

April 14, 1988

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Goodale: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and my honour today to present to you and to this Assembly some special guests who are just now, Mr. Speaker, arriving in the gallery above us here. I refer to some 90 people from le Collège Mathieu in Gravelbourg. They are both students and staff members at this unique and historic French language high school in our province.

Monsieur l'Orateur, ces personnes sont vivement concernées par la question des droits de la minorité de la langue officielle en Saskatchewan. Leur présence parmi nous aujourd'hui démontre le courage de leurs convictions, et je les en félicite.

I would ask all hon. members, Mr. Speaker, to join with me in welcoming these special guests from Collège Mathieu with us this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Andrew: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg welcoming the students from Collège Mathieu. I just came from a meeting with them with a rousing debate with regard to Bill 2. I hope their visit here is enjoyable. Their questions were probing, and perhaps you will see some further probing questions in this question period.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Saxinger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of grade eight students from Cudworth, accompanied by their teacher, Jim Bridgeman, and their bus driver, Dwight Windrum. Mr. Speaker, I'm very honoured to meet with these people at 3 o'clock for pictures and refreshments. I hope they have an enjoyable day in Regina. Would you please help me welcome the students from Cudworth.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Simard: — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join in welcoming the students who are here today, and to the students at Gravelbourg I'd like to say: Bienvenue a la législature. C'est un grand plaisir d'avoir fait votre connaissance cette après midi, et nous espérons

que vous ayez du succès en votre mission spéciale pour protéger vos droits fondamentaux. Bonne chance.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and to the members of the legislature today 12 grade 8 students from Bruno, Saskatchewan, accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Jmaeff. And I would say that I'll be meeting with them later for pictures and refreshments. I hope they enjoy the proceedings here today and enjoy their visit to Regina.

I would like to thank you and help you welcome them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the legislature, a special group of gentlemen sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to introduce Mr. Peter Steen, the president and chief executive officer of Royex Gold Mining Corporation, Mr. Anton Hendriksz, the president of Mahogany Mineral Resources, Inc., joint venture partner with Royex Gold Mining; Mr. Rob McCallum, vice-president of operations for Royex; Mr. Garry Biles, mine manager of the Jolu mines project; Dr. Ralph Cheesman, manager of the Saskatchewan Mining Association, and also an official from the northern affairs secretariat, Ms. Allison Stickland.

Mr. Speaker, these gentlemen are in town today to announce the opening of the Jolu gold mine project in northern Saskatchewan, and I would like to take this time to thank them for the initiative that they have shown and the confidence that they have shown in our province. As we all know, a major project such as this creates economic opportunities and job opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan and, particularly, the people of northern Saskatchewan. And I would like all members to welcome them in the customary manner.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Solomon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would, on behalf of the New Democratic Party opposition, extend a welcome to the officials from Royex. I had the pleasant occasion of having lunch with some of them just recently — actually at the Sheraton at noon today. And I would like to, on behalf of our caucus, wish the Jolu mine great success, and I hope that you are able to find and refine and produce that gold at very high levels . . .

An Hon. Member: — Those flow-through shares.

Mr. Solomon: — So those flow-through shares will be working well. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Welcome.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It seems to be a day in which we have quite a number of students present, and distinguished visitors.

It's my pleasure to introduce 20 students from the Holy Rosary Elementary School — these are grades 7 and 8 students — accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. C. Chastkavich and Mr. — here the handwriting is not very clear actually — Smadu, I guess. If it's not correct, I'll apologize later. I will get to meet with them at 2:30 p.m. I look forward to discussing today's proceedings with them and to get their reaction.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Farm Debt Crisis

Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. My question today was to be to the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture, but in his absence I direct the question to the Acting Minister of Agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, it pertains to the crushing debt load of Saskatchewan farmers — I think the minister knows that it amounts to approximately \$6 billion in Saskatchewan alone — and today's protest march by a number of Saskatchewan farmers to the farm credit corporation about the debt crisis.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as the government knows and as the House knows, the budget by the Minister of Finance had nothing concrete to offer by way of specific joint action involving the provincial government, the federal government, and the lending institutions, to try to give some farmers hope on easing this debt crisis.

My question therefore, to the Acting Minister of Agriculture, is this: will he be able to advise the House today what specifically the provincial government has in mind with respect to the debt crisis — such things, for example, as perhaps the restructuring of the debt or a strengthening of the debt review board? What specific legislative or financial action is in place to help Saskatchewan family farmers on the debt crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, and hon. member, as everyone in Saskatchewan knows, there have been a number of initiatives already undertaken by this government relative to dealing with the financial pressures and the low commodity prices, the trade wars, the debt that farmers in Saskatchewan, and indeed across the western world, face.

What additional measures that might be taken, I would recommend to the hon. member to stay tuned. Obviously the Premier has been involved in discussions and negotiations with the farm groups. And just as this government has been there for the farmers, whether the issue was droughts, floods, grasshoppers, operating — a shortage of operating cash, high interest rates, whatever the case has been, this government has been there for the farmers of Saskatchewan and will continue to be there for them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, quite frankly I welcome the hint, if I may use that word, by the Acting Minister of Agriculture, that there may be some announcements in the near future. My new question of course is predicated on what I believe the minister would agree with me is a crisis which demands almost immediate action, certainly before the summer gets going in Saskatchewan, so that the farmers know exactly what their game plan is for the weeks and months ahead.

My specific question to the minister is this: the Premier, I gather, is in Saskatoon meeting with M. Bourassa and with M. Mulroney. Will the minister tell the House whether or not the Premier is raising specifically with the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Quebec, particularly the Prime Minister of Canada, the gravity of the farm debt crisis? Is it on the agenda for his discussions today with the Prime Minister? And if it is on the agenda, would the minister tell the House, with some degree of specificity, if I may use that word, exactly what it is that the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture is advocating that the federal and provincial governments should do to ease the farm debt crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I don't know exactly what's on the agenda when the Prime Minister and the Premier meet, but I can tell you this, when it comes to agriculture, our Premier has proven to be a very persuasive individual with the federal government because he's delivered not only on grain stabilization payments that have been of record high levels but on two deficiency payments. We had a price increase in the initial prices earlier this week that represented \$170 million.

And the other thing that I think will probably get some discussion today is agricultural research, given that they're at the university. And I'll tell you one other thing. Our Premier delivered for the farmers of Saskatchewan where you and your party didn't deliver for 25 years, and that is on the building of a new agriculture college at the University of Saskatchewan, and it's under way right now, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a new question to the acting minister. He may not believe this, but I'm trying to ask these questions in as non-partisan an atmosphere as is possible. I don't know, quite frankly, how in the world a new College of Agriculture, as

welcome as it may be, is going to ease the debt crisis for the family farmers of Saskatchewan who are being foreclosed on and are being deeply troubled.

So my question to the minister, and I put it to him, if he could possibly spare the partisan, political rhetoric, my question to the minister is this: can he tell this House whether or not the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, is raising specifically with Mr. Mulroney — I gather they're meeting about now — the issue of joint federal-provincial debt relief and debt management for the farmers of Saskatchewan?

An Hon. Member: — You can count on it.

Mr. Romanow: — And if the answer is yes, as the Deputy Premier indicates, more than just simply saying yes, in order to justify the meeting and in order to put at ease some of the concerns of the members of the House, will he give this House and the public an indication of precisely what it is that the Premier is putting on the table in his talks with Mr. Mulroney.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well I view the answer to the questions in the same non-partisan dimension, Mr. Speaker. And the point that I would like to make, relative to the member's opposition to a Premier and a Prime Minister viewing agricultural research and a new agriculture college and biotechnology, agricultural biotechnology as important, we view it as important; they may not.

But I think that points out the difference between the Progressive Conservative administration of our Premier and the NDP philosophy when it comes to farm issues, Mr. Speaker. They are interested in short-term band-aids; we're interested in, yes, making sure our farmers get through the immediate term, but as well looking to the longer term.

And that's the kind of thing that agriculture research does. It brought us rust-resistant wheat for this province, Mr. Speaker. It brought us canola, Mr. Speaker, for this province. And who knows what lies ahead that will come forth from the good research at the University of Saskatchewan, out of that new agriculture college, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I have one final new question to the minister, if I might, with your permission. I want to make it clear to the minister opposite that no one on this side of the House is opposed to more research in agriculture, to a college of agriculture, to any of these kinds of programs. I think anybody in the province who in fact would oppose those would be doing a disservice to the farmers of Saskatchewan. That's not the issue.

But the issue is, and the minister acknowledged it in his first answer to the first question that I put to him — he was fair enough to do so — that there is a serious debt load crisis,

Mr. Speaker — \$6 billion on Saskatchewan farmers alone. Surely that demands some indication by either the minister or the Minister of Finance or the Premier; it indicates and demands a specific course of action.

Can you tell us: are you planning to strengthen the debt review provisions? Are you planning some form of joint federal-provincial financial help? Are you planning some form of debt restructuring? What specifically is it that your government has in mind? — because it's already the middle of April, and I submit to you, Mr. Minister, that this is such a grave crisis that everybody in Saskatchewan concerned with the future of family farms ought to know now what your administration has planned for them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be leaving my announcements to the Premier and Minister of Agriculture, but I would just reiterate: we have been there for the farmers, no matter what the issue has been. We will continue to be there.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the debt situation and for protecting farmers, The Farm Security Act, the counselling and assistance for farmers, the loan guarantees has done a great deal over the last three and four years, Mr. Speaker, and we can be proud of that.

And not all members in the NDP opposition, Mr. Speaker, can talk forthrightly about protecting farmers in this province like this side of the House can, Mr. Speaker, and there is no doubt about that. It has been written into this record many times relative to that point, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, I thought you understood the problem. I'm not so sure now from your comments.

But what is needed is a way to ease the farm debt load through co-operation from the provincial government, from the federal government, and from the financial institutions. You three were part of the problem; you have to be part of the solution, and you can take the lead on that.

You've wasted a year now trying to sell your equity financing corporation solution to the financial crisis. Farmers have rejected that idea, and my question is this: is your government going to continue to push an idea of equity financing that the farmers of this province have rejected?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — This whole question of farm debt — the fact that the hon. members would raise it today, Mr. Speaker, it's almost suggesting that this is somehow a new issue, and it is not. And it is something that many government members have been turning their heads to for a good long time now over this past several months, consulting with farm groups as to what some other options might possibly be.

It's not a new issue, Mr. Speaker, and I would simply ask: would the NDP even be raising this issue if it weren't for the fact that this very day the NFU (National Farmers Union) are staging some kind of mock funeral downtown? Are they merely playing to the NFU crowd, Mr. Speaker? I ask you in all honesty, is that all they're doing raising this issue here today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the non-answers from this minister. I asked a question on equity financing and he didn't give me an answer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you are so void of ideas that all you are pushing is an equity financing corporation.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool now have a plan out called the rural stability program that would ease the farm debt crisis and take away the idea that the farmers are telling me that if we have equity financing we'll have bank land.

Now, Mr. Minister, my question is this: since you obviously don't have any better ideas, will you sit down with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, discuss their policy on rural stability program, and implement a program like that before the end of this session?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question wherein he suggested that we are somehow devoid of ideas when it comes to helping build agriculture, diversify agriculture, and protect agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Because if that's the case then what does he call things like this: a livestock cash advance; the agriculture research fund, Mr. Speaker; a production loan program, Mr. Speaker, credit and agriculture credit corporation like we've never seen it before, Mr. Speaker, for our farmers; feeder associations and loan guarantees for feeder associations — across this province, a network that we've never had for a half a century, Mr. Speaker.

The Farm Security Act; counselling and assistance; oil royalty rebates, Mr. Speaker; a special deficiency payment from the federal government; rural natural gas . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. I think the minister has made his point. Next question.

Mr. Upshall: — One final question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, obviously you have no ideas, you have no solutions . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Is the hon. member asking a new question or a supplementary?

Mr. Upshall: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, if you didn't hear me. I said another question, a new question.

Farmers in this province are frustrated. I am frustrated, and the people other than the farmers are frustrated because you have no solutions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Will you and your colleagues on that side of the fence please convince the Premier, who is the Minister of Agriculture, that we cannot afford to have a part-time Minister of Agriculture. We need a full-time minister to address the problems of farm debt crisis in this province now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: — I want to tell this member, Mr. Speaker, and his colleagues across there, that he is absolutely naïve if he somehow thinks that some provincial government can fiddle a few dials and change a few programs and make the farm debt or the commodity price crisis go away, because you cannot. It is an international situation; there is no simple answer for this, Mr. Speaker. We have responded time and time again. We will continue to respond, Mr. Speaker, and I'll tell you what — you'll never see a headline in this province like you'll see in the *Ottawa Citizen* where it says, "Manitoba Farmers Threaten to Oust . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Property Tax Burden

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister, or the Acting Minister of Agriculture, has given up on trying to find solutions, so let me address a question to the Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — And it deals with your government's favourite game, Mr. Minister, shifting the tax burden, shifting the tax burden because of the waste and mismanagement of your government.

And I want to ask you specifically about property taxes. In six years, the property tax burden in this province has sky-rocketed, thanks to your failure to provide adequate funding to local governments and to school boards. And my question to you is this: is the minister aware that since his government came to office that the property taxes collected in Saskatchewan have jumped by \$400 million, about 92 per cent. And I ask you, in light of those facts, when can Saskatchewan property taxpayers expect some form of tax relief from this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, today we have just seen the New Democratic response to the provincial budget. And all through their response did they ever talk about taxes? They didn't, Mr. Speaker, because this government . . . we have brought in the second lowest taxes of any province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, the second lowest taxes of any province in the Dominion of Canada. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, independently shown that we have the lowest overall tax load in the Dominion of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, local governments do have some responsibility and role in maintaining and reducing their property taxes, Mr. Speaker, it is this government that has brought in the proposals for responding, for example, to the business tax for the business community of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the hon. member to join with me in condemning Regina city council for having the highest taxes in the province of Saskatchewan, and I hope he joins with me in suggesting that they begin to reduce their taxes for the people of this city, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Well, Mr. Minister, your answer falls on deaf ears. Even your back-benchers don't believe you. I think we're going to have to change the Minister of Finance's name to Pinocchio.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I want to say, Mr. Minister of Finance, let's take a look in Saskatoon. New question, Mr. Speaker. This week the Saskatoon public school board was forced to increase its mill rate. And you know why? Because their operating grants were cut \$513,000. Twenty-seven dollars a taxpayer on average is the mill rate increase. Ten years ago, 43 per cent of the operating grants for the city of Saskatoon public school operation was paid by the government. Today it's 33 per cent.

Now that's a tax shift, Mr. Minister, and I'm asking you again: when are you going to come and give some relief to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan instead of to your corporate friends?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: — First of all let me say, Mr. Speaker, that in light of the proposals to reduce the business tax in this province by one-half, and it being targeted to small business, it's actually with some pride that I take the criticism that we're helping our corporate friends when we reduce the business tax by 50 per cent for the small business of this province, Mr. Speaker. That's how far out of touch they are with small business, Mr. Speaker.

We would indicate, Mr. Speaker, that in fact . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order, order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lane: — The grants for education, Mr. Speaker, have increased. The hon. member knows it. They're up significantly since they were the government of this province, Mr. Speaker. Again I think we can single out, we can single out, for example, the city of Regina governed primarily, I think it fair to say, by New Democratic supporters on council that have brought in the highest taxes of any government, any civic government in the city of . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order.

Alleged Mismanagement of STC

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Transportation Company, the people's bus company. The company's 1987 annual report documents show you . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. I'm sure we're having difficulty hearing the member from Regina North, and could we have some silence in the House, please.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I say, my question is to the minister responsible for the people's bus company, STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company). The 1987 annual report shows how you people have run this publicly run, publicly owned company into the ground.

Since you took office, STC has had a loss every single year, and these losses now total over \$13 million. The number of passengers carried by STC has dropped by more than 100,000 per year. The number of buses has dropped. The average age of your buses has more than doubled, increased very dramatically, Mr. Minister, my question is: are you

people deliberately running this company into the ground, or are you just plain incompetent managers? Which is it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In defence of the government as a whole, you may know, and the people of Saskatchewan know today, that the overall management of this administration with respect to many Crown corporations is a very, very fine record, and the profit showed by many, many corporations being tabled today by their annual reports that they are good.

Now you bring up the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, and indeed the Saskatchewan Transportation Company is operating at a significant loss. But I want you, hon. member, and I want the people of Saskatchewan to know that this administration, this government, supports, supports the service of bus transportation to rural Saskatchewan. And we will maintain that support. And if we have to lose a little bit of money to provide that service, we're willing to do it.

I will admit, Mr. Speaker, there is room for improvement in the management of the bus company, and there will be changes to the bus company. But I want to stand very firm, Mr. Speaker, that this administration supports whole-heartedly bus service to rural Saskatchewan, and it is something that we will not let the members of the New Democratic jeopardize.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — New question, Mr. Speaker. I hear your rhetoric about how fine you've mismanaged our Crown corporations, and I have to point to STC, where the debt has more than doubled; PCS, where it's more than 10 times the debt under . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order. I think we're getting into debate.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I have here a report from a major competitor, Greyhound, in the very same bus industry. These annual reports show that Greyhound has been making money, adding buses, and adding service, and making money, while you people are selling off buses, cutting service, and losing money.

My question is — you are talking about privatizing STC, changes to our bus system — how is that going to help maintain the service to many of the rural outlying areas of this province? How is privatizing STC going to benefit anyone?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not certain of what will happen with the bus company in future years. But one thing that I am very certain of — and the hon. member compares Saskatchewan Transportation Company with the Greyhound Corporation bus lines. Well, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we do not have lines that

run . . . that are similar to lines that run between New York and Detroit. We don't have lines that run between Toronto and Montreal.

This is rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This bus company is a company that services rural Saskatchewan, and indeed we don't have the population to support the figures that the Greyhound or other major transportation companies do.

The only thing that I can say positively, Mr. Speaker: this government is committed to bus transportation to rural Saskatchewan. It may take a slightly different form in the months to come, but this government is firmly, whole-heartedly committed to service to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Trew: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I did not hear you answer the question about privatization and when is it going to happen, and how is that going to guarantee service to many of the outlying communities in Saskatchewan? Answer the question: how is privatization in any way, shape, or form going to help the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, excuse me, but I am a little confused by the member's comments. I don't know if he is for privatization — he brings up Greyhound, and they're making all sorts of money, maybe we should privatize it — or if the member is against privatization.

I think the one thing that stands out abundantly clearly is the member is against rural Saskatchewan. This government is for rural Saskatchewan and transportation services to those areas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Formation of Telephone Directly Review Committee in SaskTel

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for SaskTel, I am pleased to announce that a telephone directories review committee has been formed to examine ways to better manage SaskTel's telephone directory issue.

Recent production problems experienced in publishing some of the directories were the factor in the decision to establish this review committee.

I've asked the review committee to assess the directly operation from a customer and a corporate point of view so that the business can provide greater benefit to the people in the economy of the province.

I have directed the review committee to examine alternate ways of operating the business, including possible economies of scale. I've asked the committee to provide recommendations which will give SaskTel future direction for the directory business and identify factors which will influence the future growth of the operation.

I have given the committee a very broad mandate to examine the directory business with the expectation of receiving recommendations for the long-term benefit of SaskTel and its customers.

The members of the committee are Linda Prettie, an office manager in Prince Albert; Marcel De La Gorgendiere, a Saskatoon lawyer and former president of the Saskatchewan chamber of commerce; and Bob Bundon, an accountant in Saskatoon and president of the Saskatchewan chamber of commerce.

I look forward to the recommendations of the review committee to provide SaskTel with important guidance in dealing with the future direction of its directory operation.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Speaker, I was a bit surprised at the minister's comments. It has been traditional in this House for a long, long time, even when I sat on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that the ministerial statement was provided to the critic.

And if the members opposite will be quiet, Mr. Speaker, while I'm making my response to the ministerial statement, I want to point out a couple of things to the minister in charge of SaskTel. The minister in charge of SaskTel had a colossal, a colossal bungle in SaskTel while he was the minister, and he now moves to attempt to correct the situation. I say it's long overdue.

There are a number of other things that the minister should be looking into in SaskTel, one of them being the publication of glossy books for the employees of SaskTel which have run into tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of dollars. That program, a total waste. And I intend, Mr. Speaker, to get to that subject later on in this session and spend some time on that matter.

The minister announces that the SaskTel has a profit this year. Well I say to the minister: where is the settlement with the employees of SaskTel? Where is the settlement? These employees have been out for months and months and months, with no settlement to the contract.

Now, Mr. Speaker, aside from these oversights on behalf of the minister in charge of SaskTel and the oversight to extend the courtesy to send the ministerial statement across to the critic before he makes it, I want to say that I'm pleased to hear, even though it's a late conversion, to have the minister announce that he is going to have a committee look into this colossal bungle that was carried on in SaskTel recently.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

Hon. Mr. Lane: — Mr. Chairman:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$306,635,100 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 1989.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lane: —

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1989, the sum of \$306,635,100 be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to make a few comments in respect to the resolutions and the Appropriation Bill. I want to, at this time, thank the minister for sending over an advance copy. That is one of the few decent things that I have seen him do, and I am suspicious. But I do thank you sincerely for the consideration of an advance copy so that we could have a chance to look at it.

I think, when we're looking at the appropriation of a part of this budget, that I think it's important that we have some very serious reflections in respect to where the government is going, its basis of funding to the various programs and departments throughout the government.

And I want to start off, Mr. Chairman, by saying that the people of Saskatchewan, in my view, are very decent and fair, fair-minded, very progressive, compassionate. And the people in turn, I think, expect no less from its government. They want a fair government, they want a competent government, they want an open government, and they want an honest government.

And each of us being elected to this Assembly, it seems to me, have a duty to act in the best interests of all Saskatchewan residents. And I say that we here in Saskatchewan have been blessed with great acres of the best farm land in the world. We have potash and uranium supplies equaling the world's supply. We have oil and gas; we have coal; we have forest resources. And so I want to say here that having all of these, being blessed with all of these things, I want to address the issues which I think has to characterize a government and, in this, the financial affairs of the province.

And I want to turn first of all, Mr. Chairman, to the aspect of whether this government has been fair to the people of this province. I want to deal with some of the aspects to see whether or not they were indeed fair.

This Minister of Finance, who brought down the budget on March 31 just before Good Friday, brought in yet another massive deficit of \$328 million, with an accumulated deficit of \$328 million, with an accumulated deficit during his three budgets of \$2.1 billion or, on average, \$700 million annually has been the average of the budget deficit under this Minister of Finance.

Today the total deficit, as I indicated, is \$3.7 billion, and to service that debt alone costs the people of Saskatchewan \$330 million. And those are large numbers. But to put it into perspective, that we have a million people here in Saskatchewan, and I say to those who are listening here this afternoon that just to service the debt costs almost . . . costs \$330 million. That amounts to almost \$1 for every man, woman, and child in the province of Saskatchewan, every day of every week of every month for the entire year.

(1445)

And when you sit down at the supper table — I'll tell you what it is — with your family, the father, the mother, and every child sitting at that supper table at every supper on every day has to put into the bucket to pay the Premier's and the Minister of Finance's mismanagement, \$1 — \$1 a day for every man, woman, and child, just to service the debt of this province.

And let's take a look at how they have been fair in respect to taxes. This government and this Minister of Finance in the last two budgets has imposed the greatest tax increases that this province has ever known — in last year's budget, \$263 million dollars of increased taxes on ordinary people in Saskatchewan. They increased the E&H tax, which they said they would eliminate; they increased the flat tax; they increased the gas tax — tax upon tax. And this year again, what they've done is added further tax to the ordinary people of this province — another \$70 million; a half a per cent increase in flat tax of \$50 million; an increase in the consumer tax on tobacco of \$18 million. But let's see whether they're fair to the people of the province. They have imposed, in the last two years, over \$330 million of additional taxes, direct.

But what do they do for their friends? They got a different recipe. For their friends, what did they do? Well to the corporate boys they said, you need a tax break, and so the Minister of Finance cut the tax, corporate income tax, by 2 per cent, losing some \$8 million of revenues to the province.

