

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 20, 1995

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE
(BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you recall, I had spoken for about two minutes before we adjourned and I want to add just a few more comments to those short remarks.

Mr. Speaker, on a very serious note, I do rise to repeat in support of this budget. Mr. Speaker, I had talked to 30 or 40 constituents on Saturday last, took the budget around, the budget sheet, and talked to a number of people in my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that they're very thrilled with this budget. They're very thrilled with the fact that after some very, very tough years, that finally after, I believe, 13 years we've been able to balance a budget in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the Premier, the Minister of Finance, all of my colleagues here in the House, our staffs collectively, and especially the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because based on their advice, their input, their partnership, their understanding, and their sacrifices, we've been able to do something that almost seemed impossible. So it's taken three very tough years to get here, Mr. Speaker, and we did this together — the people of Saskatchewan with their government — by pulling together, which Saskatchewan people do very well.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, this is my seventh year here and I've . . . in those seven years I've seen a number of important events in this House, in this province — some positive, some not so positive. But, Mr. Speaker, it is hard to comprehend when we think back the three short years or when I first came into this House seven years ago, it's hard to comprehend that there could be this kind of a turnaround in the budget. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that I ever thought that I would see this but we've been able to do it together. I believe that. And I think a lot of the constituents I talked to on Saturday believe that this is truly a turning point in the long climb back to financial freedom but that this is a turning point in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, people back in Eastview realize that this is the first time in 13 years that the budget has been balanced and they also remember that the last budget was balanced by a New Democratic Party government. And they haven't lost sight of that fact, Mr. Speaker, and they won't. So they know who has financial integrity when it comes to running this province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a phenomenal success story for two important reasons — for many, but two that I would like to highlight — one is because when we assumed office on November of 1991, as is well known, we had the worst yearly deficit per capita in all of Canada. Now that's a matter of public record and that is a fact. And we've gone from that now, Mr. Speaker, to the best and the first province to balance its budget in the last five years. So I think that is an important reason why this balanced budget is very significant.

The second reason is, Mr. Speaker, is unlike Alberta who the Liberals and the Tories like to quote, we have balanced this budget not on the backs of poor people and unemployed people. Mr. Speaker, in Alberta, as was confirmed — I know this to be true, but it was confirmed last Thursday by the hon. member from Wilkie. He confirmed with some pride — that in the last two years the Alberta government has been able to cut expenditures, and that 70 per cent of the expenditures have been on the backs of the social programs in Alberta. In other words, 70 per cent of the money to fight the Alberta deficit has been taken from unemployed and low income people and he's proud of that, and he says that that should be the model for this government. Well we reject that, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of savage, punitive budget making that we just don't want to be part of.

Mr. Speaker, there's doom and gloom on the other side and so they obviously aren't going to stand up and support the budget and be in step with the rest of the public of Saskatchewan. So I think it's important to take a look at what some of the external people say about this budget and the turnaround.

And I'd like to quote very briefly, if I could, from an article in the *Star-Phoenix* Thursday last, February 16, on the Forum pages by Mr. Dale Eisler, the editor of the Forum pages. And the title is, "Saskatchewan comes of age." Mr. Eisler says, Mr. Speaker, and I quote . . . this was the day the budget came down, and he says:

There should be no diminishing the relative significance of today's budget. This is nothing less than a major turning point in the province's history.

I would say that the 40 or 50 people I talked to on Saturday agree with Mr. Eisler, Mr. Speaker. Then he goes on to say, and I quote:

In 1992 when Saskatchewan was on the brink of a financial crisis, the danger was real and confronted us all.

The debt, most of it accumulated during the 1980s, had reached the point where Saskatchewan verged on being branded as a credit risk.

Mr. Speaker, that too is a matter of open public record.

Then he goes on to say — and I'm just about finished — he says:

Our population was again declining, the farm sector remained in the doldrums and any significant economic growth seemed years away . . . But in three years, the unthinkable has happened.

The deficit has been eliminated and the future looks bright suddenly.

