus.

The mayor of Beechy, Mr. Jensen, was the major shareholder in that bus. The Jensens wanted desperately for that bus service to work to Beechy, and it hauled passengers and freight. The unfortunate part is it didn't haul enough passengers and freight to make it pay.

And the other unfortunate part is the Jensen's pockets were not deep enough to keep that bus going in perpetuity. When the bus needed a new engine, they were beat. A new engine is the wrong side of \$3,000. I suspect it's the wrong side of \$5,000. I should ask the Premier because he's somewhat of an expert on buses. But one little thing like a bus can be a deal breaker when you're a private entrepreneur trying to run one bus route. STC can help provide some of the backup, indeed can have some backup buses. Mr. Speaker, this is why I'm proud of STC, or one more reason why I am.

The other thing of course is STC has got the depots in the major centres that, again, a private bus company just would not have. And what are you going to have? A bus leaving from — I don't know — the doctor's office or Wal-Mart or . . . I mean where would the bus pick up passengers? How does that work? How does that work?

The beautiful thing about a public bus company is we can provide effective, reliable depots, and we can staff them, and we can keep them clean. We can keep them safe. And we can have a gathering place for bus service. And indeed we provide it for . . . those depots for Greyhound and for other connecting bus services, some of which are private.

Mr. Speaker, the member for, my colleague for Dewdney has pointed out that in November last year the electorate quite overwhelmingly said we want our Crown corporations including STC. And despite that, we have an ongoing litany of comments from members opposite saying, do away with STC; we don't like STC. They say government has no right being in business, Mr. Speaker. Shame on them. They say government should get out of business, period. Well who's going to provide the bus service?

I just said what happened. I related a story from my own childhood, back when Beechy had 500 people living in it as opposed to the roughly two and a quarter. I apologize to the good folks of Beechy if I've missed that by any significant number, but it's not very big. I know it's very close to that 225 people living in Beechy. And it's a great, great community, Mr. Speaker. I've always been proud to say I'm from Beechy. That's where my roots extend to. And I'm always delighted when I get a chance to get back home.

Mr. Speaker, whose side is the Sask Party on? Whose side? I have here . . . well talk about Beechy, we have the member for Rosetown-Biggan saying, quote, on STC he says: "Saskatchewan's bus company is a money-losing merry-go-round that should be stopped dead." Well whose side is that member on, Mr. Speaker? Whose side is he on when he says STC should be stopped dead? Is he on Beechy's side? I argue on this point I am doing Beechy and rural Saskatchewan far more of a favour than any of the members opposite around STC. And they laugh. Whose side are they on?

Mr. Speaker, we subsidize STC a grand, a grand total of \$4 per person in Saskatchewan per year. It's just gone up — it's \$4 per person per year. You know what? I'm proud that we can all contribute so that elderly people, so that widows and widowers can get on a bus, so that farmers can get their 50,000 pieces of agriculture machinery any time they need it. I am very, very proud, very honoured. I'm so proud of this motion. I'm proud of the government and I want to say on this side of the House we stand firmly on the side of all Saskatchewan people, but rural people in particular with STC. We are on their side. Whose side are they on? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Dewdney, seconded by the member for Regina Coronation Park:

That this Assembly recognize the essential role that the Saskatchewan Transportation Company plays in delivering transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? Any further speakers on this motion?

I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to this motion and I'm quite surprised and . . . but a little unsurprised as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the opposition doesn't care to speak to it. But because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm in a bit of a reflective mood this morning, I'd like

to start off by . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Members, I am having difficulty hearing the member that has the floor. Order. I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

(11:45)

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was actually having trouble hearing myself, so I appreciate the ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I'm in a reflective mood this morning, I've been thinking back to when I was young, growing up in rural Saskatchewan in the community of Rockglen or on a farm just north of Rockglen. And I can remember catching the STC bus to go to the big, bustling city of Moose Jaw.

It was a real treat and an unusual occurrence to go to the city, but we went there. My mother would shop in Joyner's and Eaton's and I would head for Assiniboia Music to catch the latest 45 rpms (revolutions per minute). We'd visit with relatives and we would catch that STC bus back home again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been many years since then and there have been many changes in rural Saskatchewan and in STC. But last year, STC carried 258,000 passengers to over 250 communities with a total of 3.2 million miles.

Last year, STC moved tens of thousands of agricultural parts every month through the crop year.

And last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, almost 600 medical passes were given out, providing unlimited travel for medical reasons to people in this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, STC continues to be a social lifeline for people in this province, threading communities together. This is a tradition that goes back to 1946 when STC was created under the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government at that time and the greatest Canadian, T.C. Douglas, 1-866-303-8683.

STC has continued to provide a social policy mandate while at the same time managing its affairs efficiently and responsibly which is a difficult and delicate balance, Mr. Speaker, given the change in demographics in this province. It has required, in fact, that STC has had to change and adapt with the times. And I'd like to give an example of that.

About a year and a half ago, I rode an STC bus from Assiniboia to Regina. I got on the bus in Assiniboia on a Sunday — and the member from Wood River will be familiar with this, of course — got on the bus on a Sunday and was expecting a big 48-passenger bus. When I got on Main Street in Assiniboia, I found in fact that it was a van pulling a trailer, a freight trailer.

The trip from Assiniboia to Moose Jaw, which is 100 kilometres, usually takes about an hour. It was a trip that actually went from Assiniboia to Lafleche to Gravelbourg to Mossbank to Moose Jaw, which was over two hours. I didn't complain, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact I was impressed with the

fact that STC had found a way to deliver freight and provide a service to rural Saskatchewan that adapted to the times.

STC has changed and adapted. It does not only serve the public as a passenger carrier and agriculture as a freight carrier, but it has also provided good unionized jobs in this province, with nearly \$2 million in wages and salaries, \$350,000 in local purchases, and an economic impact in this province equivalent to just under \$24 million a year. Ninety-six per cent of STC's spending is here in this province.

It does this because it is a public service, a public company owned by the people of this province and its first mandate is to serve the public. Now I hear opposition members speaking at this time and I'd like to address where the opposition sits with respect to STC. They may avoid the debate this morning and they may couch their comments in gentler terms now, but let's reach a little ways back into the past. Let's go back to *Hansard*, 1996. The member from Cannington, "privatize it" he said regarding STC, and let them compete. In 1998, April, the member from Melfort he would, quote: "privatize the Saskatchewan Transportation Company and SaskTel." In 1998, April, the member from Wood River, quote:

I would support the privatization of every Crown corporation. The first would likely be STC.

In 1998 the member from Rosetown-Elrose, "I definitely support the sale of STC." And in 2004, March 23 *Hansard*, the member from Lloydminster, quote:

It may be that Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada, maybe in North America, that has a monopoly on totally publicly owned utilities. So my question, I guess would be, are we right and everybody else is wrong, or where are we going in this province with the utilities?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are right and we're going in the right direction.

I, in fact, would like to congratulate the Saskatchewan Party on their position on STC. It's very clear that their intent is to privatize STC, and I congratulate them because it is true to their philosophy — true to a philosophy of privatization. They're standing by the philosophy and beliefs that underlie their party. So I congratulate them for that.

But be very clear; make no mistake, STC would be the first stepping stone down the path to privatization in this province. This is a path that was rejected last fall by the people of this province and is rejected in polls, where people indicate 75 to 80 per cent that they want to keep STC as a public service.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what would have happened if the Saskatchewan Party had been elected last fall? By now STC would have been up for sale; in whole or part it would be sold. Large carriers would have purchased the most profitable routes; smaller carriers would have purchased routes with marginal revenues. Many, many routes would be closed already because there would be no government support or subsidy; routes that could not turn pure profit would be gone. The social mandate for bus transportation in this province would be gone, and the people of rural Saskatchewan would suffer the most.

But not just rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in northern Saskatchewan. As someone who's lived in northern Saskatchewan, I can tell you that people in northern Saskatchewan would suffer greatly as well. For passengers and for freight, there are northern communities that absolutely depend on the services of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. And not just the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the urban areas as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last night, knowing that I was going to be speaking about STC, I thought I might stop by the STC depot here in Regina and have a cup of coffee. And I looked around the depot and I saw about 20 people. I'd like to describe those people to you in terms of the profile. There were five elderly people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, four of them women. There were four Aboriginal citizens, a couple and two younger people. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were seven young people, I would say ranging from age 17 to 25.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 44 per cent of all passengers are either seniors or students under the age of 25; 51 per cent of all passengers have an income below \$20,000. STC serves rural people, the elderly, Métis and First Nations people, and young people. And if the Saskatchewan Party was in power those would be the people who would suffer the most.

I would like to close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying this. I spoke to a young man in the bus depot last night who had recently been to British Columbia and had observed the privatization that has been going on there. His comment to me was that he hoped there would never be that kind of government in this province. I assured him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not to worry, there never will be. I support the motion by my member of . . . the motion given by the member from Regina Dewdney. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to point out as well that I stand in proud support of the motion. I think it's important that we speak from the northern perspective as well as my colleague from Saskatchewan Rivers did.

There's no question that the North is benefiting from the operations of STC. And, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in the North have asked me, why are we supporting STC; aren't they losing money? That's the question they ask. And what I tell them is, yes, STC does lose money. And the very simple reason for this is that STC serves 275 communities in the province each year which are villages and small towns and northern Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, there's not the customer base in these communities to provide STC with bus riders required to make a profit, Mr. Speaker. And STC has done a tremendous amount of good work in northern Saskatchewan as well.

And what is confusing, Mr. Speaker, what is confusing to me, if you look at some of the . . . And I want to read the quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the member, the critic from Saskatchewan Party that talks about their position, Mr. Speaker. And it's

important that people out there recognize that. The people that I want to recognize and hear this message, Mr. Speaker, are the low-income people, the rural people, the northern people, the women that travel on these bus for a number of reasons. Number one is, it's safe, it's courteous, it's reliable and, Mr. Speaker, it is affordable to the people of Saskatchewan to be able to go on these buses and go to a number of communities. And the critic for the Saskatchewan Party say oh no, no, no, no. He says, quote:

STC may no longer be a viable company, he said.

"If we can find private sector operations that would undertake the passenger and freight services that is provided by STC, we would recommend that would happen," said Elhard.

"The question always has to come back for this, how long should the government continue to subsidize a money-losing service?"

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think if that member were . . . should look at the service that STC provides his constituency, he would realize the amount of farm parts, the amount of low-income people, and the amount of service that STC provides. And on this side of the House, when it comes to providing service to rural Saskatchewan, we would put our record, Mr. Speaker, through issues such as STC, against their record any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, about this whole notion that the critic from the Sask Party talks about STC being affordable. My point is, he said there's private sector people that could do that. Well he's obviously right; but for the critic's information, a lot of these services and the routes that STC provides would not be taken by a private sector firm. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because the private sector firm says no, we won't make money there.

So here's the Sask Party's saying, let's privatize it. But that means only the money-making routes was where the for-profit companies would go. And the worst thing is, is that that critic and that party simply doesn't get it. The former SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) president, Mr. Harrison, said no, you don't do that. The people that utilize the bus service say no, you don't do that. Even the for-profit companies are saying, well we're not going to do that if we have this opportunity; we're not going to subsidize their operation.

So in other words they are saying no to serving the people with low income, to the large urban population, to rural Saskatchewan, to the farm community, because STC costs too much money. Well newsflash to the Saskatchewan Party — STC is an essential service, the people of Saskatchewan want it, the people of the North want it. And, Mr. Speaker, I think they should start waking up to the signals.

And I would point out the reason why they're confused over there, Mr. Speaker. The reason why they're confused over there is they say to people, we're not going to privatize the Crowns. Then a year later, six months later, oh yes we are. Some of them, oh we're not sure. Well maybe there's a balance, maybe

there's a mix. But once you start that process, Mr. Speaker, STC is on the block now, how far away is SGI? How far away is Saskatchewan Power, SaskTel? How far away are there . . .

And the other thing that's confusing, Mr. Speaker, is those folks out there — the genetically modified political party of Saskatchewan — we want to know what they are, Mr. Speaker. People of Saskatchewan have all these questions. Never mind privatization. How about health care? Where do they stand? When I look across from here, from where I sit, Mr. Speaker, what I see is I see a couple of Reformers. Oh no, no, we're not Reformers no more. I see a couple of disaffected Liberals. Oh, no, no. We're Saskatchewan Party. I see a number of Bloc, or sorry, the Western Reform Party over there as well. Then I see the Alliance, Mr. Speaker, and then I see a mixture and a sprinkling of Conservatives and then I see the disaffected Liberals. And at the end of the day, people are saying, so what are you guys? Are you guys Conservatives? Are you Reformers? Are you a Western Alliance . . .

(12:00)

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would just like to remind the member from Athabasca that all remarks should be directed through the Chair, that's all. Member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — So if they think that we're confused on this side as to what their political parties are, imagine the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're saying, well, what are these guys, what are they about?

Well, again, from where I sit, I sit here and I look back and I say, man, are these guys ever confusing. They say they don't want to sell the Crowns, yet they're offering up STC. And the Saskatchewan transportation corporation provides service to rural Saskatchewan, essential services, Mr. Speaker.

Then we turn around and say, well, aren't these guys from rural Saskatchewan? Aren't some of them from rural Saskatchewan? And the obvious answer is, yes. Well, why would they hurt something that is serving their constituents? And I haven't been around politics as much as some of those folk, Mr. Speaker, but what is confusing to me, if you're providing a service to your constituents, why would you kill that? Why would you hurt that, Mr. Speaker?

And I have an answer for that. The reason why they are taking that position is because they're all confused, Mr. Speaker. They're all confused. What is their policy? What is their platform? What is their . . . or ideological belief as to the role of Crowns? And I looked and I can almost draw, Mr. Speaker, a map of the opposition that says, well, these guys, they say, sell them all. Sell them all. You know, let's start with STC and we'll just sell them all.

And then we have the other bunch saying, well, hold it, you know, we can't really sell them, because people don't like that in Saskatchewan. If we want it to be politically popular, we don't start talking about the Crowns.

How about if we undermine the Crowns somehow through questions. Let's undermine the credibility of the Crowns through questions. Then we have another band that says, oh, I

don't know. We're from the Reform Party; we want to reform everything. And we don't want to see any government anywhere.

So what confuses me, Mr. Speaker, is I sit here as part of the government, as part of this great hallowed hall of democracy, and across the way we're hearing from a band of, I don't know which political party they're from. I don't know what they stand for. And they're saying we want to be government, because we want less government.

Oh, okay, from northern Saskatchewan, that makes a lot of sense. You know, we want to be government because we want less government. Okay, then they say, well we don't want government interference in lives. And then they turn around and say, you guys aren't doing enough for property tax, you're not doing enough for housing, you're not doing enough for health care, and then they rattle off a list. And then you say, well what is it you want — less government interference with people's lives or more?

And, Mr. Speaker, then they turn around and say, oh the Crowns, the Crowns. And I was really amazed at this last year. They talked about the Crowns and all of a sudden they're on the wrong side of the road on this one, Mr. Speaker. And then all of a sudden people are talking about the insurance rates across the country. And I was sitting in my desk here, Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition — the brand new leader, lot of flair and there's no . . . there's nothing there — and the problem that he arose that day and said, hold it here we don't like the Crown corporations but we'll keep SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Why? Because at the time who was in the news, was SGI and their lowest rates. So these guys genetically modified themselves again, Mr. Speaker. They said, okay we're not going to sell SGI because you guys pay licence plates . . . you pay the lowest rates so we're going to modify our position again, Mr. Speaker.

And people are saying, geez, you guys, make up your mind. What are you guys? Are you free enterprisers, less government? Or are you a watered down Reform Party? Or are you disaffected Liberals? What is your position, man? You know that's what people are saying. For crying out loud, what is your position? One guy says one thing one day and then they modify again, Mr. Speaker. And I can point out, I can point out, the people of the North say, my goodness, what are these guys, like what do they do?

So we turn then back to STC. And STC . . . and I see a band, a band of true-blue Conservatives over there, Mr. Speaker. It may be six, seven members and the six, seven members say . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I've been noticing with interest this afternoon this debate on the resolution. And I guess really what moved me to speak was the fact that the Saskatchewan Party is afraid of this resolution because what it does is it recognizes the essential role that the publicly owned Saskatchewan Transportation Company is playing in this province as it relates to service to northern Saskatchewan, residents of rural Saskatchewan, our students,

and our young people.

But I think what has become very clear this afternoon is the fact that the Saskatchewan Party is very openly today hiding from the issue of public versus private ownership. And I think this resolution has done very much to put that on the floor, Mr. Speaker.

And I know I have a short period of time to speak this afternoon, so I'm going to try to be very succinct in my comments. But I really do want to make one very important point, and that is that the Saskatchewan Party . . . And I have to disagree with my colleague from Athabasca. They are not confused. They have an agenda; they know their agenda. The people of Saskatchewan told them in the last election what their agenda was. It's become very, very clear.

And why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? I say that because this is one of only two political movements in this country who are afraid to have public policy conventions to discuss where their members are as it relates to issues like public and private ownership. And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I am challenging every member of the Saskatchewan Party to come forward and call for a public and an open policy convention so that the people of Saskatchewan clearly understand where they are in privatization.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, I know and they know that there are a large number of people in their political movement who were closely tied with the privatizers of Grant Devine's administration, and who as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, are the same people who would be at that convention calling for the elimination of public ownership of the four major Crowns and some of the smaller ones as well. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Swift Current knows that very well, which is why he shies away from a public policy convention. And I say shame on him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, if that member doesn't have the conviction to lead a political movement and let the people of this province know what they can expect from him, then I say he doesn't deserve to govern. And I also say, Mr. Speaker, he won't, any more than his predecessor was allowed to govern this province because the people of this province, frankly, don't trust where they would head after an election if they were to assume the power.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why is it, why is it that the member from Swift Current, just a short few moments ago I am told, indicated that there's going to be a free vote as it relates to the new Act that's put before this House to protect public ownership of the Crowns? And to ensure that there is a process where the people of Saskatchewan can have a say in that, why, Mr. Speaker, would he not say to the members of his caucus, we do not favour the sell-off of those Crowns and we are going to unanimously support it, and I am putting the whip on, like he does on other votes? And they don't need to tell me that every vote they have over there is a free vote because nobody believes that either, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — So I say, Mr. Speaker, he should put the whip on and he should say to every one of your members, you're going to follow me and you're going to be with me and we're going to either vote against this Bill or we're going to vote for it. But we're not going to be some over here and some over here, because the people need to know who we are and what we are and I'm going to define it on this Act.

But, Mr. Speaker, he will not have the courage to do that any more than he has the courage to put his members up to speak in support of this Bill. Why? Because they favour privatization and if, God forbid, they ever form government, they would be selling Crown assets to feed their habits of spending. And I say, Mr. Speaker, people of Saskatchewan know that because they remember, not only too well, their connection with the Grant Devine spenders of the 1980s.

And, Mr. Speaker, they can deny who they are. They can deny what they are. They can deny what they would intend to do. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will never, ever elect a political party that takes that premise and makes those assumptions that people will vote for them, even if they're afraid to say who they are and what they are.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I said before these people are not confused. They are not confused. They know exactly what they want. They want to be everything to everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister of this province just released an interim financial statement that showed, because of the fiscal policies that this government put in place, we were able to achieve hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we could deliver good public policy and that we could deliver good health care and good education. And, Mr. Speaker, that we can continue to support the operations of the bus company, which this government does annually, to support transportation in rural Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, not enough for those folks. They want more money for CAIS and they want the sales tax reduced and, Mr. Speaker, they want the corporate capital tax removed. And, Mr. Speaker, they have a whole list of I-wants. But never, never, Mr. Speaker, do they put it in terms of what this province can afford because they want to be everything to everybody.

Which is why I'm saying they're afraid to speak to this motion, because they want to keep the support of those who favour privatization but they also want to garner some support for those who rejected them in the last election because they didn't trust them with the public assets, Mr. Speaker.

So when I say, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition has a big, big job ahead of him, I tell you I don't think it can be done. And I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker, because it's like herding cats. You've got the old Grant Devine privatizers and spend to serve everybody's aspirations and dreams and build deficits. And they've probably got some fiscal conservatives on the other side who say, sell these Crowns, pay down the debt.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what will never ever satisfy the people of Saskatchewan and that is a political party that's afraid

of itself, that's afraid to show the people of Saskatchewan who they are and what they are, Mr. Speaker. And they can't make excuses. They've got to come forward, which is why, Mr. Speaker, I say to members of the opposition, why don't you support this motion?

Why don't you stand up and speak in favour of it with a little bit of conviction, because all it's saying is that this Assembly recognizes the role that the bus company, the STC has played in terms of serving the needs of rural people, older people, students, people in northern Saskatchewan. And that yes, we recognize we're putting public funds to ensure that the service is there. It's a transportation subsidy for those people that I mentioned before and it's a well run little company, Mr. Speaker.

And why wouldn't they support it? I'll tell you why. Because philosophically, these are privatizers. Philosophically, these are people who have the belief that you shouldn't invest a nickel in anything that has to do with a publicly owned company. They don't believe in Crown corporations. But fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, they don't believe in government. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province have a long and a proud history of believing that there is a role for public ownership, and it's been ongoing for 60 years.

And the Leader of the Opposition stands in his place, and out in the public, and he says, you know, we got it all wrong in this province; we spent 60 years on the wrong track. Every person who worked to build this province in the last 60 years, through a combination of public and private and co-operative ownership, every person's got it wrong. But the member from Swift Current has got it right. But, Mr. Speaker, he hasn't got it right enough to command his political movement to have an open public policy convention. Oh, no, no, no. He's got it right. But what does right mean? Well you'll find out some day.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you, the people of Saskatchewan will never accept him. They will never accept that approach to a political movement that was built in the middle and in the dark of the night. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why they're afraid to speak to this motion. That's why they're afraid of their position as it relates to public ownership.

And, Mr. Speaker, I challenge them one more time — open your convention, put your position clear, and let the people of Saskatchewan know really who you are. But I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it won't happen because they're afraid of who they are, what they are, who supports them, and who drives their political policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(12:15)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, Mr. Speaker, with pleasure but somewhat reluctantly. I say with pleasure because I wish to support the resolution and it's my pleasure to do so; with pleasure, because as Minister Responsible for SaskPower, I wish to support the government's

position — the people's position — on the public ownership of important utilities like SaskPower, like the Saskatchewan Transportation Company.

I rise somewhat reluctantly, Mr. Speaker, because I realize that I am taking time from this debate which a member opposite could use, which a member opposite could set forth their position. Now, Mr. Speaker, I've heard a lot of noise coming across the way from the members opposite. I know, I know, Mr. Speaker, that they have a lot to say. I'm disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that they don't want to put any of it on the record.

But, Mr. Speaker, I . . . They have put their position in respect to STC on the record. I assume that remains their position — if they won't rise in this House and set it straight; to say no, that it is no longer our position, our position has changed — I assume their position is the same. The member from Rosetown Biggar said, and was quoted in the *Leader-Post* in April 4, 1998.

I definitely support the sale of STC . . . And . . . when it comes to major Crowns like (Tel and Power), we need to consult the people. (But obviously that's not the case with STC.)

Now, Mr. Speaker, has the position changed since 1998? Well here we had the opportunity today for the member from Rosetown Biggar to rise and say, yes, what I said in 1998, I mean — I mean it today; I meant it then; and I mean it now. Or, or he had the opportunity to rise from his seat today and say, well I was mistaken; I was wrong. We do not any longer support the privatization of STC. We no longer support the privatization of SaskTel. We no longer support the privatization of SaskPower. And again I say I rise reluctantly, Mr. Speaker, because I am taking the time that the member could have taken to say, I was mistaken, or I was correct and I stand by that position today.

The member for Thunder Creek was quoted in the *Herbert Herald*, November 12 of 2003:

I think the NDP won. I think they won the last election by running a dishonest, despicable campaign, saying we were going to privatize Crown corporations.

Now where did the people of Saskatchewan get the idea that the members opposite, if they form the government, would privatize the Crown corporations? Perhaps from the statement of the member from Rosetown-Biggar, which I just read out. Or perhaps it was the member from Thunder Creek, himself, who said in — let's see — August 20 of 2002 in the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald*: "80 non-vital Crown corporations will be sold after a review." Eighty.

Now you don't get to 80 Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, without privatizing STC. You don't get to 80 Crown corporations without privatizing SaskPower. You don't get to 80 Crown corporations without privatizing SaskTel and you don't get to 80 Crown corporations without privatizing SaskEnergy. And what does the member from Thunder Creek mean when he says, after review, when he already has the number, Mr. Speaker? Eighty. He's going to privatize all of them after what he called a review.

Now if in an election campaign a few months later, people will remember the commitment — the commitment of the member from Rosetown-Biggar and a commitment of the member from Thunder Creek — to sell STC and SaskTel and SaskPower, well that's just people's memory, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think the government could be held responsible for that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've heard from the members opposite and I know they don't want it on the record. They won't rise and say it, but they shout across the way — people don't need a bus; they don't need a bus. Now I rise reluctantly again, as I said, because I know I'm taking their time. They could have got up from their seats during this debate and said, we don't think people need the bus. We stand by our statements that we made. The statements that we made before the last election campaign, statements quoted in the press, saying we would sell STC. We stand by those statements. We still believe that.

But, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to do that. They don't want to put it on the record. But the people that they say don't need a bus — who are these people? Where are these empty buses? STC carries about 260,000 passengers per year. Of these riders, 28 per cent are over 60 years of age, 63 per cent are women, 51 per cent have incomes below \$21,000 a year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after STC had been sold — as the member from Thunder Creek, as the member from Rosetown-Biggar promised the people of Saskatchewan it would be when the Sask Party formed the government — had it been sold, I guess their answer to those people would have been, take limousine service, Mr. Speaker. This is Marie Antoinette politics, Mr. Speaker, to say people don't need a bus. They don't need a bus. Their friends don't need the bus. Their friends likely own the goddamn bus, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I do believe the member got somewhat carried away with his rhetoric and I would ask him to withdraw the offending language.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I deeply apologize to the House. I'm extremely sorry, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the remark.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If those members had formed a government, their friends would own a very fine bus system today, Mr. Speaker — a blessed bus system, Mr. Speaker — but a bus system that would not be as accessible to the poor and to the isolated people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I regret two things. I regret my use of parliamentary language and I regret that I took seven minutes of the House's time when we could have heard from the members opposite on the record . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — At this time we would proceed to allow a

period of not exceeding 10 minutes to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the content of the speeches, and allow members who spoke in the debate to respond to the questions raised. I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. And just before I go to the question, very quickly, Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of a story of these two Sask Party guys coming on to a main road off a side road, and one asked the other, is there anybody coming on your end. To which the other Sask Party member says, nah, just a dog. And all of a sudden, they pull out and all of a sudden they get whacked. And then after a while, they wake up in the hospital — and, of course, it's a publicly funded hospital — and his friend asks him, well what happened; I thought you said it's just a dog. He said, a greyhound.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what happened the last election on the Crown corporations. They didn't see that bus coming, Mr. Speaker.

My question for the member from Saskatchewan Rivers is, what services, essential services does the STC offer to the people of rural Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the noise and the heckling from the other side of the floor has been absolutely deafening. But the silence, the silence, Mr. Speaker, on this particular topic is even more deafening.

An Hon. Member: — Absolutely.

Mr. Borgerson: — I would like to respond to this question from the member from Athabasca in a very different kind of way. And it's a way, in fact, that all members of this House will identify with.

I want members to imagine . . . The member from Athabasca was talking about roads just now. I want members in this House to imagine a grid road meeting a paved road in this province, meeting a highway in this province.

An Hon. Member: — Highway 35.

Mr. Borgerson: — And I would thank the member from across the way for giving a very good example.

Where the grid road meets the highway, there's a car or truck parked at the stop sign. In this particular picture, a large green bus, an STC bus rolls up, where — in the middle of nowhere — there are no towns or villages around. The bus stops; someone gets off. Remember, this is not a bus stop. Someone gets off. They're picked up by their family and taken home. That is an image that was true when I was a kid. That's an image that's true today. That's STC, what they provide for these people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Meewasin. I was interested in listening to his speech, as much of it as I could hear, because the opposition, of course, has been very loud in yelling from their desks in this debate.

I'd be very curious to know why is it that he thinks they don't want to put their comments on record today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt the members opposite, members opposite, many of them are on record, Mr. Speaker. The member from Rosetown-Biggar says: "I definitely support the sale of STC."

And he said whatever consultation we would have before we sold SaskTel or SaskPower, we would not necessarily . . . obviously we would not have to do that in the case of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company.

Now, why will not the member from Rosetown-Biggar say is that still the position of their party? Why won't they enter this debate? Because it is still the position of their party, Mr. Speaker. It is their position of their party, but they don't want to make statements like that any more because they know what the people of Saskatchewan think of them.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that members opposite will just trip over their tongues, they'll heckle from their seats, but they refuse to participate in this debate. This is the comment portion of it.

Mr. Speaker, it's much like their policy convention that they're going to have closed to the public, closed to their members. Now it's open; now it's closed — what a flip-flopping group. There's confusion everywhere except around the issue of STC, Mr. Speaker, where it is crystal clear from comment after comment after comment from members opposite they want to sell STC. They want to turf 225 STC employees out. They want to leave people and parts stranded wherever they are.

My question now is to the member for Regina Dewdney, what do you think about this important public debate?

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to debate a very important issue on public policy — the future ownership of one of our Crown corporations and the role that that Crown corporation plays in delivering services to people of rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's a shame. It's a shame that the members opposite did not want to participate in this very important public policy debate. In the forum in which legislators in this

province are to debate and discuss public policy, Mr. Speaker, they failed to do so. They didn't want to participate, Mr. Speaker. They didn't want to put their position forward on public ownership of a very important Crown to the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's a sad day. That's a sad day when members of the legislature do not want to participate in debates, when they're afraid to put forward their position, Mr. Speaker, when they don't want to tell the people of Saskatchewan where they stand, Mr. Speaker. Then, Mr. Speaker, all we can do is rely on what they say in the media. And, Mr. Speaker, they have said they'd like to privatize this Crown, Mr. Speaker, and they would.

(12:30)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Athabasca made reference to Greyhound, and I realize he wanted to speak more on this topic, so I would like to ask the member from Athabasca to comment on the services provided by Greyhound and by our own provincial carrier, STC.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. I'd like to thank my learned colleague for his question. And the difference between Greyhound and STC, Mr. Speaker, according to an August 25, 2004, article in *FORTUNE* Magazine regarding Greyhound operations in the US (United States) — which is according to them, the great free enterprise country of the world — the article indicates that despite the fact that Greyhound receives operating subsidies from both their federal and state government, it lost \$111.5 million, US dollars, in 2002 and \$28.9 million, in US dollars, in 2003, Mr. Speaker.

So what did we lose then under STC? Count them — 1, 2, 3, \$4 million — providing all those essential services. Four million dollars compared to \$111.5 US dollars. And, Mr. Speaker, today they will vote with us because they've got to follow the leaders, which is this government, on the Crowns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member from Regina Dewdney, the Government Whip, and the mover of the motion. Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite are so determined that this is an important issue for the people of Saskatchewan to see how this Assembly considers this motion, my question is to the member: will he allow a vote on this important issue?

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased again to rise and participate in this debate and answer this question. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite had ample opportunity to stand and put forward their position in this

House during this very important public debate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are taking the opportunity to ask questions and review what was said during debate today which was a very, very important public debate. Mr. Speaker, they failed to participate at all. They failed to participate, Mr. Speaker, and they've been extremely, extremely, extremely clear, Mr. Speaker, in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from the Tuesday, November 9, 2004, article where Mr. Elhard, the member from Cypress Hills is quoted, and his name is used in the article, Mr. Speaker.

STC may no longer be a viable company, he said.

"If we would find private sector bus operations that would undertake the passenger and freight service that is provided by STC, we would recommend that would happen," said Elhard.

They would privatize this Crown.

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. I thought it was interesting that he was one of the very few rural voices that we heard in this debate today. I thought it was very unusual that we did not hear more rural voices in this debate today. And I'd appreciate hearing his perspective on why it is that he thinks that the . . . (inaudible) . . . service was important to rural Saskatchewan, and number two, why we did not hear more voices from rural Saskatchewan in this debate today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would respond by saying that, in fact, I'm as surprised as the rest of this Assembly is. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member's time and the time for the debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 4 — Inquiry into Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company

Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this motion that is currently before the legislature, the motion I am about to move after a few brief remarks, seconded by the member for Cannington, has to do with the largest government-related business scandal in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. It has to do with SPUDCO, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this particular scandal, this NDP scandal that just simply won't go away because the people of the province won't let it go away. This particular scandal, if you can imagine, is 10 times greater than the sponsorship scandal that plagued the

federal government of Canada.

It's interesting to see what the federal government's response was to their scandal. Even though it's only one-tenth the size of the SPUDCO scandal that is currently before our Assembly — and that's nagging, frankly, the people of Saskatchewan — even though it's only one-tenth the size of the SPUDCO scandal, what did the Prime Minister of the land do in the face of the sponsorship scandal? He called a public inquiry, Mr. Speaker. He called it voluntarily, Mr. Speaker. He stood up, took his place in the House of Commons after having a press conference about the matter and said, this is serious. This represents taxpayers' money that has been squandered in large, large numbers.

This represents the scandal . . . the sponsorship scandal represents an issue that Canadians needed to know the truth about. The federal government had not been forthcoming. All the facts related to that sponsorship scandal had not been made available to the taxpayers whose money had been lost. And for those and other reasons, the Prime Minister of the land voluntarily said this has to be the subject of a public inquiry. And of course, what we see now unfolding in Ottawa is just that.

I don't expect it was an easy decision for the Prime Minister to make. And whether you agree or disagree with the Prime Minister on any number of issues or share his political persuasion or not, I think you can probably agree that for the Prime Minister it would have been a difficult decision to come to because what happens in a public inquiry of course, Mr. Speaker — and we've seen it happen in inquiries here in Saskatchewan — is that the truth comes out. The truth of what happened in the subject that's being . . . the subject of the inquiry comes out and people can see it.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? When the truth comes out, that is the opportunity, that is the time when those responsible for misdeeds can be held accountable. When all the facts are out, when we know exactly what happened with any particular scandal as a result of the work of a third party judicial inquiry, Mr. Speaker, when that happens, the truth comes out and people are held accountable. That must be the reason why it was a difficult decision for the Prime Minister to make.

When that inquiry is finished, there is going to be a situation, Mr. Speaker, where the evidence presented, the truth that's discovered at that inquiry will no doubt impact lives of people that were responsible for that scandal, responsible for the wasting of those Canadian tax dollars. And it will hold accountable those who didn't come clean on those scandal issues in Ottawa voluntarily.

So it's not an easy thing to call an inquiry on a scandal that's plaguing your own government, to be sure. What does it take then to do that? It takes some courage, Mr. Speaker. It takes some guts to be able to stand in front of the people of this province in this particular instance and say, you know this is the worst scandal we've ever seen in Saskatchewan. We know it involves, we know it involves the truth not being told always to the investors and to the partners and to Saskatchewan people. We know that, Mr. Speaker.

We know it because . . . You know old SPUDCO himself, the former minister responsible had to stand in his place in this legislature and apologize. We also know that it was serious, that there were misdeeds done because every single day out in the rotunda in the provincial media, the minister that's been handed this file, the Minister of Saskatchewan that's been saddled with this scandal — goes out with this hot potato some would say — has to go out to the media, and he apologizes. He pleads for forgiveness, Mr. Speaker. He pleads for forgiveness.

So we know, Mr. Speaker, that this is a serious issue. We know that. We know what is at stake — not just the lost of taxpayers' money — but we know that what's at stake is the voracity of what the government told its partners and investors and the people of the province about SPUDCO.

So the simple question is this really: does the Premier of the province have the courage to do the right thing and call an inquiry into SPUDCO? It's a simple, it's a simple question really. The Premier himself, the Premier himself and many of the members over there — there's the member for Nutana I think as well, the minister responsible for SPUDCO, the current Minister of Finance, and a few others over there — they would have been in these benches in about 1989, Mr. Speaker, when their leader set the standard, the NDP already set the standard, for what deserves a public inquiry.

Well I remember that quite well, Mr. Speaker, because I was a political staffer right here in the building. And I remember exactly what those members said opposite. And for those that don't remember — and apparently the Premier doesn't remember, and the member for Nutana has forgotten, and the member for P.A. Northcote's forgotten, the Minister of Finance has forgotten, and the Deputy Premier has forgotten — luckily for those that forget there's *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker.

And *Hansard* will tell us exactly, with clarity frankly, what that party believed about public inquiries — the standard that they set for issues that should be the matter of public inquiries. Let me quote if I can, Mr. Speaker, from *Hansard*. I don't think members will mind if I quote what the then leader of the opposition said, Roy Romanow said, in the face of another financial difficulty or challenge called GigaText, Mr. Speaker. And people in the province still remember that.

Here's what the premier said at the time, in this Legislative Assembly to the then government of the day, about that particular issue. He said quote:

I say to you, sir . . .

And I notice, Mr. Speaker, that the premier didn't address his remarks to the Chair as we're often admonished to do. He didn't do that. We're of course trying hard to do that. But here's what he said, quote:

I say to you, sir the very least that can take place is the establishment of a judicial inquiry which is independent and complete into your involvement . . .

There again he's not directing his remarks to the Chair but to the premier of the day.

. . . into your involvement, the cabinet's involvement, the advisers' . . . involvement in this mess.

He ends his quote with . . . This is what the then opposition leader, Roy Romanow, said about GigaText, he said:

How about doing that?

How about having an inquiry. He's pretty clear.

But he didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. And you can imagine, I think I can remember, but you can imagine just the desk thumping that would have been happening at that time by the premier of the province. You can imagine that.

You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, how the member for Nutana would have been cheering her leader on when her leader demanded a public inquiry into GigaText. You can imagine how the Minister of Finance would have been cheering his leader on, clapping and thumping his desk. The same would be true for the minister responsible for SPUDCO himself, the member for P.A. (Prince Albert) Northcote.

The premier went on to say . . . or, I beg your pardon, the leader of the opposition of the day, Mr. Romanow, went on to say this about GigaText. He said:

You (meaning the government of the day, you meaning the government of day) are covering up by refusing to give us the documents and the answers.

That sounds like question period earlier today, actually.

I am therefore making this request of you (he says). Will you set up (an immediate — and he's talking to the provincial government of the day — will you set up) immediately a full-scale, comprehensive, judicial inquiry into the actions of you and your government in this fiasco mess?

I think it's a little redundant for Mr. Romanow to have said fiasco and mess, but he was upset, Mr. Speaker. He was upset at the time. And so were all the members over there that were at that day . . . on this day, Mr. Speaker. They were upset because they believed that a . . . they believed, Mr. Speaker, that the loss was so great, the loss of taxpayers' money was so great that it warranted a public inquiry, a third party inquiry.

And how much money was lost? Five million dollars. Serious, serious to be sure when you lose 5 million taxpayers' dollars. How much has been lost by the SPUDCO scandal, by the NDP through the SPUDCO scandal? Seven times more than that — but that's only to date — seven times more than that. And the Deputy Leader of the Opposition makes a good point, that's only to date.

Yesterday the minister announced that he's going to settle out of court likely with another SPUDCO related lawsuit. And there might be more lawsuits related to this particular scandal, there might be more costs, but for now we know it's \$35 million — seven times greater than GigaText.

I guess the question in this debate, what I'll be listening for

from members opposite, is if 7 million . . . if \$5 million lost was serious enough to warrant a public inquiry, why in the world won't they do it for a \$35 million scandal that also involves, by the member for P.A. Northcote's own admission and by the Premier's admission in his own report, that they didn't — what was the wording — accurately communicate the truth. That's what the wording is in the report.

It's not just money lost. It's the fact that this government looked people in the eye and didn't accurately communicate the truth, Mr. Speaker.

(12:45)

Mr. Speaker, I just don't understand the hypocrisy of the statement or of the position that a public inquiry is warranted for a \$5 million loss of taxpayers' money 13 years ago, 14 years ago, but a public inquiry is not warranted for a SPUDCO scandal that cost taxpayers \$35 million and counting, Mr. Speaker. And that's what this issue is all about here today. It's about the ability of the voters to trust what their government says. It's about the government finally learning its lesson, that it can't pick winners and losers as a way to try to grow the economy. It's about all of those things.

And the other important part of a public inquiry frankly, Mr. Speaker, is the signal that it might send to those who will want to invest in Saskatchewan, both within the province and outside the province. Because there are people out in the rest of this . . . people outside Saskatchewan, entrepreneurs, investors who are watching what this government does. They're watching very closely how serious the government takes an issue like this. Maybe some of them have even been asked by this government to be their partners. Who knows?

Mr. Speaker, the questions that they will ask before they consider making an investment here is, is this the government they want to work with, or is this the government under whose jurisdiction they want to make their investment in? A government that refuses to call a public inquiry into their biggest political scandal. A government that refuses to let the truth run around, Mr. Speaker, as the old song says, run around naked so everybody will be able to see that this government means business about getting to the bottom of this.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, they don't mean business about that at all; they don't mean to get to the bottom of this. And do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because, as is the case in so many circumstances with the NDP, when it comes right down to it, if they're given a choice between doing the right thing for the economy, sending the right signal to investors, or doing the right thing on the issue of addictions, or doing the right thing in the area of health care, or doing the right thing in the area of agriculture, Mr. Speaker; when it comes down to a choice between those things and their own self-preservation, their own political hides, they choose self-preservation and their own political interests every single time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And if they have changed their spots in this regard, if they have, Mr. Speaker, then all they need do, all the Premier need do is stand up and do the right thing. Do the right

thing and call a public inquiry into the SPUDCO issue, not just to find out where all the money went. We don't even know where all the money went as it was alluded to by the member for Cannington. I think the taxpayers would like to know where all the money went.

We don't know the nature of the involvement of the NDP's firm of lawyers. I think the firm is Olive, Waller, and . . . Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller, I think is the name of the firm. We don't know the nature of their involvement.

Mr. Speaker, here's an issue we haven't yet, we haven't yet found the truth about. We haven't found out about who in the NDP in their campaign office from the last election or on that front bench directed that NDP law firm to basically intervene in a court case with a very frivolous affidavit that was thrown out by the judge almost immediately, to try to influence the provincial election. That's how serious this scandal is.

There still remains the question as to whether or not this party — the Premier, himself; the Deputy Premier, who would have been steering the campaign; their campaign office here in Regina — there's still a doubt as to their involvement in manipulating the court system and, Mr. Speaker, expending taxpayers' dollars in the manipulation of that court system, because it had to involve their NDP law firm, to try to influence and manipulate the provincial election. That's how serious this is.

Members laugh about it and smile about it. Mr. Speaker, we would like to ask the question. We would like a provincial inquiry to find out about the nature of that affidavit, Mr. Speaker. We'd like a judge in a provincial inquiry to be able to question that Deputy Premier who is chirping from his seat and find out if it was his plan, if it was his grand scheme to use the courts of the province of Saskatchewan for his own political gain. That's what we'd like to find out, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — We would like to find out, Mr. Speaker, about exactly what the member for Meadow Lake, the current minister of First Nations and Métis affairs, we'd like to find out about his role with the private sector company that was driven from business apparently by the NDP government. We don't have the answers to that.

We don't have the answers to the questions that Ernst Young asked in their report. Their recommendation — you'll remember it, Mr. Speaker — was that a legal opinion, not an auditor's opinion but a legal opinion be sought to find out if they got the right legislative authority to do any of this. That's their recommendation, Ernst & Young's, that they need a legal opinion, Mr. Speaker — not an auditor's opinion, a legal opinion. And maybe they got that, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the government got that. Maybe the NDP got . . . but we haven't seen it. And a provincial inquiry could get to the bottom of that.

We'd like to find out about the trust liabilities that their own documents show exist because they spent money allocated for Ducks Unlimited and Rafferty-Alameda on SPUDCO losses.

These are serious issues and serious questions. They relate

directly, Mr. Speaker, to the credibility of this government, of this Premier. They relate directly to the investment environment of our province. They relate directly to what . . . The rest of the country's watching. And the Deputy Premier's kind of grinning and smiling about all of this.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, we hear from outside the province about those who are already vested in our province and those who may want to invest more. And they're . . . Well and the member for Regina Dewdney is now, has now come over to our side and I don't blame him, Mr. Speaker. I don't blame him. I wouldn't want to stand over on the side of SPUDCO either.

People outside this province are watching very, very carefully what this government does. Those who have the power to create sustainable jobs and expand our tax base, they're watching what this government does on SPUDCO — whether or not they take this seriously, whether or not they're prepared to get to the truth and to hold those accountable, Mr. Speaker.

But the government isn't interested in the truth. They're interested in their own political preservation. They're interested in their own political hide. And we've seen examples of it even this week.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen examples of it with the CAIS program where they made a commitment to fund CAIS. They said they couldn't fully fund CAIS because of equalization and they didn't have the resources. Equalization gets fixed, they get 1 billion more in resources, Mr. Speaker, and they still don't keep that commitment, Mr. Speaker. They still don't keep that commitment because it doesn't serve their political interests. It may serve rural Saskatchewan, but they'd rather serve their own political interests.

We've seen it, Mr. Speaker, with how they've handled the smoking ban. The government's admitted that they're going to lose millions of dollars as a result of the smoking ban in liquor and gaming revenue. But the only way they can lose millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, is if the men and women who are creating jobs in that industry, in this province, lose money first because they are just taking a percentage of that revenue, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what was their response to the hospitality industry? Same thing. When it came down to choosing their own political preservation, i.e. an election slush fund and/or accommodating their own loss of revenue from liquor and gaming or helping the hospitality industry, they chose themselves.

When it comes to getting to the bottom of the SPUDCO scandal and getting the truth out or their own self-interest, they choose themselves, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to CAIS, serving rural Saskatchewan on one hand or their own political self-interest, they choose themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Here's the good news. Soon and very soon, in the province of Saskatchewan, the people of the province will make a choice and they will not choose that side. They will not choose the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, because of the answers that have not come forward from the government to date, it's my pleasure to move the following motion, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That this Assembly acknowledges that the SPUDCO loss constitutes the largest government business loss in the province's history; and that since this Assembly endorses transparency and accountability in all aspects of the public treasury in respect of the province's taxpayers, this Assembly demands that the government hold an independent judicial inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

Seconded by the member for Cannington.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current, seconded by the member for Cannington:

That this Assembly acknowledges that the SPUDCO loss constitutes the largest government business loss in the province's history; and that since this Assembly endorses transparency and accountability in all aspects of the public treasury in respect of the province's taxpayers, this Assembly demands that the government hold an independent judicial inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Cannington.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's indeed a pleasure to rise on this very important issue in the loss of \$35 million by this NDP government, and growing. I guess the real question here is, I can take a page out of the response by the Premier to the deputy minister, his own deputy minister's review. And it says here, questions of why decisions were made, the public portrayal of those decisions, and political responsibility have not been clearly addressed.

That's what the Premier himself said, Mr. Speaker. That it has not been clearly addressed and the only way after the six years of the misleading terms of reference that were applied to the partnership between Con-Force and SaskWater as outlined by the previous minister responsible for investments, the member from P.A. Northcote, Mr. Speaker, that has not yet been clearly outlined.

The responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, have not been clearly laid. The decision-making process has not been clearly laid out, and the reasons why those decisions were made have not been clearly made.

Mr. Speaker, you have to take a look back in 1997. The reports talk about the rush to move ahead on this. What was the rush, Mr. Speaker? The decision to initially start into this was made in November 1996 and there's a rush in March '97 to move ahead on this.

Mr. Speaker, the rush had nothing to do with potatoes. The rush had to do with the potential upcoming provincial election and the protection of the minister from that particular area and his seat. That's what the rush was, Mr. Speaker. That is what the rush was — that they had to get some economic development going in that area. The only way to do it was to put up government money to protect that minister, Mr. Speaker.

There is only one way, only one way, to get to the bottom of this, to find out why the government lawyer, Fred Zinkhan, was saying that (a) to farmers, we're going to get you because you're nothing but a bunch of dumb farmers, Mr. Speaker; that the accounting firms and that the private people involved in this were misleading and fraudulent in their representation of the income potentials available. SaskWater should have been doing their due diligence, Mr. Speaker. That minister at the time should have been doing his due diligence. And they didn't do it.

And yet they turn around and try to blame others that were involved in this process, Mr. Speaker — people that the government duped into paying their money up front, that to plant the seed potatoes for which, at the end of the day there was no sale, Mr. Speaker; that were dumped in the dugouts to rot. Mr. Speaker, it's those kind of things that the decision-making process and where the monies went that needs to be brought forward, and the only way to bring that forward is in a public inquiry.

All through these reports, the Ernst & Young report, the deputy minister's report, Mr. Speaker, clearly shows that the government was misrepresenting the values of the corporation, of SPUDCO. They talk about a 51/49 per cent partnership in the corporation where the documents that only came out because of the court case, Mr. Speaker, clearly showed that that partnership was only on paper; that it did not represent the values; that Con-Force had no expectations at all of receiving any of the income or the losses, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the only way to settle this is a public inquiry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It now being past the hour of 1 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.

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