He cut the corporate tax more than the total amount of revenue that he provided to the operating . . . increases to the operating grants for all of the schools operating in Saskatchewan. There he offered \$7 million to operate all of the schools throughout the province, but to the corporate friends he said, here's \$8 million of tax rebate, tax cut. Not very fair, I say — not fair to the people that have built this province.

And then let's take a look at the program cuts. Throughout his department . . . throughout all of the departments of government you will notice that 11 departments have received less funding, cuts in their funding.

You will find that the health program has been savaged — the drug program and the dental program — the most savage cuts to the drug programs. And today as you visit around, if they dare go into Elphinstone and meet with some of the constituents there, they will find the problems that are caused by the slashing of the drug program, where people on limited income have to decide whether they'll put food on the table or purchase drugs to keep them living.

Those are the choices that this government has made and forced upon the people of this province. And I say that's not fair, and the people of Saskatchewan say it's not fair. And the people of Saskatchewan say it's not fair that for every \$1 we have to pay in personal income tax, that the corporations pay 16 cents. I say, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan want a fair government. The people of Saskatchewan are not getting a fair government, and it's demonstrated by the deficit that they have burdened the people with, by the increase in the taxes, by the massive cuts and underfunding of basic programs.

And let's take a look again. Let's ask ourselves, is this a competent government? Well I've just said that it has run up the largest, the most massive debt that this province has ever known, and that's not being very competent.

But most of all, this government had a choice. This government had a choice to keep that debt down. They could have chosen to charge to the oil companies something like \$1.7 billion in oil revenues, but they allowed the oil companies to drift off with that revenue. And they have left this province burdened with debt.

Let's take a look at what they have . . . some of the other actions. Here is a government that can't afford a dental program for our children, but they can spend \$8.4 million on empty office space. Eight million dollars would guarantee and reinstate the dental program, but they spend it on empty office space. They spend \$24 million advertising, trying to brainwash the public into believing in their performance rather than, I say, rather than performance in programs — \$24 million wasted annually on wasteful advertising, empty office space.

And now that they have devastated the treasury — they have literally made the province broke — do you know what they say? The Minister of Finance says, well we can't help our farmers; course not! How can we help them in their debt situation? They say the problem is too big for the provincial treasury to solve, but at the same time the Premier goes around and says, we'll open the treasury to help our farmers. The only problem is, they have emptied the treasury; they've handed it over to their friends.

Competent government, economic planning for the future — really demonstrated. It's really demonstrated when you look at the welfare budget. Over \$190 million that is spent

supporting welfare recipients, 57,000 of them; 45,000 people unemployed. Those are the statistics which indicate categorically that this government has no direction, that this government has no competence, that this government is unfit to govern this province.

I want to look at the source of revenues. The Minister of Finance is bragging about having reduced somewhat the deficit from the previous year. Well if you look at the revenue source, do you know what the biggest revenue source increase there is?

Well it's certainly not corporate income tax, because they cut those. And it's not individual retail sales, because they're down. But I'll tell you where it's coming from. The biggest reduction in the deficit accounted for was \$175 million increase in equalization payment — \$175. When we left office, Mr. Chairman . . .

An Hon. Member: — 175 million.

Mr. Koskie: — One hundred and seventy-five million, yes. When we left office, Mr. Minister, we were in fact a “have” province, and this outfit has turned Saskatchewan into a “have not” province. And the biggest increase in revenue is equalization payments from the federal government — \$175 million, because they can't run the province.

If you take a look at the increase in the payments or receipts from the other governments, it's over . . . the increase is about \$208 million from other governments that is flowing in here. That indeed is about equal to the deficit increase. It is paid, not from generating an active and vibrant society, not that new businesses is springing up and new jobs being created, and more people paying taxes, and more revenue, and more retail sales, more personal income tax. No, we're getting our extra revenue by being a “have not” province, by being a province which they have driven the people to the highest per capita debt in the nation. That's the legacy of the competence, rather the incompetence, of this government.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that one other thing, as I said, the people of Saskatchewan also want is an open government. When this government assumed office, I think they believed that they were going to operate in an open fashion. And I can remember the speeches that were made by members opposite indicating the necessity to consult with other people.

And I can remember the former minister of Finance. He said, we will consult; we will go down to the shopping malls and we'll set up computers and let the people go in, and they can plug in what programs they want to cut and what programs they want extended, and we'll have full participation.

And the Premier immediately after becoming Premier said, oh, I will set up a youth council that I will consult with. Huh, have you heard of it since? They've now sold the computer. It's no longer available for the people to have input. And total consultation with the public has been withdrawn.

They say the minister in charge of privatization . . . He goes on television and he says to the people of this province, no, none of the Crown corporations will be sold — none — unless the people of the province have an opportunity to discuss it and are in agreement. That's what he said to the people of Saskatchewan, and what did he do with Sask Minerals? Well ask the people that are working down at Chaplin because I spoke to some of them. And you know when they were informed in respect to their participation in the privatization of Sask Minerals? They were told on the day that the sale was announced.

And did the people of Saskatchewan have an opportunity to buy a share in the corporation which they already owned? I say no. What they did is they went down to eastern Canada, rounded up a couple of their corporate friends and said, here's a corporation, Sask Minerals; take it. We want to get rid of it. That's our ideology; we want to get rid of it, regardless of what the people of this province have to say.

Really an open government. Really letting people participate. Fantastic participation as evidenced there.

And let's take another example. Throughout the history of this legislature, *Public Accounts* and the auditor's report has always been filed so that when the session opens in the spring that the opposition have an opportunity to review the expenditures of the previous year and to look at the auditor's report.

Today we're into the middle of April. We've asked the Minister of Finance to table the *Public Accounts*, and if the auditor's report . . . to table that. And what has he said? He said they're — he didn't say this, but one can gather they're afraid to have the books open to disclose the expenditures of this government.

This is not an open government any more. This is a government that's running afraid of the people of this province, and the facts will destroy them. And as a consequence they say, do not file the *Public Accounts*.

And then they brought in the budget. They were supposed to be so proud of their budget, except no one in the back-benches would get up and speak and support it. Very strange — not many of them.

An Hon. Member: — The budget?

Mr. Koskie: — Yes, that's right — the budget. You didn't speak on the budget; that's the problem.

But when did they bring the budget down, Mr. Chairman? Did they want the public to be able to address the budget, to review the budget, so there could be comment on the budget?

Well what they did is arrange that they would have it just before Easter season — March 31. Next day was Good Friday and Saturday and Sunday and Monday, so the public

wouldn't have an opportunity. Now that's confidence in a budget. That's openness. I say it indicates that this is a closed, it's a secretive government. This is a government that is now, as I said, afraid of the people of Saskatchewan.

The final characteristic that the people of Saskatchewan want in their government is that they want an honest government. And I say that the people of Saskatchewan have learned to expect that.

(1500)

There's been a tradition in this province that when the premier of a province spoke — whether it was Tommy Douglas or Woodrow Lloyd or Ross Thatcher, the late Ross Thatcher, or Allan Blakeney — one thing the people may not agree with all of their policy, but one thing was sure that you could trust the promises that those men made to the people of Saskatchewan. Integrity, it was called, decency, honesty . . .

An Hon. Member: — Fairness.

Mr. Koskie: — Fairness. But look at this government's record. And how can there be any possibility of integrity being left, Mr. Chairman. This government and many of the members in the back benches promised, promised that they were going to improve the drug program. And the Minister of Finance himself signed a certificate indicating a guarantee that he would in fact eliminate the prescription drug fee.

And look what has happened. How can the people of Saskatchewan believe them? In 1982 they said to the people of Saskatchewan, elect us and we will eliminate the education tax, the E&H tax. They promised that. Millions of dollars of cut in taxation, they said. First term of office, and last year what did they do? They increased the sales tax, the E&H tax by 40 per cent to 7 per cent — \$100 million they took out of the people's pockets — \$100 million.

And then they promised the gas tax. In 1982, they said we will eliminate the gas tax, get rid of it. The Premier said in this House, never again as long as there's a Tory government sitting on this side of the House will we ever see again this gas tax. After the election what happened? Back on goes the gas tax.

And do you know who he gives the rebate to? He doesn't give the rebate to the business men who are helping to generate the economy. He gives it to the ones that use it for joy — not joy riding — but for ordinary family driving, pleasure, pleasure. That's what he did. And a basic, basic plank in their program that they reneged on.

Another one that the seniors are asking as we go around in Eastview and into Elphinstone, they're saying this government made a promise, and we haven't heard about it lately. We want to know where that promise is that the Premier made to us, that the Minister of Finance made: free telephones to all seniors, they said. Where has that got? Broken promise, no integrity, not being honest with the people of this province.

Where is the farm purchase program that they said that they would put so many young people onto the farms? Well they introduced it, but then they decided that they didn't have enough money to help the farmers any more, because they had to choose between the farmers or the oil companies or the resource companies. And they opted, Mr. Chairman, for the oil companies and the resource companies, and they abandoned the farm purchase program.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the ultimate was in 1986-87, this same Minister of Finance brought down a budget before the election and he said there's going to be a deficit of \$389 million. And one of the highlights of his budget, he said, this will be a reduction of the deficit, meaning from the previous year. And do you realize what happened? He brought in a deficit of \$1.2 billion.

Eight hundred million dollars it cost more than what he budgeted for just to elect another Tory government. They used the people's money to buy their way back into power. But I'll tell you, it won't work and we'll test it in Eastview and we'll test it in Elphinstone, and I'll say the record will show come May 4.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Mr. Speaker, while we are going to be supporting, in principle, the appropriation, because this has been a normal thing to do — that if a government brings down its budget in the normal time, in late February-March, that as we proceed through the estimates, that an appropriation be granted.

But I want to say that we do it with reservations, reservations because we believe this government's priorities are wrong. We think that this last budget has been unfair, that it was mean. I think it was a budget that catered to the large corporations at the expense of ordinary Saskatchewan citizens.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, while we'll be supporting it, I want to say that this government has, with this budget and with the previous budget, has really burdened the people of this province with a heavy legacy of crushing debt, of reduced services, of massive increase of taxes. And as I indicated today in question period, a more massive shift of taxation is going on to the property owners.

So they've given them the legacy, then, of debt, of higher taxes, of cut-back in programs, and most of all what they have done, they are starting to shatter the hopes of the people of this province. They have indicated to the farmers of Saskatchewan that they will not in fact be able to assist them because they have made their choice, they have given to the oil companies and the resource companies; the treasury is empty. They say, we are not going to be able to help the farmers of Saskatchewan.

We will support the Bill, but on those reservations, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I, too, would like to add a few words this afternoon to this Appropriation Bill. And I would want to say, on behalf of the people of this province who have been looking at the legacy of mismanagement and incompetence displayed by this government, that not all of the people of this province are willing to accept the kind of government that this Premier and that Executive Council and those back-benchers have delivered.

And the member from Weyburn is yapping and yipping, and I just want to tell him that we spent a little time in his riding the other day, and he would want to know that it wasn't all New Democrats, as he indicates, that are disgusted and dissatisfied with the kind of government you've delivered. There were people of other political stripe who are not very comfortable with what's gone on in this province since 1982 as well.

This government has built up a massive \$3.7 billion deficit. This year alone they're forecasting yet another 350 million — I say a record that no government should be proud of. At the same time they've built this massive deficit, individual income tax is up 103 per cent — 103 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a short period of time that a Premier and his council and his back-benchers, since 1982, have been running amok over the last six years or so.

As well, the people of this province are looking at a flat tax, from the most intelligent budget that costs a family with an income of \$25,000 some \$500 a year — this from a government that promised in '82 to reduce personal income tax by 10 per cent in this province.

And I say to you, that while we'll be supporting this Appropriation Bill, as my colleague from Quill Lakes says, we do with reservation.

And I want to say today, if I could, a few words about this government's proposals for privatization of some of the vehicles that we've used to deliver health care service and education, and that we've used to balance our budgets over the year. And I want to speak to the privatization of the liquor stores in this province. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there has been an awful lot of revenue generated through those vehicles over the years, and this year alone I note they're forecasting some \$140 million to go in to the Minister of Finance to keep his deficit to \$350 million. And were it not for the 140, you'd be looking at some 490 million as opposed to what we're looking at.

And I want to say that whatever trickery they use to try and convince people that those revenues will still be there when you put a middleman in or when you privatize it, it can't happen, because anybody with any common sense would understand when you add someone to a business transaction, be it selling liquor or dry goods or whatever it happens to be, those people aren't going to perform that function for nothing; they want a profit. They've got to have a profit in order to maintain their business.

And I would like the minister of privatization to stand up in this House and indicate to the people of this province how they're going to maintain those revenues without increasing prices or without increasing the taxes on that commodity. I say to you that there is no way to do it, and the people of this province understand that there's no way to do it. I say, \$140 million worth of revenue that after privatization is going to be decreased, and decreased substantially, is not the way to be operating.

The people of this province demand the services that they've become accustomed to, and no one can blame them for that. They demand a decent system of health care and a decent system to educate their children. They demand a system of taxation that will allow them to keep their homes and drive their vehicles. And I say that this government is moving in just the opposite direction.

And I said we support this Appropriation Bill with reservation. I want to talk about what was in for small business. What was in this budget for small business? And I say to you — nothing.

When I talked to the truckers around this province who were asking for some relief from the unfair gas tax that they imposed upon them, that were promised in 1982 they were never going to see, what they tell me is that coupled with the deregulation of the trucking industry, this government is forcing them out of business.

And the members opposite might want to start talking to some of those small truckers who are losing their businesses, people who have served their communities and their province for 30 and 40 years. Because I want to say that I've been speaking to them and they're another group who are dissatisfied, disgusted, and are rejecting the policies of this PC government under the leadership of this Premier.

My colleague from Quill Lakes was indicating this government's lack of openness, and he was referring to the fact that the auditor's report is not available to the people of this province so that we can closer scrutinize the kind of spending and the kind of mismanagement that they've perpetrated upon the people.

They're afraid to go to the people with the facts and the true figures. They're afraid to let the people know just how bad their record of mismanagement has been. And the people of this province won't forgive them.

The kind of waste when you see \$8 million worth of commercial space empty, sitting vacant, and being paid for out of general revenue; that's not the kind of government that they promised to deliver. But I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the kind of government that they have delivered.

They indicated in this budget they were going to address the problem of the business tax. They tell the municipal governments they've got \$10 million — ah, but there's some conditions. What are the conditions? The conditions are that you find out of your revenue

another \$10 million to alleviate the business community of 50 per cent of that tax, of the \$40 million worth of taxation through the business tax.

(1515)

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nowhere in that budget address did they give the municipal governments any indication that there would be funds in order to do that. Well what's their answer? How do you do it? We'll privatize services.

Administrators in the cities and in the towns across this province have told this government that privatization isn't going to bring extra revenue or lower costs in terms of delivering services. There may be areas and there may be times when that may be the case. But as a general rule they're not going to be able to find the matching money in order to remove or reduce this business tax.

So what has the government done? Have we seen any municipal revenue-sharing grant increases? Not in this budget — not in this budget. Prior to 1982, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a pretty consistent thing in the budgets every spring that were delivered that you would see an increase, so that the local governments didn't have to increase their taxes to the people that they serve. But where is this government going?

This government says, well you find this money, find this \$10 million. Well how do you do it? Do you quit collecting the garbage? Do you quit cleaning the streets? Is that their answer? Because I tell you, that's what they're telling the mayors and the municipal governments throughout this province to do.

Are they saying, cut the funding to the school boards and that that's going to enhance the quality of education, and then through cutting that money through the school boards you can reduce this business tax and find this \$10 million? Is that their answer? Because I'm telling you that those municipal governments are scratching their heads right now, trying to find the \$10 million to match it to alleviate the business tax problem.

And this government has clearly abrogated its responsibility not only in that area — not only in that area. When you look at the number of bankruptcies of the small businesses, and what have they got? They've got a scam, a scheme: you find 10 million; we'll give you 10 million. But they never address the problem as to where those governments are going to find that money.

And then to put controls on those governments, to say to these governments, well you can quit picking up garbage, that's acceptable — I mean we don't mind, we don't mind — or you can quit cleaning the streets, or quit your highway . . . your little roads programs in your communities. You can cease all of that, like you guys have done provincially. And they can quit upgrading their roads in their communities, as you've done throughout this province, and they can find the money through that.

But I say to you, and I say to members opposite, those governments in the areas of the different communities in this province are not going to forgive you either, because you're placing burdens and hardships on them and you haven't helped them find solutions.

I say to you that time after time after time I've heard members on the other side of the House stand up and chastise municipal governments for being inefficient and not managing their communities' funds properly, and at the same time I say to you that we've got municipal governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who have done good jobs on behalf of the people of their province.

But while this government chastises municipal governments for inefficiencies, what are they doing? A total provincial debt of \$11 billion, a deficit of \$3.7 billion now, and this government has the audacity to stand up and chastise anyone for mismanagement or running an inefficient government. I say to you, shame on the members on the other side of this House.

You would want to govern as leaders and you would want to show leadership, I would think. And as a senior government to municipal governments in this province and to school boards, you should be showing some leadership in terms of sound economic planning and management. But what do we see? Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has demonstrated just the opposite from what they're asking others to do.

I see my time is passing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I just want to close by saying that of course, as history has, we will be supporting this Appropriation Bill, but as the member from Quill Lakes said, we do it with some reluctance. We know that the wheels of government have to keep turning, and we know that this government needs an awful lot more money than they've been able to generate, consistently year after year after year. But as I said, we'll be supporting this Bill.

But I, Mr. Speaker, would want to say that I do it with a great degree of reluctance because it doesn't address the problems, and it doesn't address the issues. And I want to end by saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has been unfair, they've been indecent, and they don't deserve to hold the reins of power in the province that all of us hold so dear. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to participate this afternoon in the interim supply motion put forward by the Minister of Finance, the purpose of which is to provide funding to the government to continue operations until such time as the actual budget that's been prepared by the Minister of Finance has been passed by the due process of this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, just since October of 1986 we've seen a great deal of changes in the face of Saskatchewan, in this province. The changes have been harsh, cruel, and unusual as to what Saskatchewan people have grown to expect from their government, whether it be a

government of the years of Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd, or the years of the late Ross Thatcher, or the years of government under Allan Blakeney as leader of the New Democrats. They always had some appreciation for compassion and understanding, and there was always at least some semblance of a planned economy and a planning process for budgets in the administration of the province.

This is no longer the case. We have in Saskatchewan a very vicious attack on medical care. We find a government that wants to limit essential medical services to people. It seems strange. It's not only because of people's income in some instances; even people with the resources, the income to be able to afford good quality health service, find it difficult to attain in the province of Saskatchewan.

You look at the waiting lists throughout the province, and some, depending on the month and the figures, some 11,000 to 15,000 people — they're on waiting lists that can't get into hospitals for surgery — some cases elective surgery, granted. But the waiting lists are far too long to have people suffer the harsh reality that this government has cut funding so badly in health care in the province of Saskatchewan that people are no longer receiving the health care that they were used to in the province of Saskatchewan.

Even the Saskatchewan Medical Association and physicians throughout the province are deeply disturbed with this government. They're deeply disturbed by the capping of fees that are available for doctors to be paid out under the great medicare program that has been established in the province of Saskatchewan. It ended up in a court case, and the Saskatchewan Medical Association won the court case.

The judicial system in our land ruled in favour of the physicians and medical practitioners. They ruled that the government, this Conservative government, had no right to say that there was only this much available for medical care regardless of how serious people's medical problems may be or may become in the province.

Well, the Saskatchewan government wasn't happy with that. They've appealed the case, and the appeal is scheduled to be heard, or may have been heard at this point in time. I believe it has been heard at this point in time, but as yet the judgement has not been handed down on the appeal.

So they have not only attacked the people who are on fixed incomes in the province, they've attacked almost everyone in the province. I believe it was Senator Davey Steuart that once said in this House — and it would apply to the government opposite — Davey Steuart, at one time, said after the defeat, I think it was, of the Liberal government in the province of Saskatchewan, that if there was a group in the province or an individual that wasn't mad at them, it's because they haven't talked to them.

Certainly this government has touched so deeply so many people in the province that there is a massive group out there that is just waiting for the opportunity to go to the polls in a general election and soundly defeat the government of the member from Regina St. south, the member from Estevan, and that day will come soon. At least in terms of a

smaller test, we have the by-elections in Regina Elphinstone, and Saskatoon Eastview where I would predict, and I'm sure that the government's polling would show, there's going to be a very sound defeat of the Conservative candidates in both of the by-elections that are going to the polls on May 4 in this province.

That will just be a small picture of what's going to happen to this government when you're brave enough to again go before the polls and go before the Saskatchewan people in a general election in this province.

You see, first you came after working people — and in particular you can use dental therapists. And you didn't care, you didn't care that you destroyed a part of the medical care program in the province of Saskatchewan. You viciously attacked about 400 dental therapists, took them into rooms across the province and told them that their jobs were being abolished, the program that they had developed as the best dental program anywhere in the world, and you destroyed it — you absolutely destroyed it.

But it wasn't just enough to attack medicare and the dental therapists and the school-based children's dental program. Then you targeted at the sick and the elderly. You attacked the sick and the elderly because you destroyed the prescription drug plan in the province of Saskatchewan. You decimated that drug plan in the province of Saskatchewan so that those that are on limited incomes and those that are disabled and those that rely on prescription drugs, especially the elderly in many cases, can't afford to take the drugs that they need — drugs prescribed by their family physician or by some specialist within the province. They have to make a choice between buying food or buying their drugs or paying another bill.

We never thought we'd see the day in this great province where people would have to prioritize their spending to decide whether they're going to take care of their health or to take care of some other necessity.

People in this province always felt, and justly should feel, because of the precedent was set in the past, that you had equal care for medical care and you had equal access to drugs regardless of what your income is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — And this government has no compassion, no compassion whatsoever.

And you didn't stop. After you went after the dental therapists, and after you went after the seniors, and after you went after the disabled, you went after public ownership in the province of Saskatchewan. You don't want to call it public participation really; that's what you call it for the public, because the polling shows that, and that's what rules the governing party of the day in the province of Saskatchewan. The polling shows that the phrase "public participation" is popular, so you created a Department of Public Participation.

But it's not really a Department of Public Participation, it's privatization; it's destruction of the public institutions and Crown corporations that have been built up over the years in the province. There's been examples talked about in this legislature, and I can offer you those examples again because they're worth repeating, in case there's some people that haven't heard about it.

(1530)

What about Saskatchewan Minerals, the first Crown corporation in the province of Saskatchewan, established in 1947; established to get a share of the resource revenue which had previously been lost, completely lost from the province. Because we weren't getting that fair share, Sask Minerals was set up. They started off in the sodium sulphate mines in around the Chaplin area and they did an excellent job. Between the years 1947 and present, as far as I know, Sask Minerals only one year — only one year — had a loss. Every other year they made a profit to go into the programs that people in Saskatchewan had come to appreciate.

And what did they do through the Department of Public Participation, Mr. Chairman? Maybe some of the members opposite would like to say what they did. They sold the sodium sulphate division of Sask Minerals for twelve and a half million dollars. Twelve and a half million dollars to whom? To the people of Saskatchewan? No, it wasn't to the people of Saskatchewan. They sold it to one company from Toronto in partnership with another company from Quebec. Participation from Toronto and Quebec — hardly public participation for people within the province of Saskatchewan.

So it wasn't just enough to go after the dental therapists, and to go after the disabled, and to go after the seniors. They're so desperate for funding they're going after the revenue-generating mechanisms of public ownership that we've had in the province of Saskatchewan to pay off the short-term debt in terms of a big, long-term loss for people in the province of Saskatchewan.

What else do you want to do to try and raise money? You're deceiving people in Saskatchewan by saying free trade is going to be good for us over a long period of time. Are you going to debate free trade at some point in this legislature? They're afraid to debate free trade in this legislature because they know the people of Saskatchewan will see it as another nail in the coffin — another nail in the coffin.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Anguish: — Free trade is nothing more and nothing less than a sell-off, very rapid sell-off of Saskatchewan's resources to pay for the staggering debt that's been run up by this and the previous Minister of Finance in the province of Saskatchewan — just staggering debts.

What's free trade going to do? Is free trade going to help agriculture and add to manufacturing, add to manufacturing in the province of Saskatchewan? The government

says yes, and the member from Yorkton over there is saying yes. It'll help manufacturing in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well let's look at the facts, because I think what they're saying are contrary to the facts. We've had relatively free trade, or we have had free trade in farm machinery for years. For years we've had free trade in farm machinery between the United States and Canada. How many manufacturers are there now of major farm machinery in — not only Saskatchewan; in Canada? I ask the members opposite: how many manufacturers of farm machinery, in which we've had free trade for a number of years, how many are there in Saskatchewan? Silence. How many are there in Canada? Silence.

There are zero manufacturers of farm machinery in Canada, and we've had free trade for a number of years. So how is free trade going to help manufacturing in the province of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You want to participate in the debate? I hear some of the members clacking over there now. You wouldn't answer the questions when I posed them to you.

Hon. Mr. Klein: — The member opposite, in his remarks just now presently, indicated that he heard members opposite clapping — truly not a very factual statement. There was absolute silence.

Mr. Chairman: — The point of order is not well taken. It's a dispute . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order. Order. It's a dispute between two members, and the debate will continue.

Mr. Anguish: — Thank you. Thank you for your very accurate ruling, Mr. Chairman. Obviously something of what I'm saying is getting to the members opposite, and I'm glad that they have been listening. I thought they were trying to participate in part of the debate here today, but we see no one rising on that other side to participate in the debate.

Mr. Speaker, how about going back to this free trade again? What's going to happen when the Americans say to us, we don't have medicare in the United States of America — our great friends to the south. But you have medicare up there in Canada — incidentally, which started in the province of Saskatchewan — and you've got to develop this level playing field. So if that comes about, what assurance have we got that this government will stand and defend medicare in the province of Saskatchewan? None whatsoever.

An Hon. Member: — Look at the record.

Mr. Anguish: — Members are saying, look at the record. Members opposite and former members of that same political party said that medicare was a sacred trust. But look what you've done to the dental program. Look what you've done to the drug program in the

province of Saskatchewan. And I maintain, when the Americans say it's unfair for you to have a medicare program and we don't, you'll knuckle under like you've knuckled under to the Mulroney government in Ottawa, and will knuckle under to the American government to the south of us.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman — we're in the Committee of Finance; you'll have to excuse me if I keep calling you Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to a debate on free trade in this legislature so that the people can see the devastation that'll be brought about by a thoughtless plan by a thoughtless government.

The only plan that's taken place by this government is public opinion polling. And that's obvious through the deficits that have been created over a number of years. In fact, every year since this government has come into office, they've created just horrendous debts for the people in this province.

Addressing in more particular, I'd like to move to agriculture. In many ways, Mr. Chairman, the biggest surprise, and likely the most bitter disappointment for the agricultural community, was what the spending in the budget is not going to do. There's nothing really for Saskatchewan agriculture; there's nothing for Saskatchewan family farms; there's nothing for rural communities. There's nothing for our number one industry in the province of Saskatchewan — agriculture — our number one industry. And you're watching it go down the tubes.

Again, I want to talk about a lack of planning from the members opposite — lack of planning, where you have put billions of dollars into the farm economy through thoughtless kinds of programs, in many instances, which farmers were appreciative of because they needed the money. After all of those expenditures in previous years, we have a worse problem now than what we had in the years when that money was being put in — absolutely no plan.

In the budget, Mr. Chairman, and I quote, they promised to address two central issues facing our farm community — low commodity prices and high debt. That's what they promised. What are they going to do? Nothing, no action whatsoever, no action there, Mr. Speaker.

In the throne speech before the budget, they virtually ignored those problems. There was no mention, no plan put in place. And I'd ask the members opposite, what have you got for contingency plans for the drought situation in southern Saskatchewan?

You must be aware that there is a water supply problem in the southern part of the province. Any area south of the trans-Canada, or if you drew a line from Regina over to the Rosetown area, there's a very serious water supply problem. The jury's still out, I suppose, in terms of agricultural drought, because we can't predict whether there's going to be spring rains or not, but we do know now that there is a very serious problem in water supply.

The town of Limerick, which I would hope some of you would be aware of because it's been in the news, has had a water supply problem for a few years now. Well last year their dug-out went dry, but they were able to pump water into their town dug-out from another water supply six miles away, but because the problem is worse this year, that water supply that was there last year, only six miles away, no longer exists. But what does the government do? What does the Minister of Rural Development do? They sit by in silence.

They have nothing to offer those people who are facing a very serious situation. This isn't droughts in the Sahara Desert or in Bangladesh or even in the sand hills out in the western part of Saskatchewan; this is agricultural communities, Mr. Chairman, where the government sits by and does nothing. They sit on their hands and do nothing to help those rural communities.

I'm told, and the facts will bear it out, that in the hydrometric stations across the province — we have some 400 of them; some of them established as long as 50 years ago — where they record the water supplies, is that this year, in terms of water supply drought, is the worst year in recorded history of . . . since they started recording water supplies about 50 years ago.

What is the government going to do about that? Are they going to spend part of this appropriation today to assist those communities, hundreds of communities, that are facing a very serious water supply problem? Not likely, Mr. Speaker, not very likely.

In terms of the agricultural budget itself, they say they're going to help agriculture. That's contrary to the facts. What are they going to do? The budget this year cuts \$8 million from the agricultural budget just looking at the bottom line. If you look at what the Department of Agriculture has to pay to the property management corporation, it's much more than \$8 million. You could likely double that amount if you did an analysis of the budget.

The government always says that they have no options; well they do have options. I hope that some of the members who are listening . . . that there is a water supply problem in southern Saskatchewan. And they want to build a dam, the Shafferty dam project, as it's become known, and spend a billion dollars, or maybe in excess of a billion dollars on that project.

The experts acknowledge that the valley in which they want to contain the water is not suitable: it's not deep enough; it's not steep enough; it's too wide. The evaporation will not allow water to fill up the reservoir, and when there's no water in southern Saskatchewan, how do you expect the reservoir to fill up?

Are you going to spend a billion dollars to create jobs in the Premier's riding and say, to heck with the rest of the citizens who can't get their drugs, can't get the medical services they need? You say, to heck with the people who work in the province of Saskatchewan

that are uncertain about their jobs, just because of political patronage you want to spend in one area.

If the town of Limerick can't fill up their own little dug-out as a water reservoir, how in Heaven's name do you expect to fill up a dam that would take millions and billions of gallons of water to fill the reservoir?

Does it mean that you're going to go ahead with major diversions from northern Saskatchewan? You don't know that, because you've got no plan. You can only fly by the seat of your pants for so long, and there'll be so many people that are angry with you, that you might as well stop functioning as a government because you're not helping anyone. Anyone you touch, you're hurting.

What about the. . . the last year we had *Public Accounts* tabled in here was the '85-86 *Public Accounts*. And to those that may be watching on the legislative channel this afternoon, I'd like to say that the *Public Accounts* is very important. The *Public Accounts* is very important because it draws the government to account for the money they've spent over that particular fiscal year.

And it's audited by the auditor, the Provincial Auditor, who is not an employee of government; he's not an employee of the opposition; he's an employee of this legislature. He's the watch-dog of the public purse.

(1545)

So the *Public Accounts* has a great deal of importance, and what I was saying was that in the last *Public Accounts* that we received — and we've got to remember, this was the *Public Accounts* that didn't take into consideration the election period where there were huge expenditures on advertising to prop up the government's sagging popularity at that time, and it obviously worked to some extent because they're re-elected. In the *Public Accounts* we do have, \$20 million was spent on government advertising — \$20 million spent on government advertising. And I would predict that in the election year, the '86-87 *Public Accounts*, the advertising will be much, much higher than that.

Well what would that \$20 million alone do? It would put the school-based dental program back into effect, if you hadn't sold off all of the equipment. It would put back into place the prescription drug plan where people who need those prescription drugs would have easy access to them again, instead of having to prioritize the scarce funds that they do have.

And rural residents want to know why there's no increase at all for revenue sharing for rural municipalities. I was up in the constituency of the member from Meadow Lake the past couple of weeks for a day or two, and many of the rural municipal roads are in worse condition than they've been for many, many springs, and I would assume it's because the R.M.s have a scarcity of funds. They have to prioritize these days — the roads they're

going to grade and the roads they're not going to grade, so that they remove the snow from some roads and other roads they don't bother removing the snow from.

In the Department of Highways' budget, while we're talking about roads, Mr. Speaker, they'll boast on that side that they're spending about \$110 million for highway construction. You know, Mr. Chairman that's I think about \$5 million less than the last year that Allan Blakeney and the New Democrats were in government in the province of Saskatchewan, and that's going back to 1982. So here we are, six years later, and they're spending less money on highways but yet bragging about it.

No, Mr. Chairman, the government opposite doesn't show either the awareness or the sensitivity or have the leadership for people in this province to have any confidence in them. The only people that may have some confidence left are those people in some of the rural areas that haven't been touched as harshly by the government as those that live in rural areas closer to this centre of power in Regina, where they like to run everything out of. But people in those rural areas will be touched at some point in time because of the sheer incompetence of the Minister of Agriculture — the sheer incompetence of the Minister of Agriculture.

Never before in the history of the province of Saskatchewan has any government had a part-time minister of Agriculture. We find it hard to believe in the province of Saskatchewan that they would have a part-time minister of Agriculture.

An Hon. Member: — Newfoundland, maybe.

Mr. Anguish: — One of the members says, maybe they'd have a part-time minister of Agriculture in the province of Newfoundland. Well that may be possible, but it is appalling to think that we have a part-time Minister of Agriculture in this province, where agriculture's our number one industry.

Myself and my colleagues hear from agricultural groups, on many occasions, that can't get a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture — too busy to meet, too busy to meet with farm organizations in the province. Well I can understand, and people should know that what I'm talking about is that the Minister of Agriculture is also the Premier.

*****And surely the Premier, you would think, would be a full-time job in the province of Saskatchewan, in charge of many important programs and an entire government. And yet that person wants to be the Minister of Agriculture — a job that they might have the expertise to handle, which is questionable, Mr. Chairman.

But shouldn't that particular member make a choice? Maybe that individual should resign as Premier and become the Minister of Agriculture. And I think, if the truth was known, some of the members opposite would be happy in that situation, because I think that the Premier in the province is losing it. He stands up and he rants and he raves in the legislature, and it's certainly unbecoming the office of the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan.

I've seen the Premier of this province in the past week stand in this legislature and brag, about five or maybe 10 minutes, about government programs and what a good job that the province . . . the Conservative government is doing in the province. And then he gets off that right away because he knows that anybody listening doesn't believe the rhetoric that's coming out any more, because people know what's being said is contrary to the facts. But after that first five or 10 minutes, the Premier goes on for another hour into a tirade of slamming and kicking and screaming at individual members on this side of the House, because they don't want to talk about the real issues of health care and education and those issues that affect Saskatchewan people.

Well what is the other option that the Premier has in the province? If he doesn't want to resign as Premier, he should maybe resign as Minister of Agriculture. Would that be a good option? Well on this side of the House we say yes. What do you members think over there? The people also say, especially rural people, in increasing numbers, that the member from Estevan, the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, should resign as Minister of Agriculture.

They're starting to ask questions as to why is he not appointing a full-time Minister of Agriculture. Why is he not appointing a full-time Minister of Agriculture? Is there no one in the back benches who wants to be Minister of Agriculture? Is there anyone over there that wants to be Minister of Agriculture? I see a number of farmers sitting there this very afternoon, that I would have thought would have had the capability. But obviously the Premier of the province doesn't think you have the capability; otherwise he would have appointed one of you as a full-time Minister of Agriculture. It wouldn't cost any more in the budget. Or is it because of other reasons that we don't know? People in the province think we need a full-time Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Chairman.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I think I'll wrap up my comments. I strayed a fair bit to number of topics, but I think they are worth mentioning. What we have to remember is that the money that's being approved here today — and we'll support it, as my other colleagues have said as they've spoke — is because we care about the operation of programs that people need in the province. And if we didn't approve the funding, then many people would be seriously and adversely affected.

But we want to raise those concerns, because so much of the money, by this government, is not spent in areas where it should be — in areas such as health care, prescription drug plan, the dental plan, to decrease the number of people on waiting lists. It should be spent on education so we can fund our education system properly. It should be spent on the development of the province, improving our own economy, instead of the desperate struggle by this government to try and get out of the huge, huge debt they've created by a legacy of mismanagement and incompetence and uncaring and unsharing government of the Conservatives in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise today to support the interim supply measure that's before us. All the members on this side will be doing that; it's normal for both sides of the House to support the interim supply measures. These measures are basically to ensure that the government has enough money to meet its commitments pending the passage of the budget and the completion of the estimates. But it should be made clear that, even though we support these interim supply measures, we do not support the budget, the budget which underlies the interim supply measures.

We do not support the budget, because the budget is essentially one of increasing the personal property tax load on the people of Saskatchewan, while decreasing the services that they normally expect to receive for the taxes that they pay. The people of Saskatchewan are being asked to expect less in the way of services and programs from this PC government, and we cannot support that.

We cannot support increased imposition of personal taxes, income taxes, the flat taxes, the sales taxes and also of property taxes and other charges and fees in our province at a time that the government moves to decrease corporation taxes; at a time that the government is saying that we really need to level the playing field in preparation for free trade and therefore we need to reduce corporation taxes; and saying to the people of Saskatchewan, but you have to dig deeper into your pocket because somehow, in the long run, it's all going to be better for you. Well people don't believe in those kinds of fanciful theories, even if the members opposite do.

The budget reflects also a legacy, a legacy of debt, a legacy of wrong decisions, a legacy of massive tax breaks for oil companies, a legacy of unfairness. Today, Mr. Chairman yesterday we had a retired superannuate, one of 6,000 men and women who have worked many long years for the provincial government, this person picketing the legislature.

An Hon. Member: — He's there today, too.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — And he's here today, picketing the legislature because the government opposite says that it's so broke, says that it has no money to provide for a modest cost-of-living increase for his pension and for the pension of the other 6,000 other superannuates in this province.

This is the legacy of that government, a legacy which says that, yes, we need to give massive tax breaks to major oil corporations, but cannot find the money to provide for a modest increase of the pensions of those who have worked for many long, hard years for this government, for the Government of Saskatchewan, to provide the people of Saskatchewan with competent services and programs, services and programs that the people enjoyed. This government says, we can't support that.

The budget essentially says to the people of Saskatchewan that we've made a mess of things; that we, the PC government, have made a mess of things and we want you now, the people of Saskatchewan, to pay for the mess we've made. That's what the government is saying in this budget, because the government's budget reflects very

accurately their very bad decision making, their incompetence and their waste in the last number of years.

(1600)

Now I suppose if that's all the budget said, or if that's all the government said, the government might get some support from the public, if that's all they said. But I think that the public of Saskatchewan are reluctant to support this government because they see the government continuing to waste; they see the government continuing to make any number of bad decisions; they see a government that seems to have more money for political advertising; they see a government that has more money for a large and burgeoning political bureaucracy; they see a government that has more money to give away to its corporate friends. And notwithstanding the past, when people look at the present, and the decisions that you're making, and when they see the budget and the kinds of choices that you're making in this budget, they say that the government is wrong, the government cannot be supported. They can't support a government and a budget as long as that government makes dumb, stupid decisions — dumb, stupid decisions, as in the case of the SaskPower Building in Moose Jaw.

Now this is a case, Mr. Chairman, where the government decides to sell a building for \$280,000 — sells the building to a friend of theirs for \$280,000 — sells it to a long-time Tory supporter for \$280,000. And I won't get into the fact that the person they sold it to is a well-known Tory, or the fact that the building was listed for sale only with that person's spouse. And I won't get into that; that's beside the point. But the point is, they sell a building for \$280,000 then they enter into a lease arrangement with the person they sold it to, to rent half of the building — half of the building — not the whole building, but only half of the building — back for \$37,000 a year for 10 years, plus one-half of the operating costs.

Now I've knocked on doors in Elphinstone and I've knocked on some doors in Saskatoon Eastview and I asked the people that I go to; how do you explain this decision of the government? How does it make sense to you? And I can't find one person — one person, Mr. Chairman — who says that's a sound decision; that's a good decision for the people of Saskatchewan; that decision reflects fiscal responsibility; that decision reflects competence. I can't find one person — one person — who will say to me any of those things.

I don't think that there is one person in Saskatchewan, I don't think there is one business in Saskatchewan, that would act as the government did in that particular instance, because it makes no sense. It makes no sense from a business point of view. It makes no sense from anyone's personal point of view to do that. It only seems to make sense to a government that has its ideological blinkers firmly on, can only see ideology, cannot see straight business sense, and is willing to make those decisions.

It's also a government that sees that it makes sense to favour your corporate friends, and it makes sense to favour your political cronies, as they did in this case. But again the

people of Saskatchewan do not see any sense in that particular decision. They cannot believe the Deputy Premier when he stands in his place in the legislature during question period and says, well there's some advantage to having the cash up front. Pray tell, what is the advantage of having the cash up front when you're committed to paying far more than that in the long run? Pray tell, what is the advantage?

There is another reason that the people of Saskatchewan cannot support this government, and do not support the budget, and simply put, Mr. Chairman, it revolves around the question of openness and honesty. They see this government as being not open and not honest.

In my view and the view of the people of Saskatchewan, if you want the support of the people in difficult economic times; if you want the support of the people in the face of a crisis such as we have in this province when you look at agriculture; if you want the support of the people in those kinds of conditions, you must show firm, resolute, open, honest leadership. And one of the important qualities of leadership is that you're open and honest with those that you attempt to lead.

And that's what people believe. People will say that we recognize there are problems; we recognize and are willing to forgive perhaps, at times, bad decisions that you've made in the past, but only if you level with us now. Tell us the full facts; tell us everything that's going on. Don't deceive us; don't lead us on; don't lead us down the garden path. Be open, be honest, let us know what's going on, and in those kinds of conditions we might be prepared to follow your leadership because we recognize that firm and resolute leadership is necessary in the midst of a crisis. It's necessary in the face of the difficult economic conditions that face Saskatchewan.

They do not see that with this government. They do not see a government that's open and honest about all the things they do. They see, and they look at question period, and some of the public views in to question period. They see a Premier; they see ministers that evade, avoid, duck, "filibuster" — well, that's my term for when the Deputy Premier gets up and makes his inane comments during question period. It's nothing short of blustering, and he's trying to filibuster at the same time if you look at the fact that he attempts to answer questions, then says he'll take notice, gets up the next day and answers the question again. It's a filibuster, and all the time he's blustering, so it's a combination of the two.

But the people of Saskatchewan see a Premier and cabinet ministers evading, avoiding, ducking responsibility, and they see a government that somehow gives the impression that this is all a big joke, that this is the thing to do. These people, this PC Government, are settling a new standard for legislative responsibility — a new standard.

No longer do you ask a question and expect to get an answer. No, the new standard is that if the question's asked, you find artful ways to avoid answering the question in any way, shape, or form. That's the new standard they set — and a standard that's supported by their cronies in the media outlets in this province. Because if we look at the reportage of

these things, we get a very clear impression that that's fine with the media. They don't much care what the government does, and they seem to support the fact that the government tries to avoid and evade and duck responsibility. And the media seems to accept this new standard of legislative responsibility and accountability.

But the people of Saskatchewan know, through watching the question period, through watching the proceedings, they know that this government is being less than open and honest. And they ask: what kind of leadership is that? What kind of leadership is it for a premier to be asked a question, to avoid answering the question, to evade the question, to make unwarranted attacks on others? They say, what kind of leadership is that? Leadership that's required in the light of the crisis that we have in agriculture; leadership that's required in light of the economic conditions that face this province. And they say, just what kind of leadership is that?

And they ask: what kind of openness and what kind of honesty? And I guess the question is: how can the people of Saskatchewan have confidence in that type of leadership, Mr. Chairman? — a leadership that certainly is not displayed during question period.

And the government members may laugh. They may laugh about how artfully they can avoid answering questions. They may laugh about that. But let me tell you, the people of Saskatchewan will have the last laugh in this matter, and the first chuckle in this will be in the by-elections.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Question period, Mr. Chairman, is not the only place where this paucity of openness and honesty reveals itself.

When you see the record of this Finance minister when it comes to tabling *Public Accounts*, we again see secrecy and a lack of honesty.

I might explain that the *Public Accounts* are a record of the government's spending of the preceding year. It lists all the government's expenditures, and this record is produced to help the Assembly to review the spending of the government on behalf of the people of the province. That is one of the primary functions of this Legislative Assembly.

Our job, both sides of the House, is to take those expenditures and to ask some questions about whether or not the government spent the money of the taxpayers wisely, competently. That's one of the primary functions of this Assembly.

Towards that end, it's normal, it's been traditional for Finance ministers to table those *Public Accounts* in good time so that, when these records of spending are considered, they might be considered in a timely way, that we're not dealing with records of some number of years past, but hopefully, only of a year past. That has been the record in this province.

There is a very strong tradition, if you go back the last 40-45 years, of Finance ministers tabling these *Public Accounts* with the Legislative Assembly so that the Legislative Assembly, through the Public Accounts Committee, can get on with the business of examining those *Public Accounts*. There is a record of Finance Ministers tabling those *Public Accounts* before March 31 of every year; that is, until the current Minister of Finance.

The current Minister of Finance has taken the position that: I really don't care about the traditions of this province; I don't care about the tradition of tabling those *Public Accounts* on time. And what he, in effect, is saying, that I don't frankly care about the public's right to know how my government spends their taxpayers' dollars; that is what he is, in effect, saying.

This Finance minister last year waited until June to provide the *Public Accounts*. This year — it's already the middle of May — the Finance minister still has not tabled the *Public Accounts*, and there is no reason for that.

People might think, well perhaps they're still at the printers. Perhaps they're not ready. Well that's not fact. These *Public Accounts* were printed, they were completed, they were presented to the Minister of Finance within the last week. There is no reason, there is no excuse that those *Public Accounts* should not be tabled with this Assembly so that the Assembly can do one of its major jobs, which is to peruse those accounts, which is to peruse this government's spending. And that has not happened. Perhaps this year we're aiming for another record.

A fine tradition, a fine tradition of accountability through tabling the *Public Accounts* on time has again been sacrificed to meet the cynical and political agenda of the Minister of Finance. That is what is happening in this province. What the government is in effect saying to taking that attitude, by saying that we can table the *Public Accounts* when it suits our purposes, what they are saying is that they oppose the right of the public to know, that they oppose the right of the public to know how their money has been spent, and that they will do everything, everything, throw up every conceivable road-block to make it difficult for the public to know how their money has been spent.

And I say, shame on them, and I think that the people of Saskatchewan are saying, shame on them. They say, shame, have you no respect at all for the traditions of this Legislative Assembly? Have you no respect at all for the traditions of this province? Have you no respect for the public's right to know, and have you no respect at all for openness and honesty? Have you no respect?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — I say that the people of Saskatchewan will no longer support your sorry, incompetent display of power; that they will no longer support your sorry, incompetent government. They cannot support your devious dealings. They can not support your sheer cynicism, and they can not support your lack of openness and honesty.

We cannot support the budget. We did not support the budget. And the reason for that is not only has the government made a very great mess of things, and for us to support the budget would be to say that we agree with what you've done, but notwithstanding that, the government continues to act in a silly, stupid fashion making stupid decisions, displaying its incompetence and waste every day, displaying every day its favouritism for a favoured few. They continue to do that.

(1615)

But I think most importantly of all, and a primary reason why the public of Saskatchewan is fed up with this government, is that notwithstanding that and notwithstanding a need for firm, resolute leadership, this government continues to act as if it does not care about openness, does not care about honesty, has no regard for the public's right to know.

And it's for all those reasons that we have spoken against the budget, and we want to make it clear that even if we do supply the interim supply Bill, we cannot in any way support the financial plan that supports that interim supply, that is to say, the budget of the day. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Chairman, I hardly had a word out of my mouth when we heard from the member from Weyburn.

Now the member for Weyburn, Mr. Chairman, is a closet celebrity — he's a closet celebrity. He's a person who likes to get on the fashion pages of the newspaper. And I see that he's very interested in fashion design, fashion outfit, fashion weakness — well I've noticed he has a few fashion weaknesses — and whose style do you admire, fashion philosophy, and what can't you throw out. This is the fashion summary of the member for Weyburn, who before I could get on my feet was beginning to respond from his seat. Now I agree, some of his best speeches, Mr. Chairman, come from his seat.

Now if the member for Weyburn, who's the Minister of Education, was paying attention to his portfolio, which is Education, then he would be doing something about a problem that exists in Saskatoon Westmount.

That problem has to do with the technical institute. Just last year this minister slashed out of the budget whole sections of that technical institute. He slashed out courses where there were people lined up and waiting.

And I ask the member for Weyburn, don't leave the Chamber, because I'm going to give you some good advice now. Just hang around. You wanted to speak from your seat, and now he's running for cover.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. The member is not to make reference to anyone being in or out of the Chamber.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I make no reference to anybody being in or out of the Chamber. I said the member from Weyburn is running for cover, and that's what he was doing.

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. Order! Is the member challenging the Chair?

Mr. Brockelbank: — No.

Mr. Chairman, had the member for Weyburn been paying attention to his portfolio, which includes the technical institute in Saskatoon Westmount, he would be doing something about supporting that institute. However, he's not.

And as I was saying, he cut large sections out of that technical institute last year, as he did all technical institutes in the province, when there were waiting lists, long waiting lists of students wanting to get into courses in that technical institute.

I have the most recent example, and it's too bad that the member for Weyburn won't hear this. But here is an ad in the *Star-Phoenix* that appeared on March 26, and this was the fall program registration at Kelsey, and it lists a number of courses in technologies that students might wish to apply for.

I want to give you some examples, Mr. Chairman, to prove my point about the Minister of Education, who is letting the students of this province down. I'll give you three examples: early childhood development — there is a room for 20 students in that course, an intake of 20 students. There are applications of 130, Mr. Chairman — 130 students. Hotel and restaurant administration — there is room for 30 students in that course, an intake of 30 students. Mr. Chairman, there were 105 applications for 30 positions. Personal development worker — there's room for an intake of 20 students in that course and there were applications of 75, Mr. Chairman. I suggest to you that that member who is always volunteering information from his seat would be better advised to pay more attention to the department he's running and not let down the young people of this province.

Not only that, and the early childhood development program, I want to say something further about this for the Minister of Education's edification. The early childhood development program in year two has a similar low opportunity for enrolment for second year students, and students from all over the province have to travel to one technical institute to obtain their second year. They can't take it in Regina. And the second year, Mr. Chairman, as in the first, is over-subscribed.

Now had the member for Weyburn not interfered, as I rose to my feet, to make his comments — although he appears more interested in coming out of the celebrity closet in fashion — I would be saying, Mr. Speaker, and have started off my remarks in a general

and non-argumentative fashion, as I usually do, to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, it's spring, it's spring again . . . or Mr. Chairman.

Spring in Saskatchewan is a very important time. It's a time of hope. It's a time of new growth. Spring is my most favourite time of the year, Mr. Chairman. And as we stand here today discussing this interim supply Bill, which is the first one-twelfth of this massive budget this government has brought before us, I can't help but think, spring is the most important time of the year to me and I know it is to many Saskatchewan people.

I grew up, Mr. Chairman, in rural Saskatchewan; lived on a farm. In the spring, on that farm, the first signs were the crows came back and there were new green leaves on the trees, new green grass and spring flowers. It was a time of hope, Mr. Chairman. The birds were returning; there were new kittens and calves and colts and lambs on that farm, and it was a great time of the year to be there. And best of all, in the spring we drafted the plans on our farm — and I know many farmers do in Saskatchewan — for the spring, the summer and the fall.

It's spring in Saskatchewan once more, but in contrast here in this legislature, this budget and the interim supply, which we are dealing with today, offers no hope and no growth — no hope and no growth. And that's sad for the people of Saskatchewan.

One of the first things I noticed about this particular budget is the flat tax, the increase in the flat tax, Mr. Chairman. I was looking at flat taxes in other provinces, and we have the province of Alberta, right next door to Saskatchewan. They have a flat tax in the province of Alberta, but it's not a flat tax on your net income; it's a flat tax on your taxable income. And the consequence of that, Mr. Chairman, is that it's a much fairer tax — if you have to make a decision between Saskatchewan's flat tax by the Tories or Alberta's flat tax by the Tories.

Now what is the Government of Alberta doing this year? Well they are cutting their flat tax in half, Mr. Chairman. They're cutting their 1 per cent flat tax in half. What are we . . . What is the Conservative government in Saskatchewan doing? It's boosting their flat tax up to 2 per cent of net income, so that person with a . . . people with a family income of \$25,000 will now be paying \$500 of flat tax that they weren't paying under a New Democratic government a few short years ago.

And if a person has a little higher income, middle income, earning \$35,000 a year, they will be paying \$700 a year more, Mr. Chairman, in flat tax which they didn't pay under a New Democratic government.

Here, right before our eyes, the clipping from the *Star-Phoenix*, March 25, '88 says: "The province of Alberta is cutting its flat tax in half." Their flat tax was \$411 last year for this family of four with \$40,000-a-year income; they're cutting that in half.

I never thought, Mr. Chairman in my life in this legislature that I would ever look to the province of Alberta for a more liberal approach to taxation than this province. But here

it's happened — the province of Alberta cutting their flat tax in half; Saskatchewan jacking their flat tax up every single year since it was introduced, Mr. Chairman, a half a per cent every year, going from one-half of 1 per cent to 2 per cent every year, and every year this government, through its mismanagement and waste, getting deeper and deeper in debt.

This spells mismanagement on a colossal scale to the people of Saskatchewan. And I suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, that the people of Saskatchewan are going to see through this flimflam of government advertising that we were subjected to this winter and spring about how well they're doing running the province. They're going to see through that, and in the by-election in Saskatoon and Regina they're going to send this Minister of Finance and this Premier a message that they're dissatisfied with that performance.

I said that there is no hope and no growth in this particular budget. Well one of the areas that there is growth in the province of Saskatchewan, even though I said there is no hope and no growth, is the area of food banks. In this area this government has been a very successful government, in a negative sense.

Where we had no food banks since we had the last Conservative government, over 50 years ago, Mr. Chairman — the last food lines were under a Conservative government over 50 years ago — this government has turned the clock back successfully. So now we have food lines again.

And the Minister of Social Services, labour, women, native affairs, etc. etc., stands in this House and suggests there is no problem. He says, show me your hungry and I'll feed them. Well there's a school lunch program in the inner schools in Saskatoon, and all we need to do is send the minister to that program and say, get the names of those children that are on that school lunch program. All we need to do is get the names of the people at the four food banks in Saskatchewan, send them to the Minister of Social Services, and tell him: there's your names and addresses; deal with the problem. But no, the Minister of Social Services talks around it in a technical manner so that he ignores, he is able to ignore in his mind that there is a problem existing in Saskatchewan.

Well even the food banks, even the food banks under the government are having some problem, because the lines are getting unmanageable. The long lines at the food banks are becoming unmanageable because there is not enough supply there to address the problem. And yet our Minister of Social Services has his head in the sand; he can't see that there is a problem.

I mentioned at another time in this House, Mr. Chairman, that the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, the first time in my lifetime in Saskatoon, did a feature story several pages long on hunger — hunger in Saskatoon. They know the problems there. The reporters of the *Star-Phoenix* know the problems there. But somehow or other, the Minister of Social Services cannot get through his head that there's a problem.

(1630)

Unemployment. Well the Minister of Labour also attempts at all times to gloss around the problem of unemployment. Unemployment in Saskatoon city is a very serious problem. It's still . . . the province has about 41,000 people unemployed. Saskatoon . . .

An Hon. Member: — Forty-five thousand.

Mr. Brockelbank: — It's probably risen. Saskatoon, 12 per cent unemployment — one of the highest of major cities in Canada. And the minister has an interesting explanation for that. He says, well, the people are flooding in from all over Canada, and they're filling up the city with unemployed people. Well that may wash with some people, but it's not going to wash with the people in Saskatoon, because they're catching on to this Minister of Labour. They're catching on to him.

Something that is growing in the province of Saskatchewan are deficits, and these have been growing for some time in Saskatchewan, and they continue to grow — \$328 million in this particular budget. And the debt, the consequences of that, is an accumulated government debt of \$3.7 billion.

Despair, despair is growing vigorously in this province, and this PC government, Mr. Chairman, this PC government has this province frozen in a progressively more conservative winter of despair with each new budget. Seven times they tried, Mr. Chairman, and seven times they've failed.

Remember, Mr. Chairman, before 1982 there were 11 successive budget surpluses under a New Democratic government, a record of management of the resources of this province which is unequalled — unequalled in the history of this province. Does that concern the government, that the deficit has risen to \$3.7 billion? It does not seem to, but it certainly concerns me, Mr. Chairman, and it concerns some of the people that I've had the opportunity to talk to in Saskatoon Eastview.

But the Premier has other priorities. He has his own set of priorities, and the deficit and the budget debt is not part of his problem, doesn't seem to faze him at all. His priorities are appointing 11 legislative secretaries in the government back benches who obtain \$7,000 a year each plus expenses over and above what they receive as an MLA. There's no necessity whatsoever for 11 legislative secretaries on the government side. As a matter of fact, if the Premier had a free hand of it, he'd probably appoint them all legislative secretaries, but I must admit he's controlled himself a bit.

There are actually six people on the government side that aren't receiving remuneration in excess of their MLA pay; there are actually six left there that the Premier hasn't got to. Now the Premier backed off on legislative secretaries; I'll be fair to him. It was up to 15, the most that anybody had ever had in the province of Saskatchewan. But the Premier was leading into election, and he said, look we've got to show some restraint here, we've got to make a public example. So he slashed out some of the legislative secretaries; you know, get rid of the waste and fat on the back benches. And that was before the election.

After the election it was up to nine again, and then up to 10, and now it's up to 11. With any kind of adherence to the priorities that the Premier has, soon he'll have those other six on the government side appointed as legislative secretaries. However, I suspect that he'll hold off the appointment of any further legislative secretaries until after the May 4 date when the by-elections are over, because he wouldn't want to have that interfere with his election campaign.

And the Premier has some other priorities as well; he has put 11, at least 11 former MLAs, most of them being defeated cabinet ministers, on the government payroll at high rates — on the government payroll.

At the same time, the Premier's saying to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, pull in your belts, the tough times are ahead, we've all got to sacrifice. But he's managed to put at least 11 defeated MLAs, most of them cabinet ministers, on the payroll. And you'll recognize their names, they're household words around Saskatchewan: Schoenhals, Sandberg, Katzman, Currie, Domotor, Embury, Dirks, and the list goes on. I haven't named them all — the list goes on.

This government, who's asking us for interim supply of over \$350 million right on this Bill that's before us now, Mr. Chairman continues to spend millions of taxpayers' dollars on wasteful, self-congratulatory media ads. This government is wasting, in addition to that, \$34,000 a day on unleased . . . or leased, unused office space. Right in Saskatoon, Mr. Chairman, the Premier, while he was on this public appeal to the public of Saskatchewan to support him in this time of restraint, increased the size of the cabinet office in Saskatoon by 50 per cent — 50 per cent increase in the cabinet office. The Premier says, do as I say, don't do as I do, and that's not good enough for the people in Saskatoon and Regina and elsewhere in this province.

I want to know why, why this government has that kind of extravagance, why they're increasing taxes. They're increasing taxes, the flat tax being one of them, because they want to continue this extravagance, which they initiated a number of years ago, on into the future, regardless of the by-elections. They want to have the money there so that they can spend it — your taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker.

How will these excesses of this government be paid for? Well the flat tax — that's going to pay for some of it — that's \$500 people aren't paying now, or are paying now that they weren't paying a few short years ago; the sales tax, last year boosted from 5 to 7 per cent; the new gasoline tax, which has heaped untold burdens on municipal governments and school boards in this province — untold burdens of taxation — which they in turn, of course, Mr. Chairman, shift to the municipal taxpayer. And the municipal government gets the name of the bad boy for raising taxes, and this government attempts to get off scot-free because they didn't raise the tax. They let the municipal government do it.

This government, at the same time, has increased at least 234 other fees and charges. Good examples would be birth and marriage and death certificates; all increased 50 per cent by this government.

And I see by the paper here, a discussion . . . a report on — this is yesterday's *Leader-Post* — a report on the discussion of the possible increase to Saskatchewan Government Insurance rates, which the minister says:

Might be necessary and are under consideration, (said the) minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

Now the minister waffles on the subject in the question period, suggests that, well, yes, it's under consideration, but we really haven't decided anything yet.

Well the people are not so naïve as that, Mr. Minister. They know there was a leaked cabinet document last winter which says the surcharge on SGI rates is going to be \$25 a person — \$25 surcharge. And all the minister in charge of SGI, in the question period yesterday, was doing was attempting to divert the attention of the taxpayers of this province from the fact that he's going to put a \$25 surcharge on SGI. But he's going to hold off until May 4 — until May 4. And that's not good enough.

While these cuts are being made and these increases have been made in these taxation fields and fees that the government charges, cuts are being made in worthwhile programs, such as the school-based dental program for children and the prescription drug plan.

The prescription drug plan tax is a sick tax. It is only paid by sick people. No one else pays it; just the sick pay that tax. That is a sick tax which has an annual \$125 a person deductible, which they must pay before they get anything returned from the purchase of prescription drugs, and thereafter there is a 20 per cent deterrent fee on all prescriptions — all from a government who took the pledge, who took the pledge that they would take any kind of deterrent or fee off the prescription drug plan a few short years ago. They took the pledge and they put it in writing and it was signed, ironically enough, by the Minister of Finance, the person who's now the Minister of Finance. But they've forgotten about that pledge, and they have put the deterrent fee on the prescription drug plan.

And I say to the Minister of Finance, when he's asking us for interim supply, that we're not happy, we're not happy with the fact that he has this deterrent fee on the people of Saskatchewan. I know it is a burden to the people of Saskatoon Westmount. There is no doubt about it, because I get their complaints in my MLA office all the time, regularly.

They're having . . . and the people in Saskatoon Westmount are really excited about that coloured envelope they have in the prescription drug plan that puts them in the fast lane to get their 80 per cent back after they've paid their 125 deductible.

And the people I'm concerned about in Westmount, Mr. Chairman, are the people that are on low income and middle income who have serious medical problems for which drugs have to be prescribed. And it's not as if these people sort of pluck this prescription out of mid-air and say, I must have that. What happens is they go to a professional person, a doctor; the doctor prescribes a certain drug. They go to another professional

person, the pharmacist, and the pharmacist fills the prescription. So these people have nothing to do with generating this sick tax they have to pay.

It's a fact of life that some people have medical problems that require prescription drugs. And I say to the government of this province that the health of all the people is important. We should keep the standard of health care up in the province of Saskatchewan. Once you let that standard slip, the whole health care system slips as this government has allowed.

I say to this government, on the request for interim supply of \$350 million, that this government has to change its priorities. I don't think we're going to get an overnight conversion; I think it will come slowly as we move towards the next provincial election.

And there'll be a perceptible change in their attitude after the by-elections are out of the way. I saw it in Regina North East. After the by-election was out of the way, but before the provincial election, the New Democrats won a resounding victory in Regina North East, and the Premier stood up and he was repentant; he was repentant and sad. And he said, I've heard the message. I'm listening, he said. And he made some changes; he made a few cosmetic changes. But after the election was over, the Premier forgot his repentance and he was back at it again. He was back at doing what he knows best, and that's socking it to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

This government has to change its priorities, slash its patronage, cease renting excess office space from their friends, stop give-aways to outside corporations. None of the suggestions are about to be implemented by this government at this time. They have a blind commitment to an outdated ideology which is wrecking Saskatchewan's economy and wrecking Saskatchewan's social programs. That's not good enough for the people of Saskatchewan.

(1645)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak a bit more about the economy of Saskatchewan, because I'm concerned about what this government is or isn't doing. I'd take a look at housing starts, and never has a government spent more advertising dollar, taxpayers' dollar, on advertising a program than the housing program, the home program.

They got so excited about the possibility of having a by-election in Saskatoon Eastview that they started running the home ad in the Saskatoon newspapers, on the radio, and on the television. It was on television *ad nauseam*. It was on the radio all the time, and it was in the paper on an almost daily basis for at least a month. This is a home ad. And I suggest to you that they were feeling sensitive about the fact that they had no winter works program.

So they did lots of advertising. Now that has some benefit for the media people who receive a fee for doing the advertising. It doesn't have any benefit for the taxpayers who have to foot the bill for this government's advertising.

And you know, they might have got away with it — they might have got away with this advertising, but the fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, they only did the radio ads, the newspaper ads, and the television ads in Saskatoon — in Saskatoon — because they suspected the by-election was coming and they wanted to tell the people what a great winter works program they had — the home program. Well that kind of duplicity and waste of taxpayers' dollars becomes nauseous to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

How are they doing at housing starts? Well I have the housing starts figures here from CMHC, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and these figures go back to 1977 and come up to 1987, so it covers a 10-year period. And just by way of calculation, Mr. Chairman, I took the last three years of a New Democratic government, '79, '80, and '81, and I added up the figures for housing starts, and I averaged it out for those three years. And I did the same for the last three years of this Conservative government, for a comparison sake, and this is what I found out.

The last three years of the New Democratic government, the housing starts . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There's the member for Weyburn chirping from his feet this time. He's standing in the back, and the people of Saskatchewan . . . I wonder if he went out to check on what's happening at Kelsey Institute, because the member for Weyburn has certainly let the people of Saskatoon down in Kelsey Institute, and every place in Saskatchewan that has a technical institute. He's slashed programs out of there that were good programs for Saskatchewan people and meant something, not only to urban areas, but to rural Saskatchewan.

And I'm glad to see that the member for Weyburn, from his position, whatever it may be at this time, has apparently looked into this and wants to report to the House. And I'll look forward to his comments on this interim supply Bill after I sit down. But unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, I don't want to listen to his comments in the middle of my speech.

I was talking before I was interrupted, Mr. Chairman, about the housing starts in the province of Saskatchewan. This government's been going around the province all over saying what a great job they're doing on housing starts. Well, the last three years of New Democratic government in this province the housing starts averaged 7,988 housing starts a year, per year; the last three years of the Conservative government they averaged 5,253. Now that is a difference of 2,735 housing starts less in the average of the last three years of our government and the last three years of this government.

This government has fallen down miserably on housing and housing starts in the province of Saskatchewan. But the costs go marching on; the costs go marching on, yes, sir.

Inflation in Saskatoon is tops in Canada: power rates increased January 1; gas and electricity to cost more; basic telephone rates hiked; housing starts down 69 per cent. This is a clipping from the *Star-Phoenix*, February 13, '88; this is not my report. It says: "Urban housing starts in Saskatchewan were down 69 per cent in January compared to

the same month a year ago.” So it’s not as if we’re comparing apples to oranges. We’re comparing lemons to lemons here. The government’s housing policy the previous year, which was a lemon, and the government’s housing starts this year, which is another lemon — down 69 per cent in January of this year compared to January of the previous year.

And this government has the audacity, in its advertising which the taxpayers are paying for, to tell them that they’ve got a vibrant housing industry in Saskatchewan. Not true, not true, Mr. Chairman.

I want to touch on another area, the unemployment area, which is a direct consequence of some of the folly of this government. The unemployment situation in Canada is 7.8 per cent unemployed; in Saskatchewan, 7.9 — higher than the national average; Saskatoon, 12 per cent, Saskatoon, 12 per cent — a dismal performance by this government.

Now the government had said: we’re doing a great job; we’re doing a great job in the economy of the province — industry, development of different plants in the province. Well there is perceptible movement there, Mr. Chairman, but unfortunately the perceptible movement is in the downward fashion.

And I just got a few clippings here. And this starts in January — these are all this year, Mr. Chairman — January 2, ’88: “Regina paper bag plant to close.” And that particular plant would put a number of people on the unemployment line — 43 people, 43 people. That’s January. March: “Westeel laying off 27 employees” — March 2, ’88, *Star-Phoenix*. Again, April 4, ’88: “Stores closing. Buy-Rite Furniture will close its Regina and Moose Jaw stores.” It’s all going in the wrong direction: I speak to the appropriate ministers in charge of the economy and industrial development in Saskatchewan.

Another clipping, April 2, 1988: “Eaton’s closing store, ending a 45-year run.” You know, some of the greatest years that Eaton’s had in those stores in this province were under a New Democratic government — some of the greatest years that Eaton’s ever had. And not only that, not only that — Mr. Chairman, I want you to hear this — last year Eaton’s closed similar outlets in Weyburn and Swift Current.

And I wonder what the vocal member for Swift Current has got to say about Eaton’s closing their store in Weyburn? Maybe I can hear from the member for Weyburn when he rises to speak in this debate, as I’m sure he will.

Well I have some more things that I want to report, that I want to report on to the member for Weyburn, and I should take a few more minutes to do it.

There is some growth in the economy of Saskatchewan. I mentioned before the food banks. And another one is the liquidators. Now the liquidators are having a field day out there. And I have a liquidator ad here. I could have had a stack of advertisements for liquidators several inches high, Mr. Chairman. But this is a bankruptcy liquidation, and there’s been many of them, just in Westmount constituency — many liquidations in

Westmount constituency. This particular one is in Westmount constituency and it's in Westgate Plaza on 22nd Street West. So you can see, Mr. Chairman, that the government, with its policies, and with the attention it pays to development in the province, has a lot of the economy going in the wrong direction.

But people in Saskatchewan are going to get a chance to direct their attention to that very shortly when the by-elections occur, and the government will get a report on the situation at that time.

I mentioned earlier some of the fees and charges that have increased. I have my tax bill here for my residence in Saskatoon, Mr. Chairman. And I also have here a photocopy of the last property improvement grant I got, and that was in 1983 — the last property improvement grant — for \$230. And that's gone, Mr. Chairman, and in its place we have here, I have my actual tax bills here, 1986 and 1987, the increase was — no change in the assessment; the land, the buildings were assessed the same, were the same both years — between '86 and '87 the taxes rose about \$80 — about \$80.

And I suspect, Mr. Chairman, when the city of Saskatoon gets through the ringer that this government's putting them through with this budget, that the tax increase will be at least that much for this residence again, with no change in assessment, and that's unfortunate.

The government makes its choices, and we'll take the penalty if there is a penalty to be invoked on them. But when they make their choices, I wish they'd make them for people inside the province of Saskatchewan.

I've been looking at the situation with regard to one Peter Pocklington. Peter Pocklington . . . It's always interesting, Mr. Chairman, because he must be a special friend of the member for Souris-Cannington, because every time Peter Pocklington's name is mentioned in this House, it brings an immediate response from the member from Souris-Cannington. And I can understand that. I can understand that when you get near the nerve it gets more sensitive, and we're near the nerve with this one.

And this clipping, Mr. Chairman, was March 28, 1988, which is a very recent clipping, and it's about Mr. Pocklington receiving a loan or a line of credit from the treasury branches in Alberta — \$100 million line of credit. Now this is one pretty smart private enterpriser; this is one pretty smart private enterpriser.

I've got to hand it to Peter Pocklington. He comes into Saskatchewan, and he talks the Premier of Saskatchewan into giving him a \$20 million hand-out. He's a private enterpriser, but he's always with his hand out, always with his hand out for public taxpayers' money. He gets 20 million from Saskatchewan; he goes to Alberta, he gets \$100 million line of credit, but the . . . from the treasury branches. But the provincial treasurer says, well that's not really that bad, because it's only \$52 million — \$52.5 million of credit is all he got. So he really only got \$52.5 million, although the superintendent of the treasury branch goes on to say later, maybe it was a little more, and it got bumped up to \$55 million.

Now this is very important because this person has a skill which you rarely see in our society, or is rarely exposed in our society. It is seen occasionally, but rarely exposed. He's able to get \$20 million in Saskatchewan, an Alberta entrepreneur. Then he goes back to Alberta and he gets a hundred million dollar line of credit which results in a 52.5 or \$55 million loan. And the suggestion was that the reason it was recorded at a hundred million dollars was it was because if he needed more money he could get it. If he needed up to a hundred million dollars, he could get it. And the treasurer of Alberta says, no, no .

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Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order. Being 5 o'clock, I now leave the Chair until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.