There is talk of economic growth and gradual tax cuts. "The Romanow government deserves a great deal of credit for what it has achieved." (This is Mr. Eisler; he says:) This has been nothing short of a revolutionary period in Saskatchewan politics . . . Embedded in this budget is a commitment to fiscal responsibility and cost-effective public administration . . . Finally we have come of age.

This is Mr. Eisler, Mr. Speaker, whom I have a lot of respect for.

So we have the Liberal leader standing up talking about a fat government and cutting back everybody's office but her own. And Mr. Eisler says that:

Embedded in this budget is a commitment to fiscal responsibility and cost-effective public administration.

And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that my constituents agree with him.

So this is the story. Mr. Eisler has his finger on the story of the last three and a half years. And, Mr. Speaker, it makes it difficult for any opposition to get up and be critical of this story. And I understand why the Liberals and the Tories across are panicking about this, because there's really no room for them to go. And so there really isn't anything credible that they can attack on the budget, Mr. Speaker, but at least they're continuing to work at it, and I guess that's the role of the opposition. And I wish them luck. So that's what Mr. Eisler had to say, Mr. Speaker, about the budget.

I might mention the situation that we inherited is also referred to in the *Prairie Messenger*, which has a very wide readership in Saskatchewan, as you know, and across North America, and further than that even. But on the January 30, '95 editorial — and this is an editorial — they say, and I quote just a brief comment here. It says:

We hear much about Premier Ralph Klein of Alberta. We are told we have a politician who will take the bull by the horns and get the government's economic house in order. We hear very little about the poor, who have been forced to go to economically much poorer provinces for social assistance.

And we certainly are not encouraged to study the monumental ramifications of a two-tiered health-care system, which is certain to follow any acceptance of private medical clinics where the rich can receive

speedy treatment without waiting in line with "lesser" . . . (poorer) citizens.

The current Saskatchewan government inherited a mess proportionately far greater than that bequeathed to Mr. Klein . . . Yet the success Saskatchewan has achieved in balancing its books makes its neighbour's accomplishment seem quite trivial in comparison.

Now that's what the *Prairie Messenger* says, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is going to have incredible social, economic, and human costs for what they've done. Mr. Speaker, the social assistance recipients, the unemployed people of Alberta, they have driven 7,000 clients to other provinces — one-way bus tickets; 7,000 clients to other provinces. The member from Maple Creek smiles. Well that isn't funny, because these are unemployed people who are poor; they've got children, and this is . . . no, this is not a joke, Mr. Speaker. They have deceptively transferred 10,000 other clients to other dependency programs, playing games with the numbers. Now that is a fact. That is a fact about what Alberta has done.

The third thing Alberta has done to bring down their case-loads is they have driven 12,000 . . . they've driven 12,000 first nations families back to the reserves. The minister from Alberta told me that himself personally. He's proud of it. They've driven these people back to reserves where there is poor housing and lack of jobs, which is why they went to the cities in the first place.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you drive people out of province, you drive them back to unhealthy situations; you basically export your problems to somewhere else. And I say that Alberta is going to experience incredible social, economic, and human cost for what they've done. And, Mr. Speaker, that is no model. That is no model to be proud of, and that is certainly not the model that we intend to follow, and we haven't followed that model. It's cold-hearted, and it's fraught with major, major, future problems.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I found it interesting last week that the Liberal leader and her party and the official opposition stood up to vote against the throne speech. Now the throne speech basically is a general plan which outlines the government's agenda for the next year or two or three years or whatever. Now this throne speech. . . . They hadn't even seen the figures yet that were in the budget. But the throne speech speaks to that commitment to financial stability and public accountability. Well I think that's where the Saskatchewan public is at. It speaks to balanced budget legislation so that no government could ever again do what the Tories did during the 1980s.

The throne speech speaks to jobs and economic renewal. It speaks to setting in place the regional economic development authorities, getting all of those in place so that local people can partnership and determine their own priorities about how to create jobs in their area. What's wrong with that? They voted against it. They voted against the Transportation Partnerships Corporation, Mr. Speaker, to modernize our transportation system, again allowing for partnership and input from local people. They voted against sustainable resource development.

They voted against the forest resource management Act designed to provide jobs to Northerners and young people, Mr. Speaker.

They voted against agricultural diversification. They voted against an agri-food innovation fund, an agricultural operations Act to help diversify livestock, Mr. Speaker. And they voted against new technology. They voted against bridges to independence like JobStart. They voted against ensuring a sustainable health-care system. Mr. Speaker, the opposition — Tories and Liberals — voted against the throne speech which outlined these things without even seeing the detail.

Now I think, Mr. Speaker, had they been concerned about coming to grips with the real issues in Saskatchewan, they at least could have joined in and supported those general thrusts and saved their constructive comments for the budget. But no, they voted against these initiatives which they purport to speak towards and for. So, Mr. Speaker, that shows you that politics for them is more important than getting on with building the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also focus on another matter because I think it's time and I think it's time that we conveyed to the Saskatchewan people some of the Liberal inconsistencies that we've seen, Mr. Speaker, because here is a Liberal leader who talks all the time about integrity in government. In fact she introduced a bill today to restore integrity and keeps talking about ethics, Mr. Speaker. Well let's look at a few examples and we'll see where the integrity is.

Mr. Speaker, she talks about more spending cuts. We're not cutting spending fast enough. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're keeping track of what she's saying on the other side of the ledger. She's also calling for about \$300 million in new spending. You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. Where is the integrity of that?

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has been all over the waterfront on the issues of gaming — all over the waterfront and saying different things in different parts of the province. Where is the integrity in that, Mr. Speaker?

(1915)

Mr. Speaker, this Liberal leader who claims that she isn't a politician . . . Delegates at the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention told me that that was the most political speech that they have ever heard. Plus it played loose with the facts — it also played loose with the facts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, where is the credibility and integrity of that?

Mr. Speaker, she, without question, accepts the member who crosses the floor from Shaunavon. Now where is the integrity in that? There are a lot of people who believe that she accepted that member . . . If she was really concerned about integrity, she would have asked him to resign and had a by-election. There are a lot of people in my constituency who think that she accepted that member with open arms because that gave her another \$240,000 to run her office. So she's talking to the Premier about downsizing his office and the cost of that, but

she couldn't wait to get her hands on another \$240,000. And she's still not satisfied — she feels that that isn't enough. Where is the integrity on that?

Mr. Speaker, where is the integrity on a leader — I might say, this is a leader? — who continues to flip-flop on the issue of the gun control business? First she's for it and then she's against it. She's all over the map there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, she says she supports unemployed people, working people, low income people. Mr. Speaker, she has voted against — she has stood in this House and voted against — part-time benefits for part-time employees, for example. She has voted against increases to the Family Income Plan for low income working families. She has voted against the child action plan — and she's a psychologist — the child action plan which helps develop preventive early intervention and support services for vulnerable families across Saskatchewan. Some 90 projects have been approved in partnership with the government and communities throughout the province. She voted against that, Mr. Speaker. And those programs are designed and developed to support communities and support families who need help. And as a psychologist she should be ashamed of herself.

Mr. Speaker, she has voted against our job packages, but she has no ideas of her own. She promised, I don't know . . . two years ago, that she would give us an idea as to how to create jobs — one idea a week. We haven't heard one idea yet in two years. Now this is the person who continues to talk about ethics in government, and integrity.

Mr. Speaker, I think as well a lot of public servants are also beginning to notice her vicious attacks on the public service. They're beginning to notice those attacks in the public service, Mr. Speaker, and they don't appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, low income people are beginning to wonder about a person who doesn't go near a food bank until the election's called and then gets her picture taken in front of a food bank, which she did last year. And they begin to wonder about someone who drives . . . who gets chauffeured around in a limo, trying to relate to business people who are struggling, and unemployed youth and so on. They kind of wonder about the sincerity of that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, where is the ethics and the integrity where someone accepts all the Tories who were part of the old regime as a flop-over to that party now, the Liberal Party. Where is the ethics in that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, one final thing I will add is the critic for Social Services in the Liberal Party — whom I've talked to — she knows very well that the federal government has not released any day care, red book money yet. She goes up to Spiritwood, and she criticizes me for not asking for some of that day care money, that federal day care money that they promised a year and a half ago, because I hadn't asked for any yet.

Mr. Speaker, we've been negotiating and pleading with the federal government for the last year, trying to get them to partnership with us on some day care money. Mr. Speaker,

again it's a matter of ethics. The Liberal critic knew very well that the money has not been released yet, and she goes up there to some other part of the province and says that if the Minister of Social Services would only ask for it, the federal government would make it available.

Why doesn't she join me in writing to Mr. Axworthy or calling him or getting her leader to help with that to get some of the day care money which is badly needed here, as one of the tools to support people who become unemployed . . . or to become employed.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is just a few examples of some of the inconsistencies from the Leader of the Liberal Party who continues to talk as if she has the . . . I guess as if she has the — what's the word I'm looking for? . . .

An Hon. Member: — I know it but I don't want to say it.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, if she has the corner on integrity, Mr. Speaker, as if she has the corner on integrity and ethics. She's got a long way to go, Mr. Speaker, and people are watching her actions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our record because we said we would restore financial integrity, and we've done that. We said we would work with local communities, with regions, partnershiping for economic development. We've done that through the *Partnership for Renewal*, a document which is bearing fruit, Mr. Speaker.

We, Mr. Speaker, we have reformed the health care system to allow for local decision making, local priorities. And this will be the first year, Mr. Speaker, where local health boards are elected across the province. Now the Liberals fought that, which was well articulated by the member from Pelly, by the way, on Friday. The Liberals fought medicare in 1962; they're fighting health care reform in 1995; two or three years from now they'll let on it was their idea because that's what they do, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud of the government; I'm proud of the strides that we've made. Mr. Speaker, we've turned the corner economically, financially, on agricultural comeback, and on health care, Mr. Speaker. And we've done this. We've got our budget under control, Mr. Speaker, while continuing to provide service and support to those most in need. Mr. Speaker, that's what I'm most proud of about what we've accomplished over the last three and a half years.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the member from Wilkie is speaking when I finish. And, Mr. Speaker, I would also challenge him to not continue to promote information that he knows very well isn't true. Now I had the chance today to respond to the question about the welfare recipient who is unemployable and disabled; the fact that that person has access to more and gets more automatically than a person who is fully employable. He knows very well that that's the case, yet he chose to put a different slant on that. And I would ask him not to do that in the future because it does a disservice to him as a critic and just simply isn't accurate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, he also continues to promote — because he did this last Thursday so I assume he'll do it tonight again — that by and large people on welfare are cheating, because that's what Tories and Liberals do. They pit low income people and poor people against each other. Mr. Speaker, that is what they do.

We are accountable, Mr. Speaker. The auditor is satisfied that we're accountable, but we're accountable because we treasure and value taxpayers' money. We've got a proud record of balancing budgets. We've got no lessons to learn from those people. But we're not bringing in controls and accountability measures in the social assistance program to be punitive. And that's exactly, Mr. Speaker, why they would do it — to be punitive, not to be accountable. And that's the difference, Mr. Speaker, between this administration and what they did in the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of social assistance I want to reiterate tonight that the case-load was down in 1994 despite the two major offloads — the first nations offload by the previous federal government, the Conservative federal government, which has not been reversed by the Liberal federal government; and the other offload in February of '94, a major offload by the federal Liberals where they cut benefits in this province to people on UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) by \$40 million. By \$40 million, Mr. Speaker — \$40 million that the federal Liberals took right out of the pockets of low income people, unemployed people, in Saskatchewan. And of course that's meant that with the reduction in those seven weeks of benefits, it's cost this province \$17 million in social assistance payments in the last year.

But even taking those two major offloads, Mr. Speaker, the social assistance case-loads in this province went down last year, as I said today, from May of '94 to the end of January of this year, some 1,300 cases, or 2,800 beneficiaries is the reduction in case-loads, Mr. Speaker. And I might add that the case-loads in Alberta for December and January have gone up 2,500 in that two-month period, Mr. Speaker. So I don't think we've got anything to learn there.

Mr. Speaker, we have the second lowest dependency rate in all of Canada right here in Saskatchewan — that is the number of people on assistance. The rate is the second lowest in Canada. We have the lowest percentage of people on unemployment insurance in all of Canada — the lowest, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. And the number of unemployed employables on social assistance is a way down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing that because economic development is working. And I know that they didn't like to hear the revised StatsCanada figures — it shows that the number of jobs were way up — and they got off that track. But, Mr. Speaker, we've developed a long-term strategy which is the *Partnership for Renewal*. But we developed short-term strategies as well to help link people from assistance to training that they need, to educational opportunities, to skills development, and to actual jobs. Some 7,200 clients are beneficiaries of the New Careers Corporation program. We developed a new . . . the Future Skills

program, Mr. Speaker, with \$10 million to assist employers to train people to become marketable. And then the summer jobs and the JobStart programs, which I'm sure the Minister of Education, Training and Employment will talk about.

But, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the best social program is a job, a sustainable, well-paying job with decent benefits. So we have our financial house in order; our *Partnership for Renewal*, which is our long-term economic development strategy, is working; and we've got short- and medium-term strategies as well, Mr. Speaker. And there are really . . . We've looked around other provinces in Canada and the States. There are really no lessons to learn from any other province in terms of how we're trying to support unemployed people to make the links into the employment market.

What we don't know is where the federal Liberal income security review is in this whole process. A lot of smoke and mirrors but we don't know just where that is at, Mr. Speaker. And I think a lot of Saskatchewan unemployed people are getting very worried about whether they were listened to. And I guess we'll know in the next week or two about that.

Mr. Speaker, I think what I would do, I think the hon. member from Rosthern probably summed up very well how well things are going in Saskatchewan. And I happen to have here his viewpoint from *The Village Press*, Wednesday, January 4, 1995. Now this is the member from Rosthern. He says, and I quote:

1994 was a good year that saw the economy rebound from several years of recession and stagnant growth.

Well that's true, but that's a reflection on their record, Mr. Speaker.

Then the member from Rosthern goes on to say — I thank him and I agree with this — he goes on to say that:

Saskatchewan retail sales increased by 9.1 per cent, oil sales by 8.8 per cent, gas by 53.8 per cent, potash (by) 27.4 per cent and uranium sales increased by 16.5 per cent in 1994. At the outset of 1995, there is every reason to believe that the recession is over and that the economy's strong performance will continue.

Need I say more?. That's the member from Rosthern, Mr. Speaker. Now I'll send this over to his colleagues. This is what he's saying — the economy is turned around after many, many years of stagnant growth and there is every reason to believe that 1995 will be just as good. So I think the member from Rosthern shares the enthusiasm and the optimism of other people across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

(1930)

I know, Mr. Speaker, I did my sixth annual business survey this spring. Mr. Speaker, I've done six surveys now of the small-business sector in my constituency. And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the business people in Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain reflect the business people throughout the province. They're optimistic.

They had a good year in 1994. Their business viability is strong. They're optimistic about 1995. And, Mr. Speaker, 67 per cent of the business people in my riding say that they intend to hire new people in 1995.

So I agree with the member from Rosthern; we're back on track, and the economy is once again beginning to turn around. And I credit the government members here, and of course the people, as business people, and all the people of Saskatchewan because they've done it.

Mr. Speaker, this year — getting more specific with regard to the social services area and the social sector — this year again, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to Saskatchewan's action plan for children. Mr. Speaker, as you know, last year we designated \$4.4 million towards the action plan for children which is a partnership with communities, communities across the province. I think some 90 projects have been funded, and those projects are available by a recent publication. Mr. Speaker, these projects are going a long way towards strengthening families, strengthening supports to families, providing preventive services, intervening early, and indeed strengthening communities.

And I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan to thank all of the thousands and thousands of volunteers and organizations across Saskatchewan who have come together to be in partnership to contribute to strengthening the network of services in their various communities.

It's a belief that we have, Mr. Speaker, as a government, that solutions lie within communities. I think communities believe that, and they have responded to empower themselves to deal with the issues confronting them in an integrative and holistic fashion.

Mr. Speaker, there are many examples of the child action plan. I'll just mention two or three of them. But the Council on Children, which is a group of 25 men and women, young people, reflects the cultural, geographic, gender, age mix of Saskatchewan who are advising the government from their perspective on the kinds of children and family priorities that we should be looking at in terms of our social policy agenda. All the ministers have met with this group, and we take very seriously the suggestions that they're giving to us.

A number of family violence initiatives, Mr. Speaker, including a pioneering legislation in terms of making it clear that we in Saskatchewan have a zero tolerance level for family violence . . . and allow women and children to stay in their home rather than being plucked out and have to go to some shelter elsewhere. We're trying to take services to them, Mr. Speaker, and there's been positive response to the family violence challenge which is a challenge across government and across all of the communities, Mr. Speaker, and will take the combined efforts of everybody to ensure that we continue through education, prevention, and services to deal with the issue of family violence. And I think that we're trying to deal with the causes as well that create the kind of stress in families where this is manifested.

But a number of other initiatives related to youth, the school-link services . . . One area that I'm very proud of is the work we're doing with first nations, Mr. Speaker, where we've now signed seven agreements, historic agreements. We're in many ways leading the nation in this area where Indian people are setting out their own Indian children and family services agencies to manage their own child welfare, Mr. Speaker. And we have a moratorium. There simply are no adoptions occurring outside of native people outside of the native community any more — long overdue.

We shouldn't have been doing that, but, Mr. Speaker, we're trying to correct years of practice that was problematic. Mr. Speaker, our agenda towards support for first nations and Metis people to manage their own affairs is progressive, is done in partnership, and we're proceeding as rapidly as we can. And we're very proud of that agenda, Mr. Speaker, and we're cooperating with them in a way that has the support of both parties, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to say that this budget will contribute this year — remember 4.4 million to the child action plan last year — this year it will be 6.3 million, Mr. Speaker. I think . . . I mean surely, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader and her party and that the critic, the critic and the official opposition will be supportive of the child action plan this year which they were not last year.

Mr. Speaker, some of the new initiatives . . . I know others will speak to some of these in more detail, but I'll mention the child care, the day care package which puts \$700,000 in new money into day care in this province — again one of the bridges for single parents, low income families, one of the bridges to allow them to access training, education, and employment options, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that 26 to 27 per cent of the social assistance case-load are single parent mothers who need support in day care. Nothing was done in that area in the 1980s. We're doing a lot of catch-up. There's virtually no movement . . .

Well the member from Shaunavon wants me to hurry up. Well I'll take my time, Mr. Speaker. I'm representing my 12,000 constituents, and I'll just continue to talk as I wish, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask for him to support me in calling Mr. Axworthy to see if we can speed up the federal money so we can put our money together. If they're really serious . . . And by the way I might mention that many developments in day care are occurring in rural Saskatchewan. I would say that about 17 of the new day care centres that are coming on stream are coming on stream in rural Saskatchewan. So I need his support here.

Now we've got our money up front, but the federal Liberals haven't put any money up front. We don't know what it's going to be. But we have put 700,000 towards day care which goes with the 825,000 we've already put up since 1991 plus the 1 million we've put into day care through the social assistance program for people on assistance or accessing employment options and need the day care. Mr. Speaker, that's about a 15 per cent increase to the day care budget since we came into power because nothing was done during the decade of the 1980s, so we've got a lot of catch-up to do.

Mr. Speaker, we released a major report on day care. We know what the parents want in Saskatchewan. We know what the day care community wants. They want affordable. They want safe care. They want a broad range of options, Mr. Speaker. They want to know how to pick a good day care centre, and they want to know how to monitor the care that the children are getting.

Through this package they can do that. They're going to have the opportunity for some additional money for northern and rural projects in day care. We're enhancing the subsidies for infant and toddler day care. And we will also be putting about \$220,000 into special needs day care, Mr. Speaker, so children with special needs will be able to go to day care, and the day care centres will be able to receive those children and provide them with the support so that their parents will be able to access employment opportunities for themselves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Hamilton: — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, what our minister was saying was very important to the youth in this province so I hesitated to interrupt him, but he did mention that he had a number of other items he wanted to discuss, and I know some of my colleagues have been looking forward to the introduction of our new guests this evening.

They're the 64th Brownie pack from Regina, Mr. Speaker, in your gallery. They are 20 girls and five leaders. They're ages 6, 7, and 8. I won't contemplate the ages of the leaders at this point. I'm looking forward to meeting with them, having a picture, and a time to speak with them in room 218. And I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them this evening to view the proceedings and to learn more about the operation of the Legislative Assembly and what goes on in the House. I'd ask members to join with me in a warm welcome for the 64th Brownie pack from Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE BUDGET DEBATE) (continued)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to join my colleague in welcoming the Brownie pack to the Legislative Assembly as well and hope you enjoy your visit. It's good to see you here.

Mr. Speaker, this year as well, in addition to continuing the some 90 projects that were announced in the child action plan of last year, we will be putting about . . . through the Department of Health, I know the Minister of Health will speak more to this, but \$330,000 into the successful mothers support program to assist, Mr. Speaker, in 10 areas of the province which will provide support and training to young moms who have children. This will address the issues of nutrition and parenting, lifestyles, skill development, self-esteem, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, again this will . . . this is a priority based on the way in which the communities throughout the province have prioritized the needs that exist. We're trying to respond in this way.

We also, Mr. Speaker, will be putting \$112,000 this year into pilot projects to support and treat adolescent sex offenders in the area of assessment, treatment, and services. Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex area requiring additional resources and we'll be trying to provide the support as best we can there.

We'll also be adding almost \$200,000 in special project money to new housing needs, especially in the North to improve northern housing. Mr. Speaker, New Careers will be adding another — in addition to its budget now — another \$600,000 to a pilot project that I'm sure the minister will speak to more — but to single parents on assistance, to provide them with the support that they need, Mr. Speaker, to make that link to the first job or to the market or to the educational opportunities. But it will deal with the child care, again the education, training, career planning, and so on. Mr. Speaker, these are short term supports to allow our people to access and get the training they need to access the jobs.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are the right directions to be going in. I might say that we've had national interest — as we have in our health care renewal, as we have in our financial plan — we've had national interest in our child action plan because it's mobilizing communities across the province to take control of their issues and challenges and to develop solutions. Mr. Speaker, that's where the future lies so we're going in the right direction and developing the support with communities.

Mr. Speaker, I've been in this field for 20 years. I was a social worker when you were the minister of Social Services many years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I know from my years of experience there are no quick fixes; there are no magical solutions. These isolated, punitive suggestions will not work. What people need are jobs. They need opportunities. They need positive links and bridges to employment and educational training opportunities. They need adequate incentives.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague from Wilkie was saying in his throne speech last Thursday that we were not giving people who were on social assistance incentives to get off. In other words, if they make a dollar, they lose a dollar from social assistance. What he's forgetting, Mr. Speaker, is

half the story, which is what the opposition was suggesting today about the budget, or the Premier's address.

What he's forgetting, Mr. Speaker, because I was there in 1984 and 1985 through their so-called welfare reform, what their former administration did, the member from Melville then, the previous member from Melville, what he did is he . . . it was him that brought in the rules that if you made a dollar you lost a dollar. In other words, he took away all the incentive, which trapped people on assistance. What the member from Wilkie has to remember is that we are the government that built back in the incentive. In other words, if you make a dollar, you don't lose it now.

They took it away, Mr. Speaker, back in '84-'85. If you made a dollar, you lost the entire dollar. You don't do that any more. We're building those incentives back in. So it's important that he understand the facts as they are, not as he would wish them to be.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Hamilton: — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize to the minister. But I thought that it was important to also mention the names of the leaders that were here, since they've taken the time to bring the Brownies. And I've been remiss to do that, and I want to just quickly mention the names to the members who are present and who had viewed the leaders.

The Speaker: — The member has to ask for leave if she wishes to.

Ms. Hamilton: — I beg leave, Mr. Speaker, to mention the names of the leaders.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the leaders have taken their time to not only lead the Brownie pack, but to accompany them today, I wanted to also mention to the members present that the leaders that accompanied the Brownies, the 64th Pack from Regina, were Mary-Ann Ratushniak, Lori Skogberg, Kathleen McAllister, Janet East, and Tracy Boehm. And I congratulate them for the work and the involvement that they have in their community, for it's the volunteers within our community that make the quality of life here so exceptional and make our community strong.

Thank you very much for your indulgence in allowing me to do that this evening.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

(continued)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I will echo that, for those comments.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make just a few comments again. I know the member from Wilkie is going to follow me, and I know that he's going to promote what's happening in Alberta. I know he's going to promote what's happening in Alberta, so I want to just make a few more comments about our approach and our budgeting relative to Alberta's. And I know he'll be listening to this.

(1945)

Mr. Speaker, he compares the Alberta model to Saskatchewan. What they forget, Mr. Speaker, is that in Alberta, as was raised today, since in the last four years the power rates in Alberta have gone up 22 per cent. Power rates in Saskatchewan have gone up 11 per cent or one-half of what they've gone up in Alberta. Now I ask him to consider that and the impact on low income people.

Second comparison I would make to Alberta, because they keep saying Alberta's tax free, Alberta has a . . . it costs families \$450 a year to send their children to kindergarten — \$450 a year to send their children to kindergarten. It does not cost that here. Now, Mr. Speaker, you can't say that that's tax free to families. Imagine the impact of that on low income families.

Mr. Speaker, a family of four in Alberta pays \$1,350 in health care premiums. You can't say Alberta's tax free. Mr. Speaker, car insurance in Alberta is almost twice the cost as it is in Saskatchewan. You can't say that that is tax-free Alberta. Mr. Speaker, in those four areas, that represents several thousands of dollars, potentially, depending on how many children you have in kindergarten. But that represents 2 or \$3,000, so don't tell us that Alberta is tax free. It isn't tax free.

It's a matter of public record, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of public record — and I know this will be acknowledged because the member from Wilkie is a man of integrity — that if you earn \$25,000 a year as a low income person, that you pay the lowest level of taxation right here in Saskatchewan. That's a matter of public record; it's a matter of public record, and that can't be denied.

Mr. Speaker, so I ask the member from Wilkie, when he's speaking, to consider the following as well in terms of what's happening in Alberta in terms of welfare. Mr. Speaker, do you know that this year the Alberta government, to people on welfare, cut extra food allowances? They restricted dental and drug benefits for diabetics and women who are pregnant. That's what the Alberta . . . that's the model they're promoting. That's what they did.

Mr. Speaker, they also slashed school supplies and transportation costs for children going to school. They have the lowest minimum wage in Canada, the lowest minimum wage in Canada. Mr. Speaker, they eliminated benefits to low income people, to unemployed people, on utility connections, on any

moving expenses, on damage deposits. Now in Alberta the only way that anybody on assistance gets a damage deposit as of October of 1993 is if it's an abused woman fleeing a situation. Any other welfare recipient does not get a damage deposit in Alberta. And, Mr. Speaker, they've also eliminated benefits for telephone installation. They've eliminated benefits for telephone installation and operations, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, things are so bad in Alberta that the Children's Advocate, who by the way was accountable to the Minister of Social Services, resigned. The Children's Advocate resigned because of the deplorable situation in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. So you combine that with the fact that they drove 7,000 welfare recipients out of province, 12,000 families back to reserves, and eliminated those benefits, Mr. Speaker, and that that is the model being promoted over there, Mr. Speaker, I can hardly believe it. Mr. