



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

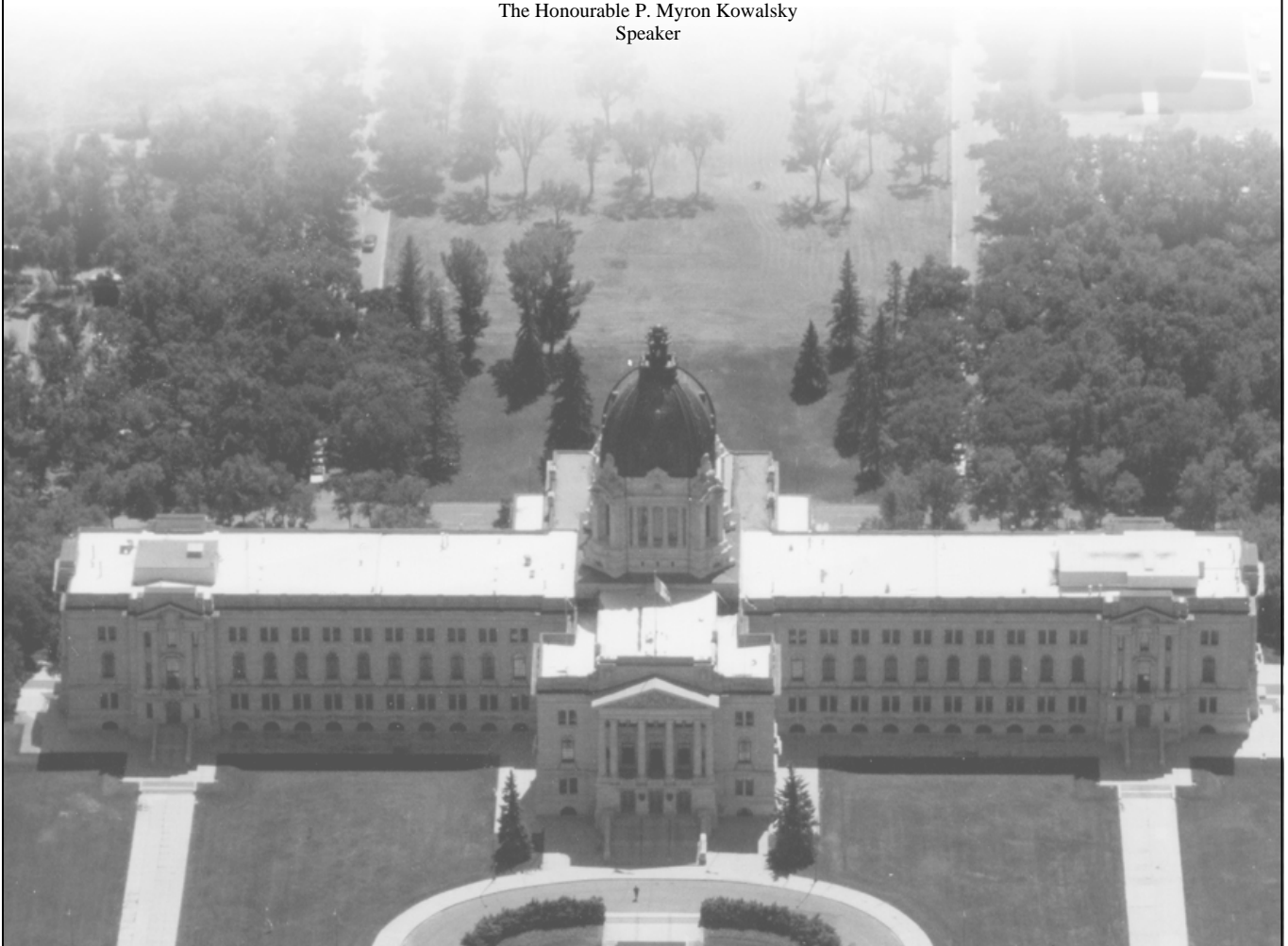
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

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Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise on behalf of people who are concerned about Revoy's Marina out at Barrier Lake.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to take the necessary action to develop a long-term lease to Revoy's Marina to include a turnabout for access to the marina, a place for boat trailers to be stored, and seven seasonal camping spots to be maintained to ensure the safety of this area continues.

The people who have signed this petition are from Naicam, Quill Lake, Archerwill, Fosston, Tisdale, and areas around Barrier Valley. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have a petition with citizens concerned with the safety on Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Bruno and Humboldt. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present another petition from the citizens of Wilkie concerning the possible reduction of health care services in their community. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Wilkie and district. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions

have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received as sessional paper nos. 18, 19, 21 as well as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 7, 8, 12, and 13.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cumberland, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, to continue celebrating Arts Week in this province of Saskatchewan we have a couple more guests in the legislature with us today. We have Tibor Feheregyhazi — and I'm sorry if I wrecked your name; it sounds like a Cree word to me — he's the artistic director of the Persephone Theatre.

We also have Mr. Victor Sawa, music director of the Regina Symphony Orchestra with us. Would all members please join me in welcoming our two very talented and special guests to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 16 students seated in the western gallery. They are from the Rainbow Youth Centre's Road to Employment program. They're here with their instructor, Jeff Dudar, and I look forward to having a visit with them very soon — if I could get a wave from everybody. There we go. I know it's a little cold, but we're going to have a nice, cool drink of juice later on, Mr. Speaker, and a good visit I'm sure. But please welcome these students and Mr. Dudar to their legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Batoche.

Louis Riel Day

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is Louis Riel Day. On this day in 1885, Louis Riel was hanged for treason in Regina. Today is an important day for the Métis people and for all Canadians. This is a day that draws attention to how the Métis are an important part of Saskatchewan's heritage and future.

Louis Riel led the Red River resistance of 1869 that led to the creation of the province of Manitoba. Some have said that Louis Riel was a man of controversy. But the contribution to Saskatchewan and Canada for the Métis people is undeniable. This day has become a day of pride for the members of the Métis nation and all Saskatchewan people as a day to reflect on our culture, heritage, and history. The Métis people are an

integral part of Western Canadian history and continue to be to this day.

On this day we also recognize the need to continue to appropriately address the rights of Métis citizens as well as all citizens. We should all take time this week to reflect on the contribution of the Métis people of our province, our history, and our culture.

I would ask all members to join with me in recognizing Louis Riel Day.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I join my colleague from Batoche to also recognize Louis Riel Day.

Mr. Speaker, labelled a prophet, statesman, scoundrel, saint, traitor, martyr, and visionary, Louis Riel is one of the most controversial figures in Canadian history. While, Mr. Speaker, we can argue about the man, we cannot deny the very significant place he holds in Canadian history.

Mr. Speaker, 120 years ago Louis Riel was executed for his role in the North-West Rebellion of 1885. This anniversary is now recognized as Louis Riel Day in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in 1869 Riel and his supporters seized Fort Garry and established a provisional government in what is now called the Red River Rebellion. This government drew up a list of rights that included an elected legislature, official status for English and French, and an economic plan for the Métis. Mr. Speaker, this list formed the basis of 1870's Manitoba Act which brought Manitoba into Confederation and provided language, religious, and educational provisions.

Mr. Speaker, today is a good day to reflect on the past and to chart a course for the future, to reflect on our relationship, and to ensure that all Métis people have the same opportunity as all Saskatchewan people have. Mr. Speaker . . .

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing Riel's contribution and to pay tribute to him and through him to all Métis people. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Ethanol Opportunity

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we held an emergency debate on the income crisis that is wreaking havoc on Saskatchewan's agriculture producers. Many producers are now starting their third straight year of negative incomes, which means another year of

operating on the equity that they have left. Many farm lobby groups and academics argue that we need to give our producers more control of the value-added chain. Our producers need proactive farm policy, not reactive policy or ad hoc programs that only react to difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, ethanol represented a huge opportunity for our producers. It would provide them with another market for their feed wheat, barley, and as well as the straw left over from combining. Did this government follow the lead of states with vibrant producer-owned ethanol industries like Minnesota? No. It decided they would get themselves involved by building what turned out to be an imaginary ethanol plant.

Mr. Speaker, in Minnesota over 8,000 producers are owners of the state's ethanol industry. This has given them greater control over marketing of their grain and has added to their income, whereas the NDP [New Democratic Party] sought only to add to their income. Unfortunately for Saskatchewan producers, it takes disasters of epic proportions to draw any reaction at all out of this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Dewdney.

Oil Drilling Activity in Saskatchewan

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, well, well, more good news for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Not too long ago the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy stood in this Assembly and made a somewhat puzzling statement along the lines of there being little or no activity going on in the oil patch in her part of the province, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, there's not only lots of activity going on in that part of the province, but it's going on all over the province, and for quite some time, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at the total number of wells being drilled this year as compared to last, Mr. Speaker, we see the number is up considerably — 423 wells last year, 607 wells this year. When we look at the total number of drilling licences issued this year as compared to last, we see that number is substantially up, Mr. Speaker — 507 last year, 797 this year, Mr. Speaker. And when we look at the total number of active rigs in the province, Mr. Speaker, we see the number is once again substantially up — 35 this year compared to 23 last year.

So, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is there's lots of activity going on in Saskatchewan. And I would like to thank the men and women of Saskatchewan's oil and gas sector for their ongoing contributions to building our economy and making our province even a better place to live. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melfort.

Award of Excellence to Melfort Tiger Lily School Board

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to

recognize from my constituency members of the Melfort Tiger Lily School Board. At the 90th annual Saskatchewan School Boards Association convention, they were awarded the Premier's Board of Education Award of Excellence. Of the eight applicants for this prestigious award, Melfort Tiger Lily was selected for its newly innovative program bridging the generations which brings together seniors and youth within the community to learn, teach, and build respectful relationships.

Congratulations to board Chair Lorie Annand, who proudly accepted the award on behalf of Melfort Tiger Lily, and to trustees Betty Armstrong, Ivan Beuker, Lori Fettes, Ken Olson, Eric Ponath, Marg Sullivan, and Dennis Wiebe. These individuals have worked tirelessly to improve the learning opportunities of the children within their division.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Assembly, I wish to recognize the achievements of the Melfort Tiger Lily Board of Education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Meadow Lake.

Provincial Heritage Site Designated

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Count Berthold John Von Imhoff was a European-trained painter of religious art and frescoes. He moved to Saskatchewan in the early part of the last century and set up a studio just outside of the town of St. Walburg. By the time of his death in 1939, Count Von Imhoff had not only completed the interior decor of over 100 churches in North America — of all denominations, I should say — but had also become a significant and extraordinary figure in Saskatchewan's cultural heritage. And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it's entirely fitting that as part of the celebration of Saskatchewan's centennial was the designation of the Imhoff studio and the farm site as a provincial heritage site.

[13:45]

I had the pleasure of attending the designation ceremony and presenting the commemoration plaque to his grandson and wife, Bert and Phyllis Imhoff. Mr. Speaker, the Imhoffs, the St. Walburg Allied Arts Council, and Imhoff Heritage Society have been instrumental in preserving, promoting, and restoring the studio and farm site.

Protecting Saskatchewan heritage is important work, Mr. Speaker, and I ask all members to join me in recognizing Phyl and Bert Imhoff, the St. Walburg Allied Arts Council, and the Imhoff Heritage Society for ensuring the preservation and presentation of this world-class heritage site. And I encourage each of you in this Assembly to visit this impressive display of art. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Agriculture Debate

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It may have taken a couple of tries but yesterday the opposition finally was able to convince the government to take part in an emergency debate on the crisis facing our producers. And I'd like to congratulate the members on this side of the House for speaking for those people we represent — in particular the member for Melville-Saltcoats for his moving words on the difficult time our farm families face this winter.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not the only person who feels this way. Yesterday on the drive home many people would have listened to the commentary of David Kirton on CJME/CKOM. Mr. Kirton played some of the comments made by my colleague and called them some very good statements within that speech about what farmers are facing, how it can affect all of Saskatchewan.

He then played some of the Deputy Premier's contributions to this important debate — a debate dealing with the struggles facing our farm families and communities. And what were the Deputy Premier's contributions? He rambled on about hair transplants, facial hair, and who knows what else. I'm sure the people listening to that afternoon drive are wondering what the Deputy Premier was talking about and how his comments are going to help many farm families who will struggle to heat their homes and feed their families this winter.

David Kirton really summed up the government's performance by saying, somehow somebody is going to have to explain to me how that has something to do with agriculture. An emergency debate important to a huge part of our province degenerates into name-calling. Some shame should be felt there. Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier should be ashamed of himself for not talking about the important issues of the debate but lowering himself to curbside politics.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Funding for Stem Cell Transplant Program

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the stem cell transplant program at Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital is at risk of closure. The program has been operating for the last eight years and provides treatment for people with advanced blood cancers. The treatment provides the transplant of stem cells from either patients or live donors.

Earlier this year the program lost one of its three specialists. As well the program does not meet Health Canada's accreditation standards set out to take place in 2006. Patients are worried another specialist is considering leaving. If he leaves, the final one will probably not be long after, and there ends the program.

The stem cell transplant centre is in dire need of funding to become accredited and to retain and recruit specialists. Mr. Speaker, is this minister prepared today to give the program the

proper funding to become accredited?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the stem cell program is operated by the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and it's located at the Saskatoon clinic. And each year over the last number of years we've been increasing the funding for that program. When it started in 2001-02 the funding was \$985,000. Our budget this year is 3.9 million. Over the last while we've had a comprehensive external review of the program in collaboration with the cancer agency, the Saskatoon Health Region, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region.

This is a very specialized area. It takes some very highly trained people to do this work. The review of the service then needs people from across the country to help in that review. The review is expected to be completed in March 2006.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this program does need review; it needs action. It needs action from this government to properly fund it because time is of the essence. Accreditation standards come into effect in 2006, and without meeting those accreditation standards we're going to lose more specialists.

The first specialist left because she was burnt out, because of lack of funding for the program. These doctors are highly specialized and without proper funding will not be able to practice to their full scope. The treatment they provide to these patients is not optional. This programs needs to meet accreditation by 2006. Without accreditation there'll be no doctors. And with no doctors there'll be no stem cell transplants in the province of Saskatchewan. That's shameful.

Again, will the minister commit to properly funding this program, so it maintains its accreditation and attracts and recruits doctors to this province?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in August, just a few months ago, Health Canada came and conducted a review of the Saskatchewan program and said that it is substantially in compliance with the directives. There were a couple of issues around how the donor assessment questionnaires were being worked on, and these problems have now been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the review that we're doing is exactly the kind of thing that allows us to fund this particular program. It's our goal to provide these services for people here in Saskatchewan as is evidenced by our continued increase in the amount of funding for this program over the last number of years. Mr. Speaker, you need to do that in a way where you make sure that what we're doing meets with the standards of the whole country. Health Canada has done its review. We're working towards making sure the accreditation is in place next year as planned.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to differ with the minister. If this program does not get accreditation, it's not because donor forms aren't filled out properly. There are much bigger concerns by Health Canada on the facility that these stem cell transplants are taking place. That is a much bigger issue than what you're trying to make light of. What that minister is . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Member may carry on.

Mr. McMorris: — . . . that that member is trying to make light of. Dr. Michael Voralia says that there are about 48 transplants per year. And that is not nearly the demand that there is in the province. About 15 to 20 people each year are sent out of this province to the United States. The cost per transplant in the United States is about \$300,000 in American funds. When you translate that over the patients that leave this province every year, this provincial government is spending about \$7 million for treatment outside of our province.

Mr. Speaker, wouldn't the minister agree that that \$7 million would be far better spent inside the province dealing with our people within the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the member I don't think understands how the national review of a program takes place. You get the experts from across the country to get involved with that. And we're doing that because we want to make sure that this program is a quality program that serves the people of Saskatchewan. And it is specifically because we would rather have that money spent in this province than sending people to other places.

The other thing is that, as these techniques become more able to be provided in more places across North America, we think that we can do that here. And that's what we have been doing.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the appropriate accreditation bodies to make sure this works. Dr. Voralia is the director of the program there. He works with the national agencies that are doing some of the accreditation. We're looking to deal with those goals. We know that the Saskatoon Health Region has some specific things that they have been working on. All of these things are part of our plan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the minister may say that I don't know all the issues around accreditation, and I'll say he may be right. But there are four people in the gallery today that do. And they know this program is in jeopardy. And they're here today to tell you that if it's not . . .

The Speaker: — I just wanted to remind the member one more time about directing his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. McMorris: — They are here to tell the minister that the program is in jeopardy. If it doesn't meet accreditation, there is absolutely no way it will retain the specialists that we have.

But I have a quote, and I think it's very fitting. And the quote goes like this:

... I just think it's a sad day in Saskatchewan, it's a sad day for a Saskatchewan family when a loved one must flee this province to find the care [he or] she needs. It's a sad day, Mr. Speaker.

Who said that? It was the Premier of this province.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand today and for once back up the words that Premier had no problem talking about when he was in opposition? Will he stand today and back up those very words? Fund the program, because without proper funding there will be no accreditation and there will be no stem cell transplants done in this province. Will he commit to doing that today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite that the funding for this program has increased fourfold over the last four years. We're continuing to work on that. We're going to make sure that we meet the various standards. And we're going ahead in an appropriate way to make sure we do that.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health for the people of Saskatchewan, if there are procedures that we don't have the technical expertise to do in Saskatchewan, we'll make sure people get to those places to get that work. It's not possible with a million people to do all of the procedures that are available. But we will do the ones that we are capable of doing. Mr. Speaker, I think this is an area where we can provide good care for our people. And we're going to do that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Tax Relief

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today the Finance minister has released his fiscal update. He and his government are swimming in cash, nearly \$850 million in extra revenues. That's even more than we estimated, Mr. Speaker, although we were pretty close.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Finance minister here who says an election is never a good time to talk about tax increases. Today he essentially admitted to reporters that you don't talk about tax cuts until prior to an election.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what he told reporters this morning when asked about the timing of tax cuts? He said, we're not in election mode. This Finance minister would rather hoard money in a phony-baloney election slush fund instead of giving people the tax cuts they deserve — the very tax cuts that Premier promised long ago. Mr. Speaker, why is this government putting NDP politics ahead of managing the Saskatchewan economy and helping Saskatchewan families today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the attempt of the member to interpret for the people of Saskatchewan my remarks this morning. But I encourage them to listen to my remarks as opposed to his interpretations.

I was intrigued, Mr. Speaker, that the very first question that we received in question period today came from the member of Indian Head-Milestone dealing with the question of proper funding, which the Minister of Health dealt with.

This raises the question, Mr. Speaker, if we are, as the Saskatchewan Party is advocating ... take money from this improvement in our mid-year financial situation for tax cuts. And they have numerous tax cuts that they would propose. What is it that they would not proceed with that we are funding from the mid-year report? Would it be the northern roads? No I think they've argued for that. Would it be top-up for the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program? No I think they've argued for that. Would it be the Health Sciences complex in Saskatoon? No I think they've made argument for that.

This is about choices, Mr. Speaker ...

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Finance Minister, with all due respect it's about the economy.

The Speaker: — Once again, I'd ask the member to direct all of his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Last year when the NDP government was pleading poverty, the Premier broke his election promise and raised the PST [provincial sales tax] by 1 per cent. Now they have nearly \$1 billion in extra revenue and still no tax break. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the Premier still has no long-term plan for property tax cuts. This Finance minister talks about volatility in resource revenues. He has lame excuses about why it wouldn't be prudent to cut taxes now. He's waiting for an election, Mr. Speaker. He cares more about politics than about building the Saskatchewan economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if it will take an election to get some meaningful tax cuts in this province, then I encourage that Finance minister to talk to that Premier and convince him to call an election sooner rather than later. Why are we not seeing any tax relief to help grow the Saskatchewan economy now?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — The member talks about the economy. I just want to remind the member that a couple of weeks ago we received the Speech from the Throne, less than two weeks ago, and we clearly indicated that, quote, from the Speech from the Throne:

In this session, recommendations from the Business Tax Review Committee will be acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, this is on top of actions we have taken over the years to improve economic activity in Saskatchewan, including changes in taxes for the manufacturing and processing sector, including changes for the mining sector, including changes for the oil sector to stimulate activity. This is demonstrable action, Mr. Speaker. What is it that the member doesn't understand about our resolve in these matters? Don't misunderstand our resolve in these matters, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk to the Finance minister about the Vicq commission, the last one, that's not fully implemented. What about the Boughen Commission? What did he do with that commission, Mr. Speaker? It's sitting on a shelf right now, half implemented. The tax increase is there but not the tax decrease.

Mr. Speaker, here is what the Premier had to say on May 31, 1991:

... is there any wonder that a tax revolt is brewing in this province? People are being taxed to death, and they're saying, we can't take any more.

Mr. Speaker, that's what Saskatchewan people are saying today. We can't take it any more, enough of this NDP government.

This government is sitting on a mountain of cash — \$850 million in extra revenue this year — but not one dime, not one penny for lower taxes. Mr. Speaker, how much longer will Saskatchewan residents have to wait? If this Finance minister can't see fit to lower taxes now, will he ever see fit to lower taxes? When will he stop playing NDP political games and get on with the business of helping Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to go back to the 1980s and the choices that those members made when they spent this province into a big hole in the ground.

Mr. Speaker, let me just quote from the Speech from the

Throne, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, from page 11:

Efforts will be maintained with school divisions, municipalities and other stakeholders, to develop a long-term solution to education property tax relief that is in the best interests of students and taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, this is on top of property tax credits we are currently providing to the people of Saskatchewan — demonstrable action, Mr. Speaker. Don't underestimate our resolve in these matters.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Medical Diagnostic Services

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my father today is in Calgary getting an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging]. His doctor in Saskatchewan told him he would have to wait at least two years to have his MRI in Saskatchewan.

This weekend the NDP will be debating a resolution from the riding represented by the Minister of Health. This resolution calls for a ban on the importing of test results from private diagnostic clinics. Mr. Speaker, if this resolution passes, my father will not be able to use his MRI results for treatment in Saskatchewan. This is unbelievable and outrageous, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: can he assure us now that this ill-considered resolution will never become the policy of this government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that what we need to do here is recognize that people within our party have different viewpoints on how things work, and they like to encourage discussion.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the initial convention that the members opposite had when their party was formed had a fair bit of discussion, but since then they haven't wanted anybody to know how they think through what they do.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to MRIs and the availability here in the province, our goal is to make sure we have sufficient capacity to provide needed MRIs for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — People like my father make the decision to look after their own health when they choose to

spend their own money rather than wait for months or years for an MRI in their own province because their government has failed them. This minister then thinks it's okay to deny them the right to use these results in Saskatchewan. This is unbelievable. Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand in his place today and say whether he will or will not support this resolution?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Our goal in our health system here is to provide the diagnostic services that are required. As I announced in January we have a committee that's being headed by Dr. Peter Glynn that's reviewing all of the diagnostic procedures in this province that are being dealt with — whether it's MRIs, CTs [computerized tomography], ultrasound, X-ray, all of those things — to make sure that we have a system that provides the best services in the most appropriate times for our Saskatchewan citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we will continue to be developing and building and working to make sure we have the best technology possible for our citizens. And, Mr. Speaker, there are some situations where members will go other places and get those kinds of results. That information will be used by their doctors and doctors here to make sure people get appropriate treatment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — This resolution came from the Minister of Health's riding. We are asking the minister today, does he or does he not support this resolution?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, when I meet with my constituency group, usually about once a month, I always tell them that the types of questions and the types of issues that they raise are much harder to deal with than the questions I get from the opposition.

And what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have had a very healthy debate within the group of people that work with me in the Regina Lakeview constituency. I think, Mr. Speaker, there will be broad discussion at the convention and, Mr. Speaker, it relates to the overall question of how we provide diagnostic services across this province. We're going to continue to work on that to make sure we have the best system possible.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also at the NDP weekend convention is a policy resolution that would kill the uranium industry in the province of Saskatchewan which does beg an important question today, Mr. Speaker. Frankly, the

NDP, the cabinet, the Premier, various ministers are all over the map when it comes to uranium and adding value to uranium.

The question to the Premier today is direct and straightforward: what is the government's position with respect to nuclear energy and the potential to generate nuclear energy in the province of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I want to say to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker — who like to pretend that somehow they are the friends of the uranium industry and somehow others are not — that this industry of which we are very proud because it's a world-class industry in this province, Mr. Speaker, was invited into this province by the government of T.C. Douglas, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And this industry of which we are proud, Mr. Speaker, had its greatest expansion under the leadership of the government of Allan Blakeney, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And those members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have had very little, if anything, to do with the development of that industry.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have made decisions as government present and past in Saskatchewan to build this industry which are in accordance with the environment and which are in accordance with the economy and what makes sense for Saskatchewan people. And we will continue to build this industry in a sustainable, sensible way, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well with respect to the specific question, you know, that answer and a loonie will get you a hot, steaming cup of jack squat, Mr. Speaker. He didn't answer the question. The question is straightforward. What is this government's position with respect to developing the potential of generating nuclear energy in the province of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has said, as I have said, and for that matter as Mr. Jerry Grandey, the president of Cameco has said, a proposal to build a large nuclear reactor in Saskatchewan that would produce over 1,000 megawatts of power is not economically practical for this province of Saskatchewan. There may come a time, Mr. Speaker, where smaller reactors are developed which may be practical and which could be considered for Saskatchewan.

But what I would say to the members opposite is this. Have

they heard a proposal from anyone in the private sector to come up with the money to build a nuclear reactor in Saskatchewan? Is there such a proposal? And, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite has such a proposal, I invite him to bring it forward. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think he does, and I think this government in saying that a project has to make economic sense is in good company with members of the uranium industry, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, here are the varying positions of this government on the issue. That minister says one thing. The member for Greystone says something quite different. In 1990 he said, quote, "As long as I'm in this legislature, I'll continue to oppose uranium mining."

Not long ago the member for Greystone, a minister of the cabinet said, adding . . . refining uranium might be okay, but he will walk out of the cabinet if they even think about generating nuclear energy in the province of Saskatchewan. That's what he said.

Then the Premier weighed in on November 2. He said no; he supported at least looking at the option of nuclear energy generation in Saskatchewan but not storage. That minister has been on and off of generation, Mr. Speaker.

And we know. We got a presentation from SaskPower that they've actually looked at the option, that there is significant work being done at the Crown corporation.

What is the position of this government? And will the Premier commit to table all the work that's been done by SaskPower and other departments of government so this province can have a long needed discussion about the potential of this industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as usual the Leader of the Opposition wants to portray he and his colleagues as the friends of development and others as not being in favour of development.

But I want to say to the House, Mr. Speaker, that according to Greg Stringham of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, he says insofar as the proposal for a nuclear reactor goes, the concept poses real technological challenges, and we're a decade away from it. Now I want to ask the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker: is the Association of Petroleum Producers anti-development? I don't think so.

Then we have Alberta Premier Ralph Klein saying, "Before a nuclear power plant is considered I would like to see all other options considered." Is Ralph Klein anti-development, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. And finally, Mr. Speaker, we have EnCana saying, "We monitor what the nuclear potential could

be but it's not something we're actively pursuing." Is EnCana anti-development? I don't think so.

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, under that minister's watch and that Premier's watch, this province has shed 6,200 jobs in the midst of what the Premier calls a boom and we've lost population. I would say that the people of the province, that those who create jobs in the province do believe that that government is anti-development based on their record, Mr. Speaker.

Here is the straightforward question. SaskPower has done some work around this issue. We know that. They have made a presentation to our caucus. Will the Premier simply table the work that they have done so we as a province can have a long-needed discussion about the potential of this industry? Will the Premier commit today to table the work that's been done by his government on this issue so we can have that meaningful discussion?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, since we don't have any proposal from the private sector to build a nuclear reactor and the Leader of the Opposition hasn't produced one, my question to the Leader of the Opposition is this. Since we're all putting our cards on the table and saying what our policies are, and our policy is clear, Mr. Speaker, I say this to the Leader of the Opposition and his party, Mr. Speaker. Is he proposing, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. The Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The policy of this government was clearly stated many times by the Premier, including the other day in a speech to the Regina business community, Mr. Speaker. But I say to the Leader of the Opposition through you, Mr. Speaker, let him stand up and clearly say, is he advocating that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, that the public invest money to build a nuclear reactor in Saskatchewan? Yes or no, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Mid-Year Financial Report

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased for the second consecutive year running to repeat some very good news for all Saskatchewan residents, and that is once again, halfway through the fiscal year, we are showing a significant

improvement in our fiscal situation.

Today's mid-year report reveals a more than \$800 million improvement over budget. About three-quarters of the overall improvement is due to stronger oil and gas revenues. Mr. Speaker, we have a very good plan to invest these welcome new revenues to benefit Saskatchewan people including addressing immediate needs, acting on commitments, and advancing strategic plans, continuing on a path of sound financial management.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to first explain what is included in addressing our immediate needs. First, there is the Energy Share plan. The rate cap and conservation efforts were announced over the last two weeks. This is a \$167 million program to help make Saskatchewan an affordable place to live.

Second, we're providing money for disaster assistance for those individuals suffering uninsurable losses due to flooding, windstorms, and the like.

And third, we're topping up CAIS for the 2005 crop year. At first quarter we topped up for the 2004 crop year. This brings total additional CAIS funding in this year to \$159.2 million.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, our additional revenues are also helping us to advance our strategic plans for the future, including carrying through on our Action Plan for the Economy with funding for northern transportation corridors by committing almost \$60 million towards improving transportation and economic opportunities for residents of the North.

There is also \$1 million targeted for First Nations and Métis economic development grants, and an Aboriginal employment development program to help spur the economy and jobs for First Nations people. And we're injecting \$700,000 this year into enhanced immigration efforts.

Mr. Speaker, we're providing support for our Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care with \$100 million for the academic health sciences centre at the University of Saskatchewan, and additional funds for regional health authorities.

And, Mr. Speaker, Justice will receive close to \$1 million for fulfilling the police commitment of adding 200 new police officers, and for crime strategies aimed at missing persons and gang suppression.

We're providing an additional \$2.9 million for the provincial alcohol and drug strategy also called for, as called for in the Premier's Project Hope action plan for substance abuse. And we're acting on the 2001 policy framework for allocating additional compensation resources for existing staff at community-based organizations and the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing on a path of sound financial management. Government debt is being permanently reduced by \$76.1

million. This is on top of \$179.3 million permanent debt reduction that was announced last year on this same day. That's a paydown of \$255.4 million.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that debt is falling. The budget forecast government debt at March 31, 2006 to be \$7.6 billion, while the mid-year projection is \$7.4 billion, a drop of \$244.3 million. We're showing an \$11 billion total provincial debt projection at mid-year, the lowest levels since 1988-89.

We're also reporting a total provincial debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio of 25.4 per cent, the lowest level since 1982-83.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the business tax review committee has announced it will hand off its report to the government on November 24. I look forward to that date, to read the report and see where our government can make even further improvements to create investment and job growth for Saskatchewan people.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat that we are acting on our plans; we have fulfilled promises and commitments; and I am optimistic about the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the opposition critic I would just take a moment to make an introduction. Seated on the floor of the Assembly at this time are two guests. From the Children's Advocate office is the deputy children's advocate, Glenda Cooney, and Glenda was presented with a Saskatchewan Centennial Medal today. And she is accompanied today by her mother, Mrs. Freda Cooney. And I would ask all members to welcome them to this legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mid-Year Financial Report (continued)

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well we've learned two things today. This government is swimming in cash — \$850 million in extra revenues. And the second thing we learned that this government is more concerned about politics than good public policy in Saskatchewan.

An unbelievable fact, Mr. Speaker — not one dime in tax decreases for Saskatchewan residents, not one penny in tax decreases for Saskatchewan businesses, no plan to improve the economy for the long term. Five hundred million dollars in extra oil revenue, record gas revenues, record potash revenues, and nothing for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker. Nothing to grow the economy for the long term. No long-term plan

whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there were a few ideas in here. There were a few. I noticed on one page of the budget document seven ideas that came from this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And we congratulate the government for moving ahead on things like the academic health sciences centre that my colleague, the member from Melfort, has been talking about for years, Mr. Speaker. Their dithering on this, their putting it into future budgets, has doubled the cost of it but at least they're acting on it now.

And, Mr. Speaker, finally, finally the promise of 200 extra police officers, that seven-year-old promise, they say they're going to fulfill it. Not this year, however, Mr. Speaker, not this year. That'll happen next year. They're putting a little bit of money towards it but it'll take another year. The seven-year promise. What an embarrassment, Mr. Speaker. What an embarrassment.

The Finance minister talked about volatility in the markets, his concern about the volatile nature of the Saskatchewan economy. Well I have a suggestion for him. If he's worried about volatility, grow the economy, diversify it, and our revenues will follow suit.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister asked me in question period what I would cut to implement our ideas. Mr. Speaker, there is \$185 million going into the phony-baloney Fiscal Stabilization Fund. That fund will be at \$750 million, and I think that's fair to say it's an NDP pre-election fund, Mr. Speaker.

The idea of lower taxes for low- and medium-income people — bad idea from that side; bad idea because the idea came from this side. It's not a priority. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is a priority but not lowering taxes for low- and medium-income people.

Mr. Speaker, how about keeping the promises of the last election? Is that a priority for this government? Not at all. Not at all, Mr. Speaker. What did we hear in October and November '03? We will not raise taxes. This Premier, this Finance minister — each one of those members, Mr. Speaker — that's what they said. We will not raise taxes. What happened a few short months later? Broken promise. Too bad. Vote NDP and that's what you get, Mr. Speaker. That's what they feel about keeping their promises.

What do they feel about commissions? What do they feel about the first Vicq commission? Dr. Vicq did a tremendous job with the first commission on lowering taxes for individuals in this province. He came up with a solid report. What did they do, Mr. Speaker? They chose to ignore parts of it. Indexing income tax brackets. What did they do? They ignored it. They left it on the shelf.

Mr. Speaker, it's very well known about the Boughen Commission that the NDP were listening with one ear and they had the hand over the other ear. Raise taxes on one side but no long-term decrease in property taxes, Mr. Speaker. That's a shame. That's a shame that we're still waiting for this one, and we encourage them to act on that sooner rather than later.

Mr. Speaker, what I think most concerned me about today's events were the comments by the Finance minister about an election not being a good time to talk about tax increases and then responding to the media and saying, we are not in election mode. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we may be two years away from election. I hope that's not the case.

And as I said in question period today, Mr. Speaker, I encourage that Finance minister to talk to that Premier and convince him to call an election sooner rather than later because Saskatchewan families can't wait. Saskatchewan businesses can't wait. We're tired of the lost opportunity that's happening with this government in place.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Finance minister and all members opposite that they preside over a government that has the highest corporate capital taxes in Canada, the highest corporate income taxes in Canada, the highest small-business taxes in Canada, the highest tax rates for low- and medium-income people, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is not a record to be proud of. That's a record that needs to be addressed and changes have to be made.

And it was again a lost opportunity today. Mr. Speaker, I encourage the government to come up with a growth plan, to come up with an action plan to tell Saskatchewan people what they're going to do to turn this economy around.

If they're incapable, Mr. Speaker, or unwilling, get out of the way because there are members on this side of the House that would gladly put that in action tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 12 — The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 12, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 12, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, after a succinct explanation of the motion I will move that Bill No. 12 be moved to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the motion to refer Bill No. 12 to

the committee before second reading is to allow members of the Legislative Assembly to discuss the important proposals in this Bill and to give the public an opportunity to directly participate in the legislative process. This process will provide interested parties an opportunity to make submissions and to provide advice on the issues raised by the Bill. It will also allow the committee to conduct hearings on the subject matter of the Bill and to report its observations, opinions, and recommendations with respect to the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's marketplace has changed dramatically over the past number of years. The purchase of services makes up more than half of day-to-day transactions. Consumers are buying goods and services in forms and ways not contemplated a decade ago and consumers are increasingly paying upfront for products and services.

The Bill provides for comprehensive changes to Saskatchewan's consumer protection legislation. It's aimed at substantially improving protections available to consumers and strengthening confidence in the marketplace. It covers a broad range of goods and services and sets out new rules regarding agreements that are entered into over the phone or by mail, as well as agreements that involve future performance, delivery, or payment. It also includes new requirements for agreements regarding specific goods and services such as travel clubs and personal development services, for example health clubs, talent and modelling agencies, sports and dance studios.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments included in this Bill are intended to provide Saskatchewan consumers with a level of protection that is consistent to the level of protection that is provided to consumers in other provinces. We look forward to receiving advice from business and consumer groups respecting the proposals outlined in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 12, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2005 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 12, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2005, be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 15 — The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Transportation that Bill No. 15, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2005 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? The Chair recognizes the minister.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 16 — The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 16, The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read 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 will the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 17 — The Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, The Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 17, The Real Estate Amendment Act, 2005 (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 considered a second time?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 18 — The Securities Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, The Securities Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 18, The Securities Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

[14:30]

Bill No. 19 — The Trustee Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 19, The Trustee Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 19, The Trustee Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and order questions 1 through 169 inclusive, please.

The Speaker: — Questions 1 to 169 have been ordered.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Junor, seconded by Mr. Harper, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wall.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to enter into the Throne Speech debate on behalf of the people of Thunder Creek. The people of Thunder Creek are the salt of the earth, Mr. Speaker. They work hard every day. Many of them work in agriculture and are suffering terribly. Many of them work in businesses that serve agriculture and they suffer in parallel with our producers.

The people of Thunder Creek don't complain much, Mr. Speaker. When they see the government of the day frittering away golden opportunities to build the economy of this province and make their lives better, they just shrug their shoulders, hunker down, and work even harder to feed their families, keep their communities viable, and keep their farms and ranches and businesses and jobs and their way of life going in spite of this government that just doesn't care any more. This tired, arrogant, old government that is more interested in government revenue than in building a strong economy that will benefit the people of the province.

While they don't complain much, Mr. Speaker, the people of Thunder Creek, my people, have long memories. They wait somewhat impatiently for the next election, the next opportunity to vote out this self-centred, corrupt, dishonest, uncaring government . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Order. Order please. The member has used language which imputes bad motives on a very specific group. I would ask the member to withdraw that statement. Member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Well that's fine, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw. I'm happy anyway with self-centred, corrupt, and uncaring. The question . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. I would ask the member to make the withdrawal, but make the withdrawal without equivocating.

Mr. Stewart: — Sure. Yes, I make that withdrawal without equivocation, Mr. Speaker.

The question most asked of me by the people of Thunder Creek

is how soon can we get an election. Because, Mr. Speaker, they believe in the democratic process and they fully intend to use it to get rid of this NDP government that only cares about clinging to power and building bigger government for them, the people of Thunder Creek and the people from other places in this province, to pay for.

Mr. Speaker, Throne Speeches are generally a little on the vague side but at least they are supposed to set the direction that a government intends to take. There is no indication in this Speech from the Throne that this government has any direction whatsoever in mind. In fact there is nothing new in the speech of any consequence whatsoever. It is nothing more than a rehash of old promises, promises that this NDP government hasn't kept in the past and in most cases, Mr. Speaker, never will.

Let me underscore, Mr. Speaker, that this Speech from the Throne comes at a time when the provincial coffers are awash in oil and gas revenue. And the people of the province are looking for some indication as to what direction this floundering bunch of dinosaurs across the floor intends to take in dealing with that revenue. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the member to come to order and to refrain from name-calling that really is not a tradition of the House. And just ask the member to measure his remarks carefully. Member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, people are concerned because in this so-called economic boom that the NDP keeps talking about, people continue to leave the province like never before. Saskatchewan has lost 6,200 jobs in the last year when every other province has increased jobs. And we still have the longest health care waiting lists in Canada. History repeats itself, Mr. Speaker. And whenever the next election is held, perhaps we will see what really happened to the dinosaurs. Maybe they just got voted off the island.

The MO [modus operandi] if you like, Mr. Speaker, of this government is and has always been to lower people's expectations, to convince them that we don't have much here in this wee province, as the Premier likes to call it. They obviously do that so people won't expect the province to live up to its huge economic potential, a potential that is far greater than that of Canada's richest province, Alberta.

The NDP know that they can't make the economy perform and still remain true to the spirit of Tommy Douglas and their *Regina Manifesto*. Mr. Speaker, I believe that some of them over there, some of them over there in the NDP ranks do have at least some vague idea as to how to make an economy grow and a province prosper. But they are more committed to the socialist doctrines of Tommy Douglas and the *Regina Manifesto* than they are to the success of this province, this province that most of my children have already left, and this province that I love.

Not just me, Mr. Speaker. My daughters that have left for better opportunities elsewhere love it here too. They still plan their whole year around when they can be home in Saskatchewan. And they would like nothing better than to live here and work here, have their families here . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order for a minute. I would ask members if they have comments to make that they should do them privately and so that they do not interfere with the progress of the debates in the House here.

I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My daughters that have left for better opportunities elsewhere love it here too. They still plan their whole year around when they can be home in Saskatchewan. And they'd love nothing better than to live here and work here and have their families here and raise them in the fresh, clean air and bright sunshine of this place they love. But they are well-educated and bright and they know that few opportunities exist for them here in this province under this NDP government that cares more for NDP history and the socialist dogma of a long-dead leader than they care about building a world-class economy for the benefit of this province that my family loves.

Apart from a few vague references to what they call a green and prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker, the only other reference to the economy is a rehash of their previously announced Action Plan for the Economy, a plan that is no plan at all, Mr. Speaker; a plan that is just talk and a plan that sets no targets, no targets for economic growth, job creation, or the repopulation of Saskatchewan.

When this so-called action plan was announced, it was so transparently devoid of any real plan at all that the media called it disappointing and a political cop-out for its very failure to provide any kind of a real plan or vision or to even set a clear economic direction for the province.

Mr. Speaker, I would find it strange if even the NDP backbenchers — or should I say backbencher — didn't question what this government plans to do for the oil and gas sector to attract more investment to the province in that field. Although the NDP are sitting on a windfall of \$850 million from oil and gas revenue and considering that actual drilling starts were down in the province over the last two years — a time of escalating oil and gas prices — I would expect that the NDP backbench to ask their masters in cabinet about that.

The plain truth is that there is absolutely nothing in this Speech from the Throne that would encourage oil and gas companies to ramp up drilling activity in the province. The speech . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . the minister of Economic Development says it's up; the Minister of Finance's numbers say it's down. Which is it? The Minister of Finance's numbers might be more current since they came out today. The truth is there's absolutely nothing in this Speech from the Throne that would encourage oil and gas companies to ramp up drilling activity in the province.

The speech talks about energy and ethanol, hydroelectric power, biomass, biodiesel, hydrogen, solar power, but no direction is set for the oil and gas industry, the industry that more and more pays the bills around here.

An Hon. Member: — The numbers are there if you want to read them.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you. I've been provided with the numbers. Oil wells drilled, oil production down point eight per cent; natural gas wells drilled down 27.9 per cent. There it is. This from the Hon. Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Finance, according to that on the bottom of the page.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that we are not in an oil and gas boom in this province. We are not seeing more development of the industry or our vast resources. What we are seeing is greater government revenues from existing wells. And for this NDP government to honestly think of that as an oil and gas boom is really very telling in terms of their attitude and state of mind regarding the oil and gas industry — this goose that laid the golden egg in terms of government revenue.

They want the revenue, Mr. Speaker, but they are dead set against making the province a more attractive place for this industry or any other industry to prosper, expand, and create jobs. Any curious mind would ask why they are like that. And the answer is simple, Mr. Speaker. It's philosophical. The bottom line in their *Regina Manifesto* goes something like this: no CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] — now NDP — government will rest until capitalism is eradicated.

That's the same capitalism, Mr. Speaker, that creates wealth and jobs and opportunities in economies, the same capitalism that pays for houses and cars and clothes and hospitals and schools for people. Governments do not do these things, Mr. Speaker. Only the wealth created from capitalism can do these things in any substantial way at all.

It's no coincidence, Mr. Speaker. The jurisdictions that embrace capitalism are the best-off jurisdictions in the world in terms of the standard of living of their people, and those jurisdictions that do not are the poorest on earth.

This Throne Speech contains nothing to suggest that this government plans to follow the successful model and reinforces suspicions in the investment and business community that they are willing to continue down the wrong road — the road to economic oblivion and misery.

The uranium industry is mentioned only in passing in this Speech from the Throne. Saskatchewan is already the world's largest producer of uranium at about one-third of the world's annual production. We had the largest known deposits of uranium in the world, and we have by far the richest uranium ore in the world. But this NDP government is torn over the issue of uranium. Meanwhile our industry stands in a state of suspended animation while the NDP try to get it sorted out.

Recently the Premier talked about processing and power generation, if not waste disposal, in glowing terms. But then I understand he changed his mind and backed completely away from any further involvement in the nuclear cycle.

[14:45]

An Hon. Member: — . . . the dirtiest fuel.

Mr. Stewart: — Yes that's right. He called it . . . he said what comes out of the tailpipe makes it the dirtiest form of energy.

The Minister of Economic Development has done the same thing on more than one occasion. Meanwhile the industry, this great industry-in-waiting, is barely acknowledged in the Speech from the Throne. Whether this government is going to allow this industry to develop in the province or not, they ought to say and soon. The world won't wait much longer for them, Mr. Speaker.

Nuclear power is seen around the world as an environmentally responsible option to power economies and the dollars that are waiting to be invested in the industry will soon be invested somewhere.

Mr. Speaker, we have 47 per cent of the arable farm land in the country within our provincial borders, and our industry has such huge potential as to be unimaginable. However the industry and particularly the grain sector has fallen into a very sad state indeed. Costs in the industry have always increased faster than the rate of inflation. But lately with high fuel, fertilizer and other related costs, this inflation has increased even more dramatically in the last couple of years. Coupled with that, Mr. Speaker, we see record low agricultural commodity prices in constant dollars.

Producers are losing money and eroding the equity in their farms and ranches more and more every year. They are losing hope, Mr. Speaker, and they have no idea what to do next except to just continue producing until their creditors take the ability to do so away.

CAIS is not working for most of our producers. It is complicated and a flawed program that the Government of Saskatchewan had no part in the formulation of. They were invited to work with the federal government to participate in the formulation of the CAIS program but didn't bother. This NDP government would rather lay in the weeds and take potshots at the federal government for the flawed program that they developed than to use their influence to see that the interests of Saskatchewan producers were protected in the CAIS program. However since this NDP government tore up signed GRIP contracts with farmers in 1992, CAIS is the only umbrella program that we have to deal with.

In this Speech from the Throne, the NDP boasts that they intend to announce full funding for the 2005 CAIS program, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's time that they made it clear that they are going to fully fund the 2006 program so the producers can take that information to their lenders this winter. As flawed as the program is, producers and other industry players need to know well in advance of seeding each year where the provincial government stands with respect to funding the program, their agreed to share of the program well in advance of the planting season.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government doesn't care about producers or rural Saskatchewan and they don't realize how badly the rest of the province needs a vibrant agricultural economy. It seems that the Premier once did have some strong opinions on agriculture, and let's examine some of the things he said and the things that he promised when he was in opposition. And I quote from the Premier on April 6, 1988, and he says:

Mr. Speaker, maybe these members opposite have forgotten, or perhaps they never knew, perhaps they never knew what it's like to farm with old machinery, and just to go from repair to repair to repair. Perhaps they've forgotten, perhaps they've never known what it's like to have to find work off farm, any kind of work, just to hold the farm together.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the Premier got his experience repairing old farm equipment. I daresay he imagined that part. And I don't know when he ever had to work off the farm to keep the farm going because, Mr. Speaker, it's my belief that the Premier never farmed. But in any event that day in 1988 he was quite the little expert on farming.

I go now, Mr. Speaker, to another quote from the Premier, on March 27, 1990, and he says, and on that day he says:

We to this day do not have a long-term income stability program for the family farms. I mean, it is a shame that here we are, again a month from seeding, and we're still in the process of negotiating some short-term ad hoc program.

As desperately as that is needed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as desperately as that program is needed in Saskatchewan today, what we need sincerely to address the problems are long-term, stable programs.

And I assume by that he included stable funding for long-term programs. In the same speech I presume, Mr. Speaker, at least on the same day, March 27, 1990, he goes on to say:

We're going to have . . . a group of men and women with the vision and the commitment to that vision that can provide a long-term mechanism for intergenerational transfer, and a long-term mechanism to provide income stability, and a long-term commitment to the health of this land for generations yet unborn. The word in Saskatchewan is that the emperor, the current emperor, has no clothes. He's exposed for the lack of long-term, significant agricultural policy. We've had too much of agricultural politics and too little of substantive agricultural policy. And, Mr. Speaker, this throne speech does nothing, in my view, to change that.

Well maybe his last line is something I can agree with. But two years later almost to the day when that Premier, when that Premier was in cabinet on your side of the House, on the NDP government side of the House, when he had some power in his hands, he was no longer in opposition. He was a cabinet minister. That's when they tore up the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] contracts.

You know, Mr. Speaker, around Thanksgiving I was over at the Hutterite colony, local Hutterite colony, The Belle Plaine Hutterite Brethren. Fine people, they are great neighbours. They're wonderful people. And Lydia from over at the colony phoned me and said, Lyle, would you like to buy some turkeys? We've got some real nice turkeys. I know it's Thanksgiving. And I said, sure I'll come over and take a couple of turkeys, Lydia. So I did. I went over and I got turkeys from Lydia. And Lydia's quite a salesperson because I also ended up with

saskatoons and potatoes and chickens. But I got those things all loaded in my pickup, Mr. Speaker.

And then I ran into Sam. Now Sam's the boss at the Belle Plaine colony. Sam's a very bright man and an excellent manager. And the Hutterites are not only good operators. They're good operators because they have some built-in efficiencies. They have a huge labour force. They're well-funded. They have expertise at every level. And Sam told me . . . he said, look over there. And I looked at a line of equipment lined up. This is before Thanksgiving. Harvest was just over in our area, and it was the time that, you know, producers clean up fall work and so on.

He said, look over there. What do you see? I said, I see your equipment. And he said, that's right. We've lined it up and parked it. With all the advantages we have on this place and all the diversity and all the expertise and all the help, we're not going to do a thing that isn't absolutely necessary. We can't afford to. And he said, I don't know how guys like you do it. He said we've turned the key on those machines, and we're not going to start them until we need to seed something because there is no money.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan property owners pay the highest property taxes in the country, and the majority of that goes to fund education. And we are the only jurisdiction in the country that funds education in this manner — at least to the extent that we do.

Farmers are even much harder hit by property taxes than are other classes of Saskatchewan property owners. And that's not to say that everyone isn't hurting from property taxes. And this government has promised time and time again to rectify the situation, but have broken every one of those promises. And I don't believe they have any intention of ever rectifying this injustice.

Here's a quote from the former premier of this province, Mr. Speaker, on the subject of property taxes.

An Hon. Member: — You never did finish that turkey story. Were they good turkeys?

Mr. Stewart: — Yes. The member from Indian Head-Milestone asked if the turkeys were good, and they were — at least the one that we baked so far.

Mr. Speaker, this former premier said:

We are pledged to do away with the education tax as soon as we get new resources of revenue to take the place of the revenue now realized from that tax. When we develop new sources of revenue sufficient to supplant the revenue now raised from the tax, we shall do away with the tax because we consider it regressive legislation.

Mr. Speaker, that was said by the premier then, Tommy Douglas, on August 31, 1944. You know, Mr. Speaker, this is inexcusable. They've been breaking that promise over on that side of the floor for 60 years now, and all we get are new promises.

Here's some quotes on the subject of property tax from our current Premier. And he says:

And I say, Mr. Speaker, is there any wonder that a tax revolt is brewing in this province? People are being taxed to death and they're saying, we can't take [it] any more.

Mr. Speaker, the situation has gotten much worse. That was September 22, 1987, when the Premier was in opposition. The situation with regard to property tax has worsened considerably since then, and still this Premier and this government make and break promises annually to deal once and for all with the situation, and they never do it. And I doubt they ever will.

Of course we're all familiar with the Premier's more recent quotes; one at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] I think about a year ago where he stated emphatically in front of I think 1,100 SARM delegates, that the status quo is not on in relation to property taxes.

That, Mr. Speaker, is just one of the more recent broken promises on this subject from the Leader of that NDP Party. And we remember of course the promise that that Premier and that NDP government made to deal with the issue if only the people of Saskatchewan would re-elect them. That was in the last election, Mr. Speaker, in 2003.

Here's a question. You know, Mr. Speaker, the RM [rural municipality] of Pense, my RM, the RM that I live in and the RM that I farm in and raise cattle in, commissioned an accountant recently — well it was actually about two years ago — to get the numbers together as to how much property tax that is devoted to education, that is collected for each student in the RM. And that's only property tax that goes to education, Mr. Speaker. That does not include other revenue streams such as potash, revenue tax sharing or anything of the kind. This is just property tax, and the vast, vast majority of it comes from farm land.

And the number, the number, Mr. Speaker, the dollars that are collected per student in my RM, the RM of Pense are \$44,000 every year — \$44,000 per student every year is collected to pay for education of mostly farmers' property in the RM of Pense.

An Hon. Member: — Do you have private schools?

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, this ... Do we have private schools, the member asked. No.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech does very little, and what it does suggest is pretty hard to believe in light of the record of this government. Accordingly I will not support the Speech from the Throne but will support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Prince Albert Northcote, the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by indicating how pleased I am to be joining members of the legislature in this fall's Throne Speech, and I want to begin by thanking the people of Prince Albert for

the opportunity to do so.

I would like to say a few words about, generally about the Throne Speech and my impression of it. I've had the opportunity to see a number of speeches from the throne. I think some of the criticism that has come in past years from members of the opposition may have had some validity in the ... it became almost cliché that the Throne Speech said little. There were no details. And so I think some of the speeches of the past, that may have been a legitimate criticism because throne speeches, just by their nature, talked in general terms about longer-term initiatives with little specifics.

[15:00]

But I want to say that very much proud I was to be a member of the government as we delivered this Throne Speech in 2005 because I really do think — as was recognized by even many of the journalists who are quick to criticize, sometimes I think too quick to criticize initiatives of our government — but I think some of the comments that came as a result of this year's Throne Speech were made sincerely. And I think it's a credit to the people, the men and women on this side of the House, who worked very hard to create a new vision for our province delivered in this Throne Speech.

And it's some of the commitments that I found were important to me as a business person, a member of this legislature, someone who's family is in business. My son, my daughter-in-law are in business in this province. I thought it was important that we reflected the direction and the commitment that we made when we put together the Vicq commission to look at corporate taxation, business taxes in our province, and the commitment in this Throne Speech that we would act upon the recommendations of the Vicq commission. And I think that's an important signal for the business community.

Mr. Vicq did some work for us some years back for this government on corporate and personal taxation. The government implemented, I think with some speed, the recommendations for the most part. And I think it made perhaps ... [inaudible interjection] ... Well and the members opposite, I gave them an opportunity to speak and I'd appreciate the same. And the opposition Finance critic will have his turn as well if he chooses to, and so I would appreciate his attention as I make my remarks.

And it resulted I think in a much more competitive province. We have moved on taxes from oil and gas to potash to uranium, and I think it's resulted in part of the surplus that the Minister of Finance was able to announce just this morning, some \$850 million worth.

And I want to say, you know, I understand the nature of the opposition and their desire to criticize everything that this government does and I recognize that. It's disappointing though that sometimes the speeches and the clichés that come from members opposite don't represent the facts. And I just was listening with some interest to the member from Thunder Creek, who was dwelling on his concern about the fact that drilling activity in this province is down. And, Mr. Speaker, we have consistently been delivering record drilling numbers. And I just want to share with members of the Saskatchewan

Conservative Party the week ending November 4, '05.

November 4, '05 the accumulative number of wells drilled 3,122; last year which was a very good year 3,108. Licences issued, Mr. Speaker, 3,903, which is the licence to drill. Last year 3,426. We've got 81 rigs operating in this province right now. Last year was 54. But I just say this, and I wanted to read those into the record because it's indicative of the kind of speeches put together by members of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about business tax and the commitment that we made, they're part of the Throne Speech, commitment was to pursue investment of heavy oil and upgrading capacity, clean oil or coal technologies, natural gas, coal, polygeneration opportunities. And I think those are all very futuristic and very positive.

The creation of an Asian-Pacific desk in the department of industries and resources, and when you look at the trade opportunities that we have in Asia, I think that's a very positive and forward-looking initiative by this Premier and by this government.

We're looking at building infrastructure in northern Saskatchewan, and we will be doing it, committing some \$68 million to northern road building and a northern road building strategy for our northern communities. Some communities have been isolated since their inception. This time of the year you can't cross by ice, and you can't get there by water. You have to barge propane in across the water earlier in the year — inconvenience, very expensive. And so I think it's a very positive initiative, and I think northern people will react very positively to it.

And initiatives that I know we've working on for a long, long time — supported, one I want to mention, very much so by my daughter-in-law — providing support for midwifery services as part of a multi-disciplinary team in hospitals in community settings. And I'm glad that we were able to find within this department, the Department of Health, the support for that, as well as increased support for the College of Medicine to train future doctors.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, if one were to fair . . . and I think the people of Saskatchewan have viewed this Throne Speech very fairly. I've had some very positive comments from my constituents and others around the province, and so I think, Mr. Speaker, as I begin my remarks I want to indicate to this House that I won't be supporting the amendment, but I certainly will be supporting the motion on the Throne Speech.

Today I want to talk a little bit about my community, about our province, and about the challenges that have recently, I guess, made themselves known to us.

About a month ago the company — major company in this province — responsible for about 50 per cent of our forest indicated that their corporate planning would lead them to other opportunities in other parts of the world, that they intended to divest themselves of the pulp and paper assets in the community of Prince Albert. And they were very clear as to why they made that decision.

And it was because of a weak American dollar which made the Canadian dollar that much stronger in the markets that we're trading into, which made our commodities, Weyerhaeuser's pulp and paper, less competitive. The dollar has risen from the 60-cent level to the mid-80s, and so obviously it was an impact on their bottom line and their shareholders were demanding more. And they made the decision that they were going to be divesting themselves of the assets.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, those of us who come from forest communities like Prince Albert and from Meadow Lake and Hudson Bay understand very clearly that the commodity markets have not been very kind to pulp and paper over the last years.

It's not a Saskatchewan phenomenon. It's a North American phenomenon. And the member from Rosetown obviously has some comments to make, and I'm waiting for his speech. I would just as soon listen to it when I'm not speaking. But, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would just ask members to allow members who have the floor to speak. The occasional heckle is quite welcome, but doubled and tripled and quadrupled it becomes a harangue. So I would ask all members to allow members who have the floor to speak. The member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker. And as I've said the commodity prices have changed.

Paper consumption has decreased on a per capita basis in the American states due to the, I guess, the initiation of more computer technology, better computer technology, and more people using that as opposed to paper, and the paper flow has decreased, meaning there's less demand for the paper that's produced in Prince Albert and other areas. And so obviously there's a need for some changes.

But with change, Mr. Speaker, comes opportunity. We have here in our province one of the finest forests anywhere in North America. It's a very healthy forest. We understand the ability of those who work in that industry to be able to produce and value add from it. And so we've got a good forest. We've got a good work force. And we've got a good investment climate here in Saskatchewan. And I think if you couple all of those, the decision by Weyerhaeuser to leave our province, in terms of pulp and paper, will present some opportunities for another company.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we're not alone. We've said this industry has been changing around North America. Other players in the international paper market have been closing plants — Domtar, Tembec, Abitibi, Georgia-Pacific who were just bought out the other day. Tembec of Montreal closed four plants in May 2005 — 500 jobs gone. In December 2004 Domtar closed its mill in Cornwall, Ontario — 390 jobs, 270 in the Cornwall area. Mr. Speaker, so we aren't alone — four plants Weyerhaeuser's closed in British Columbia.

It's a changing industry. It's a changing industry that demands change in terms of how we do business and how we make ourselves more competitive. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the mill

manager in Prince Albert said it all. He was quite articulate. And the Leader of the Opposition some short days ago used part of the newspaper article of May 26 in Prince Albert to attempt to make a case that this wasn't and isn't the province that was aware of what was happening in the industry. And I quote from this article. Mr. Williams said:

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, the local mill must "change or die," mill manager Bob Williams said Wednesday in a speech at the Prince Albert and District Chamber of Commerce . . .

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition emphasized over and over again how Mr. Williams said the mill must change or die and how the province wasn't preparing itself for the change or death. How untrue, Mr. Speaker, because Mr. Williams went on to say all of the things that they were doing internal to that pulp and paper complex to make themselves more competitive. And how:

During the last two years, the mill has made some major shifts in the way it does business.

"We don't have a choice. We're going to meet the challenge," said Williams . . .

While the mill will have to constantly change to remain competitive, Williams said the major shifts have already been implemented.

"We've made most of the changes we are going to need."

So my point here, Mr. Speaker, is obviously Weyerhaeuser knew the pressures. The mill manager articulated them to the business community indicating that they had done many of the things and they have made themselves more competitive, part of which the Leader of the Opposition chose not to speak to.

I want to and I need to read into the record another quote from another Weyerhaeuser official when the announcement of the mill came. And this is a quote from Wayne Roznowsky of Weyerhaeuser, and I quote:

This was not a decision that was taken lightly. This has not been an easy decision. This is a market-based decision. This is not a comment on doing business in Saskatchewan. This is a comment on the paper market globally.

End of quote, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, what I have put into the record is quite clearly Weyerhaeuser's understanding of a difficult market, a difficult commodity market. The fact that they had internally attempted to make their mill as efficient as they can and that their decision to sell the assets were based on the markets — based on the dollar differential and the changes in the differential. No other reason. They made that quite clear. And, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition chose to ignore that on more than one occasion when he spoke about this particular event that's taking place in our province.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate. And why I think it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, is as we are attempting to attract new private sector investors . . . This Leader of the Opposition, this authority on forestry and natural gas arbitrage and anything else

that you can think of, the man who stands up in this legislature and has the gall to tell the people of Saskatchewan that collectively we have got it wrong for the last 60 years — now he understands forestry, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a sad commentary when you're trying to attract new private sector investment to this province — and we will and we will be successful — that he and his operatives choose to portray this province as an unacceptable place for an investor to come to. And I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say directly to the people of Prince Albert, we will prove him wrong because we will have that mill operating, and that mill will be operating with private capital in spite of the discouraging remarks that are made by that Leader of the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're going to be going through a transition. And we will. We're going to find a new owner. There's interest been shown by large companies who we believe have the capital. We've been in constant contact with Weyerhaeuser who are anxious to work with this province and who have been encouraging to us saying, keep working with us, keep working, keep your communities working with us. And together we'll find a solution, and we'll find a new partner. We'll find a new private sector investor to operate that mill. It's a good mill. They've spent \$300 million in upgrading just in the last while.

As I've indicated earlier, we've got a first-class forest but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we've got 700 dedicated men and women who work directly in that mill, who know their business, who know how to do their jobs, who know their trades, and who will ensure that we will be able to attract new investment.

And, Mr. Speaker, as well we've got professionals within the Department of Environment and Resource Management who know industry players and who have been telling industry people across this country that this is a good place to invest and that you can come here and that you can make good dollars and that you can make a good return on your investment, that this is a good asset and that we will help you to move into a new ownership in this mill in Prince Albert.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, the importance of this is, yes, about the 700 direct jobs in that pulp and paper complex, but it's larger than that. It's larger than that. It's about the health of the 350,000-hectare forest. It's about people who work in skidders and in tractor trailers hauling logs to the mills all across our province. It's about the health of saw mills. It's about the health of our OSB [oriented strand board] plants right from Meadow Lake to Hudson Bay, Carrot River. It's about the health of a large OSB plant in Hudson Bay and in Meadow Lake.

Because you see, Mr. Speaker, it's all integrated. One can't work without the other. And we need to be able to maximize the utilization of our fibre and I think the industry players understand that and that's why we're going to see the investment. And that's why we're going to see a renewal with a new ownership.

And I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing this, and I believe we can look at this and should look at this as an opportunity. I think we have an opportunity. Yes, we've been a commodity-based industry but we have some opportunities here to move to a value-added product. We have some opportunities here to move to engineered wood products, which do have positive markets.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I've met with a number of companies, and others have, who have described their interest in our asset, in our forest, and who have indicated their intention to look very closely at making an investment in our province.

And why do I believe that we're going to be successful, Mr. Speaker? Because since 1999 this industry, through private sector investment, has created 8,000 new direct and indirect jobs in our province.

And the members of the opposition will say it's not enough. And I know that, because nothing is ever enough for those folks over there, or nothing that this government ever does is done right. But we understand them. We understand the nature of the politics from the Conservative Saskatchewan Party on the other side.

I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. Forestry pumps more than three-quarters of a billion dollars a year into this provincial economy. And we all have a responsibility to ensure that we grow and maximize the opportunities that come from that.

So are we going to have to make some changes in terms of how we're doing things? Mr. Speaker, absolutely. We're going to have to bring all the stakeholders to the table to put together an arrangement. We're going to have to work with Weyerhaeuser and with a new purchaser, understanding, Mr. Speaker, that we don't own that pulp mill. That's owned by Weyerhaeuser and so the arrangement terms of a purchase from a new investor is obviously the role of a private sector individual or company working with another private sector company to create the right fiscal arrangement for a sale.

And what's our role as a province? Our role as a province, Mr. Speaker, is obviously to ensure that our asset — those trees, those forests — are available and that we're competitive in terms of our costs of getting wood into the mill. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we need to all understand that we are fairly competitive here in this province. We've got one of the lowest delivered wood costs anywhere in Canada. And you can haul wood out of our forests 12 months out of the year. You don't have to wait or look at a three-month period. So I say, Mr. Speaker, we've got opportunity.

How are we going to capture that opportunity? Well it's not going to be the task force that the Premier established. We can be part of it and we will be part of it but I'll tell you where it's going to come from. It's going to come from the workforce. It's going to come from the banking communities and the investment community. It's going to come from the private sector, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there have been a lot of people . . . and the member from Rosthern obviously has some

interest in this. He's attempting to make a speech, as convoluted as it is, from his seat. And I do appreciate his interest but I don't appreciate his interference. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'll continue over his drone.

Mr. Speaker, let me continue by saying that in spite of the politics the Saskatchewan Party has and will attempt to play with this development, we're going to succeed. And I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Prince Albert understand. They understand what's happening. I think the people in northern Saskatchewan understand what's happening. And they understand that the member from Swift Current from the Saskatchewan Party, the Saskatchewan Conservative Party, will put their own politics ahead of anything. They'll put their politics ahead of 700 jobs directly at that mill and the hundreds indirectly, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say, I'm not going to focus on that and I'm not going to close on that. I'm going to close my remarks by saying that we will succeed. Communities like Prince Albert are resilient. We've gone through challenges before in our community. We've gone through the challenges of a meat packing plant closing many years ago, a brewery leaving our community, and we persevered and we survived.

And we've got a community that's growing. The retail sector is increasing. The number of jobs in our community have been growing along with the economy of this province and, Mr. Speaker, we will do what is necessary to assist in putting together a new investment for those assets. Because, Mr. Speaker, I know and you know that the families in our community obviously intend and want to stay there. They want to stay there and work in Saskatchewan and work in Prince Albert.

And are millwrights in demand? Absolutely. There have been overtures from the potash industry here in Saskatchewan, from the uranium industry here in Saskatchewan, from Fort McMurray who are looking for skilled labour of that nature. And they can find jobs in other areas. But I think, Mr. Speaker, they realize that we're doing everything that we can as a government and as a community and as a province to ensure that there is a transition to a new operator, to a new owner.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to end on a very positive note. I know that what has taken place in our province in the last number of years has created some incredible change. We've been leading this country in growth, and we've got some challenges, absolutely. We've got some challenges in agriculture, and we've got some challenges with fairness in terms of our federal government's inaction as it relates to equalization and it relates to a Saskatchewan energy accord.

And we're going to work to correcting the unfairness with our federal counterparts. It's going to take some time, but we'll get there because I think all of the people in Saskatchewan, all the people in Canada believe in fairness. And if we want to have a country that's unified and that's based on what's right and what's fair, that we're going to see the changes that the Premier is demanding of the Prime Minister.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I would, just on a personal note, issue a challenge to every politician federal to put some

pressure on their leaders — whether it's the New Democrats or whether it's the Conservative Party or whether it's the Liberals — to come to Saskatchewan and make a commitment that if they're elected after this federal election, that what they do will ensure fairness for this province, for the million people of this province, Mr. Speaker, because that's what's right.

And it's not a matter of playing politics during an election. It's a matter of ensuring that we use which tools and which levers to receive what is right for the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, that's why I make that call to our federal counterparts. And I ask the 13 Conservative members of parliament to work hard in Ottawa on our behalf. I ask the federal representative, Mr. Goodale, to have a close look at ensuring that his province is treated fairly by his government because nothing less, nothing less than that, sir, is acceptable.

And I say that working together we can make Saskatchewan a province where we have stable revenues and where our resources can go to creating schools, hospitals, and infrastructure for our children as opposed to money sent to Ottawa. Because I think any thinking person will understand that when you're generating revenue and the federal government is clawing \$1.15 or \$1.20 away from every dollar you make, that's not right and that's not fair.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be supporting this Throne Speech. I've had ample opportunity to work on its development, work on its creation. And I appreciate that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we have some good things for our community; we have some good things for other communities. We've made in this Throne Speech a major commitment to northern infrastructure to an all-weather road in the northern part of our province. And if you look at the map of Saskatchewan, the road system becomes pretty clear that we need to start doing some work up north because the pattern that those roads lay out doesn't speak very well for what we might have not done in the past. And so we've got to correct some of that. And this Throne Speech does that.

And I want to say that the people who use Highway 11 between Prince Albert and Saskatoon — many of us have had our children attend university in Saskatoon and drive that road a number of times a week; on the weekends the traffic going up to our beautiful lakes up north of Prince Albert — obviously we need to put some priority to making that a safer highway. And that's why we have committed also in this Throne Speech to twinning that highway.

Now I don't know if that'll make the member from Rosthern happy. I'm not certain that anything this government does could make him happy. But in spite of it, even if he's not happy, we're going to twin that highway going through his riding.

So, Mr. Speaker, I close by thanking my colleagues for the work that they've done in putting what I believe to be the best Throne Speech since I've been here. And I want to say I commend those who have recognized that it is a very good piece of work because it lays out a vision where no one, Mr. Speaker, will be left behind.

And if you know parts of the old *Regina Manifesto* irritates

some of my colleagues on the other side, I think that's just fine. Because do you want to know something? The legacy that the CCF and the NDP gave to this province and gave to this country is something that all of us can be proud of. And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, none of us have had to change the name of our party on this side because of embarrassment for the things that have happened in the past. Mr. Speaker, we're proud of our past. We're looking forward to our future. It's a bright future within this province, and I'm proud to be part of the New Democratic Party and even prouder to be part of this government. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:30]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to take part in the Throne Speech debate. I want to begin by congratulating the member from Regina Wascana Plains on her selection as the new Deputy Speaker. She had an interesting evening last night in the Chair, and I'm sure she will have many more in the future.

I'd like to thank my family — my wife Cindy and our three children — for the help that they give me, and the support in carrying out my duties. And I'd like to thank my constituency assistant, Ed Young, who is an important part of my team in the Biggar constituency. I'd like to thank the constituents of Biggar who have entrusted me with the job of their member in the legislature, and I will certainly continue to work to earn their support.

Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, Biggar and district has been hit hard by the NDP government's so-called cost-cutting measures. In 2004 Biggar had the closure of the rural service centre and the environment office which equated to the loss of three jobs, one family member, and access to qualifying, prompt service for a large farming community, and left a prime and vast wildlife zone with no supervision. We had the closure of the hospital kitchen leading to the loss of one position and the use of a well-equipped, spacious facility.

Now more recently we are seeing, in the interests of supplying better customer service and economic savings, the closure of the SaskEnergy office and thus the loss of SaskEnergy representation in Biggar. We had the downsizing of SaskTel representation for the Biggar district leaving us with one busy individual trying to service the entire area. In these cases not only are we losing personnel and access to adequate customer service, we may also lose more families and individuals that are involved in the community. And these steps are to so-called improve customer service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let's now throw in the recent amalgamation of school divisions and the loss of the division office. Once again more jobs lost in Biggar, the exodus of more individuals and families, the loss of representation and access to management for problem solving, as well as the abandonment of newly renovated facility. Once again long-time residents who are involved in the community uprooted, leaving a void in the town and disrupting the lives of those involved. And what about

the school bus drivers and the bus garage? There will be a need for drivers, but will their numbers be cut? Will they have to travel to other communities for maintenance on the buses? Will the routes be lengthened so children will be putting in longer hours? Will contracts be honoured?

And now, Madam Deputy Speaker, although it is not a provincial jurisdiction, let's look at the proposed closure of the Canadian National rail terminal in Biggar. It appears that the NDP care little about the effects that this closure would have on Biggar as a request for assistance in lobbying the CNR [Canadian National Railways] and the federal government to reconsider the closure has fallen on deaf ears. It seems like another case of NDP turning its back on rural Saskatchewan.

Biggar and district has the facilities, location, resources, and attitude to capitalize on the vast potential it possesses yet we seem to be on the radar as a target for the cost-cutting NDP agenda. Sure we may not be the only community hit over the past few years or the only community that would be affected by the massive increase in utility rates and the job-killing increase in minimum wage. But how many others have been hit on so many different fronts in such a short time? Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Biggar are asking, is Biggar a target for this NDP government?

I'd like to turn to another very tragic situation in Biggar, Madam Deputy Speaker, that has taken place, and it's concerning the situation of Sandra Bergen. And Georgina Bergen, her mother, says:

[While] Staring at a photo of her . . . 19-year-old daughter lying lifeless in a hospital bed, tubes snaking out from her body, her organs shutting down and [the] heart barely pumping, Georgina Bergen says the image doesn't disturb her anymore.

"I've got her sitting beside me on the couch," she said, patting the plump tan sofa beside her.

The Biggar woman, her husband Stan and daughter Sandra are suing the man they allege sold the crystal meth that led to their daughter's near-fatal overdose, landing her at death's door last spring.

The story goes on, Madam Deputy Speaker:

"The regular justice system can't hold these meth dealers accountable for the lives that they are taking and kids that they are killing," [said] Georgina . . .

"The lawsuit is to make dealers responsible for their actions" . . . "They know they are selling a dangerous drug, they know what they are doing to . . . people they are selling it to so how can they justify selling it when you're killing people with it?"

The statement of claim, filed . . . [recently] in Biggar, seeks compensation from a man, his grandmother and an unnamed person, "John Doe." . . .

Sandra Bergen slipped into a coma hours after overdosing on methamphetamine late one May evening.

"It felt like somebody had stabbed a pencil into my temple and right into my brain," she said, recalling the moments after smoking the drug.

Sandra felt strange. She began sweating profusely, her clothes were soon soaking wet, and she began vomiting.

She went into the bathroom and began coughing blood, figuring she had damaged her lungs . . . When she returned home her legs and arms began turning blue. Her mother took her to a doctor and she was sent to a hospital in Biggar. Tests revealed Sandra had a heart attack.

She was taken to Royal University Hospital where she slipped into a coma hours later, her heart functioning at seven per cent capacity.

Doctors had told her parents she wouldn't make it through the night, but she miraculously recovered and was released from hospital days later, her heart now functioning at [only] 58 per cent.

The lawsuit claims the male defendant knowingly sold the drug, which he knew was "highly addictive and harmful" to the young woman.

The claim says "such sale by (the man) was for the purpose of making money, but was also for the purpose of intentionally inflicting physical and mental suffering on Sandra."

The man's grandmother was aware that he was in possession of crystal meth and that he used her house to store the drug and sell it to Sandra and others, the claim says . . .

The Bergens are seeking general damages in excess of \$50,000, special damages, any amount the Saskatchewan Medical Services Plan may pay or has paid on behalf of the family for Sandra's treatment, aggravated and punitive damages and costs associated with the lawsuit.

But for Sandra, the lawsuit is not about the compensation.

Today the 21-year-old gets . . . tired to work a normal job and may not be able to have children because of her weak [condition] . . .

Mr. Speaker, it's very sad to see that this has happened to this young lady and to many other young people in this province. And the Bergens and people of Saskatchewan do not feel that the provincial government has taken adequate steps to address this very serious situation. They wonder how many people must die, how many people, how many lives must be ruined before the NDP pays the proper attention to this scourge on the young people and to the province of Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if it wasn't for our two members, the member from Kelvington-Wadena and Weyburn-Big Muddy, this NDP government would not have acted as even as little as they have recently. Madam Deputy Speaker, only after many years of our members bringing this situation up in the House and in the media did the government finally act, and

unfortunately it was very inadequate action taken by this government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know, the official opposition introduced the emergency debate last week, and this government turned that emergency debate down, on agriculture. And only after having introduced a second emergency debate, did the government finally relent and allow the debate to take place.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Biggar constituency, mainly a rural constituency, the agriculture situation is very serious. We have increasingly high input costs, higher fuel and gas prices, higher fertilizer costs, and the commodity prices have dropped to record lows.

And you only have to talk to the local bulk fuel and fertilizer dealers to know how serious it is. This man has told me that he has never seen the situation so bad in the rural economy where customers he's had for many years — decades quite frankly — that have been always doing very well, always paying their bills on time, now this year they can't meet their commitments. They are unable to pay their bills and even the very best, most efficient farmers are having serious problems with their debt problems and getting by and paying their payments.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the critic for Highways and Transportation I would like to just point out a few things about the government's handling of our highways and infrastructure. You only need to look at what the CAA says. The CAA, the Canadian Automobile Association, has put together a list of what it considers are the five worst highways in Canada that need immediate attention. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, once again the NDP are leaders in this country.

The NDP is a leader in high taxes, the NDP are a leader in the longest surgical waiting lists, and they are a leader in . . . they are also the last in job creation in the country. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, number two on the list of the worst highways in Canada is Highway No. 51 in Saskatchewan.

It's incredible, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this highway, which begins at Biggar and goes to the Alberta border, would be one of the worst five highways in the country. This highway services much of the oil industry that is in and around Kerrobert. And we see once again this NDP government only wants to tax and take revenue out of the rural areas and put nothing back into it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are some interesting quotes from the Premier, and I would like to read one:

But they do expect, and they have the right to expect, honesty. They have the right to expect to be able to trust this government, to be able to trust the men and women they elect. They have the right to expect that commitments made ought to be binding.

People, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will forgive mistakes; they may even forgive incompetence; but they will never forgive betrayal.

And that quote is coming from the present Premier, made in

June 23, 1987.

And I'd like to just read the deputy minister's report to the Premier concerning SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], February 17, 2003:

The response of Minister Lautermilch to Mr. Sawby is troubling . . . The Minister's correspondence was less than forthcoming in terms of the arrangement with Con-Force. The characterization of this business relationship as a partnership where government enjoyed a minority interest was inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, that minister, the minister of SPUDCO misled the House for six long years. And what happened to that minister? Well he's been rewarded by being reappointed to the cabinet on October 14, 2005.

It's very incredible that the Premier of this province would reward the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote back into the cabinet after that horrendous situation that he caused.

Just a few words on the immigration file. As critic for the Saskatchewan opposition on immigration, I've always congratulated and encouraged the government in what they were doing on the immigration file. But unfortunately this government and this minister doesn't get it about immigration.

Madam Deputy Speaker, other provinces are bringing in thousands of new immigrants to the province. They are working effectively with the private sector to encourage more immigration into the province, and this government unfortunately is hamstringing the private sector by trying to control everything in the department.

And this minister is once again taking the old socialist view of everything and having to run it themselves and try to keep the private sector, the entrepreneurial . . . really try to kill the entrepreneurial spirit in this province by mishandling the file. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, unfortunately we are coming to a point that this province cannot put up with this NDP's mismanagement and socialist way of governing the province.

So many of my colleagues would like to speak to the Throne Speech. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to say that I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the official opposition and will not be supporting the Throne Speech. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, the member from Cumberland.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:45]

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Good afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into debate in favour of the Throne Speech in this historic Year of the First Nations and Métis Women and the Year of the Veteran.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

I would also like to congratulate the member for Wascana Plains in the acclamation as Deputy Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech is about vision and goals. It's about balance. It's about the North and the South. It's about making sure no one is left behind.

Indeed these values of compassion and sharing are not new to northerners. They're not new to First Nations people, as they welcomed newcomers to this country thousands of years ago.

But first I want to acknowledge the support of my family and my community of Deschambault Lake [Cree] and for the support of people from the Cumberland constituency. The Cumberland constituency is one of the most beautiful in the province, Madam Deputy Speaker. Industries include trapping, fishing, tourism, forestry, and mining. It includes the two largest First Nations in Saskatchewan — the La Ronge Indian Band and the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation of which I am proud to be a member.

I was so very proud this morning, Madam Speaker, when I was at a role model conference this morning in Prince Albert. I saw so many young people who are in high school and who have so much potential, meeting and speaking to employers. And I was so encouraged to see them there.

I am proud to come from a family of trappers and fishers, something which my family continues to do for a living today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Cumberland constituency is geographically one of the largest in the province, covering close to a quarter of the land. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to accept the challenge from my colleague, the member from Athabasca, as to who has the largest constituency, while reminding him that our population exceeds theirs by close to 5,000. Yet, Madam Deputy Speaker, we share many things in common, the most important of which is our extreme pride in and love for northern Saskatchewan.

There is no doubt the first two years of my term in office have been very interesting, to say the least. I've learned so much and I have so much more to learn. It is an honour and a privilege to serve in this House, regardless of how different I find it sometimes. However there is one thing that always stands out for me or I think about when I'm sitting here is the voice of an elder I met during the campaign from Grandmother's Bay. And she said to me:

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

Always remember you are speaking for us.

I also want to acknowledge a couple of hard-working staff in La Ronge, in my constituency office — Kevin Jackson and Vicky Sanderson. I also acknowledge the hard-working staff in the Regina office here. And one thing I know for sure, Madam Speaker, you never accomplish anything alone.

Like so many others here, I was able to participate in many centennial celebrations. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would

like to acknowledge the good work of Mr. Centennial, the member from Moose Jaw North, for doing such a tremendous job in ensuring that everyone had a chance to participate, including northern Saskatchewan.

One event that was particularly fun for me was the Centennial Canoe Quest. The Canoe Quest was an exciting adventure that represented the values of the North while reflecting the athletic abilities of so many people. Thirty-one teams from Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, and even Scotland paddled in 25 canoes over the historic Voyageur Trail. Many have probably seen this on SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network], Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some of the most special moments of the 1,100-kilometre trek were the cultural festivals and feasts held by the host communities along the way. These celebrations showcased the unique culture and generosity of Saskatchewan's northern people. And I had the pleasure of participating in Grandmother's Bay, Stanley Mission, and seeing the ending at Sturgeon Landing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I would also like to acknowledge the idea that came from Sol and Renee Carriere of Cumberland House and Sid Robinson of La Ronge. They came up with a concept, but it took a lot of volunteers to implement this idea.

Another event that stood out for me was the elders' gathering in La Ronge. I want to acknowledge all the volunteers like Al Loke and Anita Jackson and the many others who worked so hard to ensure our elders were honoured, well fed, and recognized for all their contributions. They are the backbone of our communities.

First Nations and Métis people have made enormous contributions and sacrifices to the building of this province. Unfortunately their generosity has not always been recognized or understood. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we look to the next 100 years, we want to ensure that all children, all people have access to equal opportunities in a province where our youth can pursue meaningful careers and raise healthy families regardless of race and culture.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our government is committed to hearing the voices of young people, involving them in decision making and in providing opportunities for youth to develop their skills, gain career-relevant job experiences, and be leaders in their communities.

Yesterday a few of us had a chance to meet with the members of the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee and what a dynamic group of young people they are with so many good ideas.

The Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation is also working with our partners in sport, recreation, and culture to provide skills and leadership development through sport, culture, and recreation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I've said before, this government is committed to listening and reflecting the voices of our youth in government policy and programming. Through initiatives like the Leaders of Tomorrow, we have been able to put young

people on our Crown boards. I am especially proud that Robin Albert of Turtleford, Larrisa Belinda Iron of Waterhen Lake, Luke Alexander McCallum of Sandy Bay, and Brennan Merasty of Ile-a-la-Crosse have joined the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee.

These Saskatchewan youth have provided valuable guidance to government on many issues. And as mentioned in the Throne Speech, the protocol office new youth award is an opportunity to show our support and appreciation for the many accomplishments of youth in this province.

And as outlined in the Throne Speech, Saskatchewan is pursuing major Canadian music events for our year of artistic celebration in 2005, events like the Junos and the Canadian Country Music Association Awards.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it has been an exciting time for the film industry in Saskatchewan. The province's wealth of creative talent, great locations, competitive film employment tax credit, and state-of-the-art production studios have been factors in attracting major film, video, and television productions to Saskatchewan. Last year the film industry generated \$80 million in economic impact and created 850 full-time equivalent jobs where the average age in the industry is 35.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now want to turn back to the North to highlight a few initiatives in the Throne Speech of particular interest to northerners. I would like to speak to the importance of the northern road strategy. It's an NDP government that is once again hearing northerners, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was an NDP government who listened before and assisted northerners in having access to some of the most basic services that we so enjoy in the rest of the province — services like electricity, phones, schools, hospital care, health, and a creation of local government structure in the North.

The northern road strategy is an exciting announcement for northern residents. Good roads are vital to the health and economic well-being of those of us who are from there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as a northerner raised on the traditional resources of the land, I am especially proud of our government's vision for a green and prosperous economy. Our lands and our waterways must be protected. Elders tell us our greatest legacy is to ensure that future generations have that same opportunity to enjoy that rich heritage. We can only achieve this by working together with northerners to make sure our resources are protected and managed. And our government is committed to do that.

A chief recently said the future of Saskatchewan's First Nations is the future of Saskatchewan. This means First Nations and Métis people have access to education, jobs, and economic opportunities. As outlined in the Throne Speech, our government continues to work with Aboriginal leadership to ensure this happens.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech is about hope. It's about ensuring that truly no one is left behind. It is for these reasons that I speak against the amendment and in support of the Speech to the Throne. Thank you very much [Cree].

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, before I begin I would like to thank the most important member of my team — my wife, Valerie. Without her support I would not be here today. I would also like to thank my CA [constituency assistant] for all her hard work. She's the best CA in the province, bar none.

Once again it is time for the bearded representative from Batoche to stand and speak on behalf of the people of my constituency. The first concern of Batoche that I will bring forward is agriculture. The majority of the people in Batoche are people of agriculture or depend on it. The situation in agriculture grows more desperate by the hour. These people are hanging on by a thread. They are begging for help and all they receive is lip service.

In the Throne Speech the government has said that they will fully fund CAIS for 2005. Madam Speaker, it is November. There are only seven weeks left in the year. What are they waiting for? Were they saving it since March so they could say something for agriculture in the Throne Speech? The time is now to announce for 2006. Or are they waiting for Christmas?

Madam Speaker, farmers are looking to the spring of 2006. What will they tell their banker? We can get our '05 money now. Well maybe. If we qualify, maybe. Or our '06 money. We don't know, but we might know maybe by Christmas. Well maybe if . . .

Lip service, that's all this Throne Speech delivered agriculture. It concludes the agriculture sector with, and I quote:

The land that has sustained past generations will sustain generations in the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what a lovely green statement, but the question is how. We don't need fancy words. We need action; we need it now. This is not a new problem. It's like a cancer and it has been growing.

Here's a quote from March 27, 1990:

We're going to have a group of men and women with the vision and the commitment to that vision that can provide a long-term mechanism for the intergenerational transfer, and a long-term mechanism to provide income stability, and a long-term commitment to the health of this land for generations yet unborn. The word in Saskatchewan is that the emperor, the current emperor, has no clothes. He's exposed for the lack of long-term, significant agricultural policy. We've had too much of agricultural . . . [policies] and too little of substantive agricultural policy. And, Mr. Speaker, this throne speech does nothing, in my view, to change that.

That quote is by the now Premier of this province. In that quote our Premier said of those agricultural policies that they were like the emperor with no clothes. Mr. Speaker, if that's the case,

this government looks like a nudist colony. Agriculture is in worse shape now than it was in 1990 and our current government says the land will sustain us.

Last week the Minister of Agriculture said that we are too negative on this side of the House. All we speak about is gloom and doom. Mr. Speaker, we are speaking of reality. We are speaking what we see in agriculture. We are speaking of our friends, neighbours, and our constituencies. We are asking the Agriculture minister and the Premier to come out from under the dome here in Regina and see and hear the pain that we see and hear.

This government was at the table when CAIS was signed. They made the commitment and once again they leave agriculture hanging this year until November. Then they brag about it. They say, look what we have done. Agriculture and the people in it deserve better.

Here's another quote from our Premier on June 23, 1987. He said, and I quote:

But they do expect, and they have the right to expect, honesty. They have the right to expect to be able to trust this government, to be able to trust the men and women they elect. They have the right to expect the commitments made ought to be binding.

Madam Deputy Speaker, no truer words were ever spoken. The time is now to live by these words. People have lost their trust in this government. Forty-seven per cent of the cropland in Canada is in Saskatchewan. Nothing should happen in agriculture without extensive consultation with Saskatchewan. It is time to take the lead in agriculture, not to ask the federal government what happens next. It is time we say what will be instead of waiting for the other shoe to drop. Agriculture built and sustained this province. It is time for the government to get serious and show some real vision and take a serious look at agriculture.

[16:00]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I mentioned vision and the lack thereof. This government has shown no vision in agriculture. We have pushed and prodded, but they show no vision. Weyerhaeuser warned them it was coming, but they had no vision. Hours of work legislation — once again no vision. After saying in the election they would not raise the PST, they did. No vision.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is like the blind leading the blind. And now with their vision they decide that they need a new airport terminal. Their vision has led us to the poorest job creation record in Canada for five consecutive years. With this vision, it's time for a Seeing Eye dog.

And what does our Premier say of vision? From March 1990, and I quote:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't say this with a great deal of joy because there is an Old Testament proverb . . . [they say] — and I believe it to be true — a proverb that says, without vision the people perish. We need . . . [Madam

Deputy Speaker], in this province again a government with . . . vision, a government that can restore the confidence in government and . . . restore the confidence of our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I agree with the Premier on this statement. And above all, I see that the only way to achieve this is with a change of government.

This vision of the NDP has led to an increase of almost \$500,000 in communication staff in our Premier's office — an increase of almost 60 per cent. Is this for the people of Saskatchewan, or is it to get the NDP elected again? I am obliged to again use a quote from our Premier. On June 7, '88, he said, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, that kind of expenditure of public funds, that kind of self-serving advertising by this government while self-help groups in this province are closing their doors because of lack of funding. Welfare advocacy groups are closing their doors in this province because of lack of funding, and this government must be spending millions of dollars on self-serving advertising. It's just, in my judgement, Mr. Speaker, the wrong kind of priority. It's not a priority that puts Saskatchewan families first.

Madam Deputy Speaker, once again I agree with the Premier. That's twice in the same speech. It's time for his government to read these words and start serving the people of Saskatchewan, not their own self-interests.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another quote from a Premier that addressed government spending, April '91, and I quote:

And, Mr. Speaker, it means we need a government in this province that views the treasury as a trust and not as a trough . . .

Mr. Speaker, it is time to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. Actions speak louder than words. The actions of this government are not for the people; they are for their own self-interests.

Another issue that I would like to address for the people of Batoche is health care. We have the longest waiting list for surgery in Canada. This province is the home of medicare. Shouldn't we be at the other end of the scale? What happened? How did we get this far behind the rest of the country? What were we doing while the rest of Canada moved ahead of us?

I have a lady in my constituency that had abdominal surgery in March 2005. Things have not gotten better. Her doctor said she needs an MRI so he made the necessary applications. The lady came to my office the other day, showed me her appointment letter. The appointment is for September 2006. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is totally unacceptable. Our people deserve far better than this.

This government also passed a Bill for midwifery in 1999, and each year the association of midwifery comes to the legislature and is promised the Bill would be enacted. Madam Deputy Speaker, it has been six years since the Bill was passed. An elephant doesn't even have a gestation period that long. It's long passed time to deliver this baby.

Another promise that it's time to deliver on is the long anticipated Humboldt hospital. Once again, how long will it take? Your government has promised this hospital six times already. It has been used as an election candy through two elections. The only one who has done their part are the people of Humboldt and surrounding area. Once again, promises made but not promises kept.

Another promise made last election but not kept is the children's hospital. When, Mr. Premier, when will it happen? Or is this just another empty promise? We're the only province besides Prince Edward Island that doesn't have a children's hospital. The time is past due.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another situation that puzzles me is the way your government has addressed youth drug addiction. In 1987 our present Premier said, and again I quote:

... (our) potential for 60 beds at Whitespruce. Mr. Minister, I don't think there's any question that 60 spaces can be utilized easily in our province.

Then in October 1988 he said, and again I quote:

There are few things that this government has done that I would congratulate them for, one of the exceptions being the Whitespruce treatment centre.

Mr. Speaker, the same minister, now our Premier, when he got into the government side, what did he do? He closed Whitespruce. Now after the Saskatchewan Party raised the alarm, finally the government learns about crystal meth. Our Premier starts another cabinet post so they can talk about drug addiction, but no new beds until 2007. Once again vision, Madam Deputy Speaker, vision. Or shall we say the lack thereof?

A millstone around the neck of every businessman and landowner in Saskatchewan is the education portion of property tax. And what does our Premier say? In September '87, and once again I quote:

And I say, Mr. Speaker, is there any wonder that a tax revolt is brewing in this province? People are being taxed to death and they're saying, we can't take [it] any more.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the only thing that have changed since '87 are the people are financially in worse shape and the speaker of those words is now Premier. Once again, lip service but no action. He saw the problem in '87 but has still not addressed it. He is in a position to do something about the education portion of property tax, but what do we get? Lip service and a huge increase in taxes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the job of the government is to make sure there's a level playing field for all businesses so that one business is not disadvantaged. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, Highway 368 is a disadvantage to the businesses operating in the St. Brieux area. The highway cannot carry primary loads. They have to haul part loads which make it a very expensive disadvantage. Madam Deputy Speaker, the time has come to upgrade Highway 368 and give the community a fair shot at business. They are doing a great job already. Help them and in

turn they will help Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was very disappointed when I heard the Throne Speech. The government talked of energy and not one mention was made of geothermal energy. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is one of the key energies in Saskatchewan, and the present government doesn't even know that it exists.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there's a complete sports complex that's going geothermal rather than natural gas. The geothermal unit will make the ice and heat the building. Does that not sound like innovative technology? In fact there are towns that are looking at putting up a large unit and heating the town in winter and air conditioning it in summer, all with the same unit.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I ask members to keep their sidebar conversations to a minimum so that the speaker can be heard and avoid yelling across the House. I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would not want to be all negative, so I must say that I approve of naming Highway 2 the Veterans Memorial Highway.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I used a lot of quotes that were spoken by your Premier. He used some vision when he said them. Why can't he see the trouble that this province is in now? There could be so much potential.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is for all the aforementioned reasons that I cannot support this Throne Speech. The member from Batoche thanks this House for the privilege of speaking on behalf of his constituents.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North, the Legislative Secretary for the centennial.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Well thank you very much. And let me begin my remarks by putting together three words that in my political career I've never had the opportunity to say in this House before — Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Madam Deputy Speaker, let me begin by first of all expressing my congratulations to you on your acclamation to serve the Chair and to serve this House and to serve your democracy in your province. I think in the acclamation the House has indicated confidence in your ability to do that. And I want to congratulate you on breaking yet another barrier in the world of democracy in our province. Congratulations to you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, this has been a very, very significant Speech from the Throne. When I was asked to make my comments about the Speech from the Throne to my media in my home community of Moose Jaw, I said

something that I have never ever said before in a response to a Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen 19 of these things over the course of my political career, and without a doubt this is the single best Speech from the Throne that I have ever seen delivered in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I've been following carefully the debate that's been going on since the introduction of the Speech from the Throne motion, and let me begin by saying congratulations to the hon. member for Saskatoon Eastview, the mover, and the seconder, the hon. member for Regina Northeast.

And, Mr. Speaker, when both of these members spoke I listened very, very carefully. And what I appreciated was that from both of them, there was a recognition of this time and this place in which we stand now. They recognize the Speech from the Throne is, it's a prescription for the next year. But this Speech from the Throne is so much different than that. It is the first Speech from the Throne of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in our second century of a province.

And what I appreciated so deeply was that both of them had given a great deal of thought to the sense of course of history and the development of history bringing us today, but enabling us to look forward with a sense of vision into the future. And I want to say to both of them I appreciated the depth, the thought, the compassion that was so much a part of their delivery and to say congratulations to both of them on jobs extremely well done in the beginning of our debate to the Speech from the Throne. Congratulations to both of you.

I want to as well, Madam Deputy . . . Mr. Speaker, I should say, to acknowledge the honour that was extended to the member for Kindersley. It is when you serve in opposition, it is traditional of course to have the motion of non-confidence, and we'll be dealing with that shortly in the Assembly here. And it was in this occasion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and extended to the member for Kindersley was the honour of being the seconder of that motion. And I want to extend congratulations to the member for Kindersley who spoke from his perspective with a sense of passion and a sense of representation from his perspective, and to say congratulations to him.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have looked at this Speech and concluded that this is the single best Speech from the Throne that I have seen in my political career in the House, I found myself thinking, what is it that makes it so special? And I know that many of the media have commented that it was the Speech from the Throne that was presented with vision. With a sense, not just as I said earlier, a prescription for what the government intends to do over the course of the next year, but with a sense of vision over the course of the next generation.

And I thought surely this is a speech that must be similar to the very, very first Speech from the Throne ever delivered in this . . . In fact not in this room because this room didn't exist yet then back in March of 1906 when we had our first Speech from

the Throne ever in the province of Saskatchewan. And so I dug it out, Mr. Speaker, and went back to the words that were presented in this House or to this Assembly, by Amedee Forget, the very first Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

[16:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, it was by comparison . . . I was really quite disappointed. It was certainly not poetic. No one would have judged it to have been poetic. It took, I think if Amedee Forget read very slowly it might have been able to drag it out for ten minutes, but probably a lot closer to five.

It started out by welcoming the members of the Legislative Assembly to the province of Saskatchewan — that took about two sentences to do that. Then congratulated them on the prosperity that the province was enjoying, largely from our agricultural activity. And then went on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote from that very first Speech from the Throne from about the sixth or seventh paragraph in on the subject of the Dominion, "The Dominion Government has recently seen fit to withdraw the assistance formerly given to the dairy industry in the West."

Mr. Speaker, one can only conclude that Ottawa has been deserting the farmers of the West for at least a century. Some things it seems never change. And, Mr. Speaker, here we are, here we are 100 years later here in the province of Saskatchewan and other parts of the West battling the federal government on behalf of those who make their, not only their living but their way of life in agriculture in our province.

The Speech from the Throne then went on to refer to the fact that there was going to be an omnibus Bill bringing into Saskatchewan legislation those things that would be passed under the Northwest Territories and one or two other practical items and away they went.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that when I reflect on this Speech from the Throne and the sense of vision and the sense of poetry — political poetry — that was encapsulated within it, that it may very well be that this was not just the best Speech from the Throne that has been presented here in the time that I've been privileged to serve in this House on behalf of the good people of Moose Jaw North, this may very well be the best Speech from the Throne delivered in this century in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — And, Mr. Speaker, I say that . . . Members have talked earlier here about their reactions to specific parts of the Speech from the Throne and I won't repeat that. Time doesn't permit that.

But I want to say what especially touched me and I think many, many of the observers who have seen this political exercise before, was the sense of vision. And if I may just quote some particular parts that jumped out at me from the Speech from the Throne as it was delivered in this House.

Early on in the speech the Lieutenant Governor said these words, "Our vision today shall be our legacy for our children."

And went on to say:

Today, my government dreams of a province where no one is left behind on the path to opportunity, a province with an unbreakable social fabric, built on the foundation of diverse and growing communities, in a green and prosperous economy.

And in many ways, Mr. Speaker, that sentence said it all. It summarized what is our political mission as we come at this point in time in our history to work on behalf of the people of this great province.

And then just a moment later, the Lieutenant Governor read these words that made me feel so proud as a Saskatchewanian serving in this Legislative Assembly:

... we are a 'have' province, and the only 'have' province in Canada that does not charge its citizens a health care premium.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I think in many ways that kind of captures the spirit of what government has done on behalf of Saskatchewan people over the course of the centuries. This is a have province with heart. That's the bottom line, Mr. Speaker.

We've been celebrating 100 years of heart all year long in ways that, well just cause people next door to say without any hesitation that nobody throws a party like Saskatchewan. It's been a year for celebration, Mr. Speaker.

You know, and I thought in many ways the soul of our celebration has been the homecoming celebrations — 191 Saskatchewan communities had homecoming celebrations. Celebrations where people got together and they celebrated their history, their presence, their future, their sense of community, and their sense of relationship. Because in Saskatchewan, we celebrate our centennial.

It's all about our people. It is a celebration of our people. And that is, I think and we've ... I don't have time to go through the many, many ways it's been done. I'll come back to one in particular at the end. But it is, it has been 100 years of heart and that has been a demonstration of a province, a have province with heart.

Some of the things that were talked about with a sense of vision, looking ahead the next generation, Mr. Speaker, and identifying that by the third decade of this century that one-third of our energy needs are met by renewable energy resources ... or renewable energy sources and that Saskatchewan will lead the country in energy conservation practices.

Mr. Speaker, that's a government acting with a sense of vision and a sense of loyalty to its people and their future and their quality of life that they will know and that they will enjoy, but also recognizing the economy is important and the activities of our province.

Another long-term objective captured within this Speech from the Throne, the reference that in the next decade the value of

manufacturing shipments from Saskatchewan will double. That's not been a traditional part of our economy, Mr. Speaker, but it's growing and growing rapidly.

Some members have referred here to the very, very significant gesture of the naming of the Veterans Memorial Highway. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, governments do things that are symbolically very significant, don't cost a lot of money, but they're important. And this was one of those. To recognize that one of the things that we have been gifted, one of the greatest gifts that we can have as citizens of our province in our world is the gift of freedom and peace extended to us by veterans in our province who served in the interest of that.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing as they did back in 1905 when they said one of the agenda items was people looking to establish homes. Recognize as we enter into our second century that immigration will be an important part of the population base in order to meet the increasing needs of labour within a growing and dynamic economy. And that, Mr. Speaker, the objective was laid out that by the year 2000 that there will be annually 5,000 immigrants coming to take their place, to build their future as our forefathers and foremothers did generations ago back at the beginning of the century when we entered into the great Confederation of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I was really pleased as well on the artistic front. The celebration of the arts has been such an important part of the centennial celebration. The objective that we will engage to attract major Canadian music events for a year of artistic celebrations in the year 2007 and continuing some of that centennial fervour and fever as we celebrate who we are.

And, Mr. Speaker, one that resonated with me was the reference that as the children of our centennial enter their working years, it is my government's vision that no one in the province of Saskatchewan will work for wages that leave them in poverty and every worker in Saskatchewan will have full access to health care and pension benefits. Mr. Speaker, that commitment speaks volumes about the commitment of this government to the quality of life known by working people in our province as we look a generation ahead and into the future and lay out objectives.

Well, Mr. Speaker, bottom line is that this was a Speech from the Throne that has attempted to and I think successfully captured that sense of time and historic place that we find ourselves in now. And how fortunate we all are — every one of us, on both sides of the House — to be here, to be a part of shaping the future of Saskatchewan. That's important every year, but sometimes the shaping of history and the timing of history says that there's something extra special about being here as we move forward into our second century as a province.

And I think that that's what this is all about. I've been a bit disappointed that the debate on the Speech from the Throne has tended at times to become a bit more personal than I think is healthy for a legislature to be doing, and has been a tad lacking at times, Mr. Speaker, on speaking with a sense of vision about the future in terms of competing visions. And surely that is what the people of Saskatchewan want from us as we come here to talk about our visions — not only of the next year but the next decade and the next generation — to speak with a sense of

compelling attraction to where this province is going and recognizing, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan is well positioned within the nation to be a leader. It has been its role, its traditional historic role in so many ways over the course of our time since we joined Confederation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to . . . I was wanting to have enough time to share just about some of my sense of pride in being extended, I think, one of the greatest honours that any elected member could possibly hope to have. And that's to have had the honour to chair our centennial celebrations this year.

It's given me the opportunity to be in so many communities, talking with so many people who feel so proud about our province. And to translate that strong sense of quiet pride that is so much the Saskatchewan way and to being proud out loud, which is really — I think we've got a little work to do, and we've been getting good at that. And I hope that will be one of the legacies of our centennial celebration, is that we'll continue to be proud out loud because this is a province that has had so many firsts, not only for our province, of course, but for the nation and beyond.

And sometimes I've been asked whether there is a single event that has left an impression with me. And I want to conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by making reference to that. My honourable desk mate here, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, made reference to, at a very, very important event in Northern Saskatchewan — the Centennial Canoe Quest.

And this was a big deal in the North, Mr. Speaker, as 30 canoes put their oars into the water at the Clearwater Dene Nation on the west side of the province. Over two weeks to paddle the old voyageur highway — the old fur-trading route, long before we became a province — across the Churchill waters of the north of Saskatchewan to finish up at Cumberland House on the east side.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as we'll recall, Cumberland House had rising waters and had to be evacuated. And so the end of the Centennial Canoe Quest — this two-week, 1,000 kilometre race across northern Saskatchewan — was moved ahead to a little community by the name of Sturgeon Lake that not many people have been to; a beautiful little community, about 50 people, divided right down the middle with the swift flowing Sturgeon River and the hanging bridge that unites both sides of the community, marked as the finishing line.

Mr. Speaker, there were 1,000 people. There were 1,000 people who were there then on July 4 for the conclusion of the Centennial Canoe Quest and were there to see the grand finale. Mr. Speaker, of 30 canoes that entered the race, 29 finished the race that day. The first 25 came through pretty much as had been predicted.

At that point I asked the woman I was there with, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, when we would expect the next canoe to come through. And she said probably about 20 minutes or so. So we stood and waited. And about two hours later we hadn't seen any of them. And as we began to get a bit worried we were advised that the canoes had been spotted — four of them together — about six or seven kilometres down the river. What we didn't know at the time was that over the course

of that day a couple of canoes had tipped in the rapids and they just decided to stick together.

Mr. Speaker, I will never forget what happened to finish that race. We spotted them coming through the forest, and then as the first canoe came around the bend, up the swift-flowing Sturgeon River towards the bridge, something happened that is very, very difficult to do in a canoe in a swift-flowing river and is kind of magic, Mr. Speaker. As the first canoe came around the bend, he came around the bend and then stopped. And the second canoe came around the bend and moved up until it got to the first and it stopped too. And then the third and then the fourth. And as the fourth canoe got to the other three, those canoeists reached across and they latched on to one another's canoe and finished, Mr. Speaker, finished that race at precisely the same moment.

And I'll never forget that, Mr. Speaker. Those were competitive people. They had been working hard to achieve their goal for over two weeks and, Mr. Speaker, as they came through I stood on that bridge and I concluded I am in Saskatchewan and I have just seen 100 years of heart. Because the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that we live in a province in which, when people run into difficulties, neighbours still help neighbours. And the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we live in a province in which it is our vision, it is our vision that no one — no one — will ever finish last.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is that spirit of 100 years of heart, the celebration of our centennial, that I thought was captured in this Speech from the Throne when I heard the words read from that Chair in this House as we mark the beginning of our second century as a province moving forward, acting in the best interests of those who sent us here to represent them, when these words were read:

. . . my government dreams of a province where no one is left behind on the path to opportunity, a province with an unbreakable social fabric, built on the foundation of diverse and growing communities, in a green and prosperous economy.

Mr. Speaker, I was sent here to represent the future of my constituents. Because I believe in the future of Saskatchewan and I believe in the future of this being a province that will continue to play a prominent role in the greatest confederation in the world, I will be proud to vote in favour of the motion supporting the Speech from the Throne. Thank you very, very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[16:30]

The Speaker: — Order. I must inform the Assembly that under rule 16(3), it is my duty at this time to interrupt the debate and put the question on the amendment. The amendment is as follows, moved by the member for Swift Current, Leader of the Opposition, seconded by the member for Kindersley:

That the following words be added after the word "session":

however this government no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly because of its lack of vision and initiative and its failure to address the issues that are most important to Saskatchewan people as demonstrated by ignoring the crisis in agriculture, the inability to set spending priorities consistent with the province's needs, the failure to grow the economy and create economic prosperity, by not delivering much-needed services leaving many people behind, by forcing others to move out of the province for health care and by forcing people to pursue their careers and dreams elsewhere because they cannot find jobs in Saskatchewan.

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

Those who favour the amendment say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those who are opposed to the amendment say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I do believe the nos . . . Call in the members for a recorded vote.

[The division bells rang from 16:31 until 16:35.]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the amendment to the main motion moved by the member for Swift Current, seconded by the member for Kindersley:

That the following words be added after the word "session":

however this government no longer enjoys the confidence of the Assembly because of its lack of vision and initiative and its failure to address the issues that are most important to Saskatchewan people as demonstrated by ignoring the crisis in agriculture, the inability to set spending priorities consistent with the province's needs, the failure to grow the economy and create economic prosperity, by not delivering much-needed services leaving many people behind, by forcing others to move out of the province for health care, and by forcing people to pursue their careers and dreams elsewhere because they cannot find jobs in Saskatchewan.

Those in favour of the amendment please rise.

Yeas — 25

Wall	Toth	Elhard
Heppner	D'Autremont	Krawetz
Draude	Hermanson	Bjornerud
Stewart	Wakefield	Chisholm
McMorris	Harpauer	Gantefoer
Eagles	Bakken Lackey	Cheveldayoff
Huyghebaert	Allchurch	Weekes
Kerpan	Merriman	Dearborn
Kirsch		

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amendment please rise.

Nays — 29

Calvert	Hamilton	Lautermilch
Van Mulligen	Taylor	Serby
Atkinson	Cline	Sonntag
Crofford	Prebble	Forbes
Wartman	Belanger	Higgins
Thomson	Nilson	Beatty
Hagel	Junor	Harper
Iwanchuk	McCall	Quennell
Trew	Yates	Addley
Morin	Borgerson	

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 25; those opposed, 29.

The Speaker: — I declare the amendment lost. Debate resumes on the main motion. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to join in the Throne Speech debate today. I would like to offer my thank you to the constituents of Saskatoon Silver Springs who saw fit to elect me as their representative and send me to this Chamber some two years ago. And, Mr. Speaker, I do indeed consider it a privilege to serve as the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs in this constituency. I'd like to thank the hard-working constituents of Saskatoon Silver Springs. That includes the people of Erindale, Arbor Creek, Silverspring, University Heights, Forest Grove, and a part of Sutherland, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank at this time, Mr. Speaker, my family — my wife Trish for her support and encouragement and advice that she gives me in helping me to do this job.

I would also like to thank my family, my young children. Carter, who is seven years old. He's in grade 2 . . . grade 3, I'm sorry, grade 3 at Cardinal Leger School. I was reading last year's speech, Mr. Speaker . . . no. Carter is in grade 3; he's going to be eight years old at Cardinal Leger School. Carter enjoys hockey. He enjoys piano. He played football this year, and is a very enthusiastic kid.

Now my daughter, Paige, is five years old. She's at Maria Montessori kindergarten and she, too, is an active little kid. She's involved in all kinds of activities from dance to piano to skating, and I look forward to every weekend that I can return home and take part in their activities.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to pay tribute at this time to my constituency assistant, Beth Epp. Beth will be known to many members in this Chamber as well as staff in the building here. Beth has been involved with numerous royal visits, and she's the first one to step up and to volunteer for anything that she is asked to do. And that's the philosophy she brings to my office. She's there receiving compliments constantly from the constituents of Saskatoon Silver Springs. And I would like to thank Beth here publicly for the work that she does for Saskatoon Silver Springs and for me as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

I'd also like to pay tribute to the many volunteers that work hard in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency to further their cause. As you know Saskatoon Silver Springs is a growing area of Saskatoon, a growing area of the province. It needs infrastructure. It needs schools. Oftentimes I've taken my place in this Assembly and presented petitions about the need for a school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, there's 600 kids under six years old in Arbour Creek alone that don't have a school to go to. And I know the Minister of Learning and others are well aware of that, and I hope that they move on that in this budget to reward the hard-working people that have worked so hard to lobby for a school for people in their area.

There are others that work hard in the constituency as well and volunteer. I want to specifically mention the Erindale-Arbor group citizens patrol — people who have taken time out of their busy lives and their busy schedules, often on weekends, on Friday nights, Saturday nights, to patrol the neighbourhood, to control crime, and to send a message to those doing unscrupulous things that they are not welcome in our neighbourhood, Mr. Speaker. Those people deserve to be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address this Throne Speech and the themes of the Throne Speech. The Throne Speech is a concern to everyone in the province. It's the need for a vision in Saskatchewan that is most important at this time. A vision that would be reasonably expected in the Throne Speech is lacking. Now it's one thing for a member of the opposition to say that, Mr. Speaker. But what are others saying? Let's take a look what other people across this province are saying regarding this government.

According to the government's own polling information, 47 per cent of Saskatchewan people disapprove of the NDP's handling of this economy, and only 20 per cent actually approve of it. By a vote of more than 2:1, Mr. Speaker, they hand this NDP government a failing grade in this area.

But perhaps the NDP government fares better when it comes to the handling of the public purse. Well apparently not, Mr. Speaker, not here — their performance is even more dismal. Fifty-four per cent of Saskatchewan residents, according to the government's own polling, disapprove of how the NDP has handled taxpayers' money. And, Mr. Speaker, only 15 per cent approve. On this one they have failed the people of Saskatchewan even more miserably.

People are asking many questions, Mr. Speaker. Why is Saskatchewan losing jobs in the midst of the biggest oil boom in its 100-year history? Why does Stats Canada numbers show that Saskatchewan has lost 6,200 jobs — well actually 6,198 to be specific, Mr. Speaker — in the midst of the greatest mining and exploration campaign in the past century? Why is that, Mr. Speaker? In the run-up to this economic activity, from 2002 to 2005, over 14,000 left Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's more than the city of North Battleford. That's more than the city of Estevan or Weyburn . . . people leaving Saskatchewan.

In a province with unlimited potential, more potential I would argue than any other part of Canada, how could this government

possibly perform so badly within an environment where economic opportunities are so good?

Mr. Speaker, where is the vision? Where is the leadership? What is in fact the government's response to these questions? Well to quote one cabinet minister, Mr. Speaker, they "are concerned." Well one cabinet minister is concerned. Isn't that nice. That was the member from Saskatoon Massey Place. To quote another cabinet minister, they "are puzzled, what's going on?" That was the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker. This is leadership, Mr. Speaker. This is dazed and confused and is the best that the government seems to do.

[16:45]

The leadership void is disheartening to the people of Saskatchewan. They deserve better. They deserve an effective vision and strong leadership, Mr. Speaker.

A Throne Speech, as we all know, is a broad-brush approach to painting a picture of the future of the province. A Throne Speech is also by definition an opportunity for the government to be eloquent about its vision, to describe the direction in which it leads the nearly 1 million people of this province. And that's all fine but therein lies the problem, Mr. Speaker. This government just can't seem to figure out that at some point it must do something. It must act, Mr. Speaker. It must move forward. Talking about the same issues over and over again isn't convincing anyone, aside from the government members on that side of the legislature.

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, worn-out rhetoric is still a commodity of value on that side of the House. But it's not selling, Mr. Speaker. It's not selling well in small town Saskatchewan or in the streets of the cities. It's not selling well in Saskatoon Silver Springs, Mr. Speaker, nor in the fields of Saskatchewan farmers. If the members of the government ever went out there, they would certainly know that. Apparently it's more comforting for them to wrap themselves in a security blanket of irrelevant and outdated statistics than shroud themselves in the reality. And that's the reality that points out to a shortage of vision in this area.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at what some other people have to say about this Throne Speech. Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* columnist Randy Burton noted in commenting on the complete lack of strategy in the Throne Speech. He said:

There's plenty of room to debate the timing and details of such policies, but there can be no doubt the Saskatchewan people are ready for a coherent plan [Mr. Speaker] even if it is for a few [short] years.

But as he notes in the Throne Speech, you won't find it here, Mr. Speaker. You won't find it here in this 2005 NDP Throne Speech.

A *StarPhoenix* opinion similarly notes that:

. . . the bulk of the speech was taken up with re-announcing initiatives that are underway or already have been announced. Much of it was taken up with broad generalizations that fail to capture the imagination of a

province that badly needs hope to match the growth of government revenue.

No matter which way you turn, Mr. Speaker, the reaction was the same. It goes far past the simple fact that this Throne Speech are broad and far-reaching. This one is far reaching all right, Mr. Speaker. It is reaching backwards, backwards to previous promises, to last year's announcements and attempting to gloss over the past few years dismal failures.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Throne Speech of which Jerry Seinfeld would be proud because like he always says about his television show, it's about nothing, Mr. Speaker. And what we have here is a Throne Speech about nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Although this Throne Speech is spectacularly devoid of direction, it has been successful in one respect. Members on this side of the House, we always give credit where credit is due. And this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, has one redeeming feature.

It caused a common reaction across this province. It was criticized by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, criticized by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and, Mr. Speaker, by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. So they all feel the same way about it.

It's one saving grace about this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. People of all backgrounds found it lacking, and that's quite an accomplishment. But apparently representatives of a broad range of interest recognize the lack of vision when they see it. And in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, they have indeed seen a lack of vision on the part of the government for the future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, in so many different ways this government has failed miserably. Taxation is one. And the Throne Speech does nothing to address the overwhelming failures of the NDP government and its abdication of leadership in this area, Mr. Speaker.

It was just two years ago that the Boughen Commission concluded it would be best for the people of Saskatchewan to raise the provincial sales tax so as to decrease the education portion of property tax.

The NDP only half listened, Mr. Speaker. They closed one ear and listened with the other, raised taxes on one hand and didn't do anything on the other. They raised the PST, and they have almost been silent in doing anything of consequence on the property tax issue. The mere pittance of a property tax reduction they did enact was more than eaten up by increased assessments and therefore higher taxes on those very same properties, Mr. Speaker.

After ignoring the right thing to do — that being reducing property taxes in a meaningful way — they went ahead with another PST tax grab anyway. This government has shown that it's incapable of accomplishing one positive thing to which it said it was committed. Apparently the NDP dictionary does not provide . . . Apparently using the NDP dictionary does not translate into tax decreases, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at what Kevin Hursh has had to say in agriculture commentary on radio stations across the province, Mr. Speaker. "Monday's throne speech," and I quote, "did nothing to diffuse the property tax revolt brewing across Saskatchewan." Hursh reminded listeners that just two years ago Premier Calvert told the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities that the status quo was not acceptable.

So what did this government do about it, Mr. Speaker? They put through an 8 per cent, short-term, two-year, band-aid solution. Meanwhile most of the property assessments went up. The result is that those farm families are now paying more property tax, not less as the Premier intimated would happen. More, Mr. Speaker. This measure was too little, too late, says most of the agriculture community. Well too bad for everyone — your tough luck — says this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, this government is led by the same person who said in September 1987, and I quote:

. . . is there any wonder that a tax revolt is brewing in this province? People are being taxed to death and they're saying, we can't take [it] any more.

Well, Mr. Premier, you are right on this one. They can't take it any more. But, Mr. Speaker, what has this government provided to remedy the situation? Higher PST and higher property taxes. In a similar vein this government has said more recently, and I quote, "In this session, recommendations from the Business Tax . . . Committee will be acted upon."

And I will remind this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, that these are their own words from their own Throne Speech offering their own commitment. But keeping with this government's propensity for sitting on its hands and cheering every now and then when they think things are going well rather than acting, I question this, Mr. Speaker. What exactly do they mean when they say recommendations will be acted upon? That they follow the advice of the Vicq committee and do what needs to be done? Will they implement the Vicq committee report in its entirety, Mr. Speaker? Or will they pick at the parts that raise taxes and ignore the rest just as they did with the Boughen Commission property tax report?

The Throne Speech said all the right words about the business tax review, Mr. Speaker. The government said it's committed to taking action. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government taking action — that raises fear and trepidation in the business community, I can assure you of that. Mr. Speaker, the question the business community is asking is which taxes does this government mean will be hiked. NDP action. Oh no. Will they have another job-killing monster? We're not sure.

When the rest of Canada is and has been moving to reduce the tax burden, at what point will the empty rhetoric of this government, as exemplified in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, be replaced by positive and substantive action? Easy for me to say, right? As the government stated in its Throne Speech, we are in a time that we have never been and in an age that we have never seen. And that may explain, Mr. Speaker, some of the reason why this NDP government is obviously confused and concerned, bewildered and befuddled.

Who says that there's a problem with this government's management of the economy? Well, Mr. Speaker, if it was only the opposition, only members on this side of the House, they might be able to claim it's a case of partisan politics. But this is indeed a government of poor management, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Institute of Chartered Accountants among others certainly says so.

Here's a couple of examples from the Saskatchewan Institute of Chartered Accountants and their *Saskatchewan Check Up*. This province, Mr. Speaker, lost 3,000 residents with post-secondary certificates and diplomas and 2,100 people with master's and higher level of degrees, and that was just in the past year, Mr. Speaker. That's an unequivocal disaster and a track record that this government should be ashamed of.

Even the year before, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan happened to add 5,400 jobs to this economy, year over year. No doubt the government decided to crow long and loud about that number, simply because there was no minus sign in the job creation numbers — a real change in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, as the accountants' paper points out, that record was tied for last in all provinces of the country. That's right, Mr. Speaker, the worst job creation record in the country over the last five years, and that's a shame.

The Throne Speech did absolutely nothing to address the job situation as was stated in the Throne Speech. As our second century unfolds, Saskatchewan will have one of the most diverse business environments in the country. Private enterprise, co-operative enterprise, and public enterprise will stimulate growth and create jobs. That's what the Throne Speech said, Mr. Speaker.

That's a surprising statement from a government that just oversaw the decline of 6,200 jobs in Saskatchewan. Perhaps the government will hope the people just sort of forget that this is one of the worst job creation records in the entire country. Perhaps the government hopes the public will be so enamoured with the flowery text of the Throne Speech that it forgets the facts, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that will not be the case.

This government just means that some day we will have the economic growth and the job creation. Mr. Speaker, that day is now. If this government can't accomplish any job creation within this economic environment — this boom, using their own words — it raises the question, Mr. Speaker, if they will ever be able to do that.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at Saskatchewan's population. No matter what your political stripe, it's hard to deny that we've had five years of failure. It's Saskatchewan's Achilles heel, Mr. Speaker. Population loss has become the benchmark of this NDP government. In case we aren't clear on the facts, here they are again, Mr. Speaker, courtesy of the Saskatchewan Institute of Chartered Accountants and their *Check Up* review.

In the past five years Saskatchewan has been led, led by this NDP government. They lost 33,000 people to other provinces. Now, Mr. Speaker, 33,000 people — that's two provincial constituencies. If those two provincial constituencies were in the province today, I would suggest that there would be a different government in this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Thirty-three thousand people, equivalent to the size of our third and fourth largest cities in Saskatchewan — Prince Albert or Moose Jaw. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker. They're gone.

This government always replies to bad news that it's nothing more than a blip on the radar screen. It's an aberration, we've heard. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not an aberration. It's a five-year track record verified by the Saskatchewan accounting institute and it's no blip, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a failure.

This government can try to slough off the shoddy record all at once but here is the reality — the equivalent of Moose Jaw or Prince Albert in a five-year period, Mr. Speaker. We've had enough.

They left Saskatchewan in search of better opportunities against the backdrop of a booming resource sector, a strong mining and mineral sector, just to name two. The NDP's track record has been what? Losing the equivalent of our third or fourth largest cities. Let's think about what would happen if they all came back, Mr. Speaker, if they all came back to Saskatchewan — those 33,000 people. This province would be a different place.

The business and employment climate, Mr. Speaker, has been well summarized again by the Saskatchewan association of chartered accountants in its *Check Up* document. It makes for grim reading, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately for this NDP government it's all true. And here's what the accountant paper has to say. Saskatchewan's rate of new business incorporations was far behind that of other Western Canadian provinces.

The NDP, Mr. Speaker, can repeat their mantras and conjure up statistics in their own minds that everything is all right as much as they want, but the numbers the accountants are looking at are real, Mr. Speaker, not imaginary. Saskatchewan's effective taxation rate on capital investment for medium and large companies are the highest in the country, Mr. Speaker. I've stood in my place and I've said that many times, whether it's in question period or in speeches like this, Mr. Speaker. This government spends more time defending high taxes than actually doing something about it.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the highest corporate capital tax rate, the highest capital tax rate, the highest small-business tax rate, and the highest property taxes in Canada. How is that even defensible by this NDP government, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not defensible. It's deplorable, it's deplorable.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. It now being the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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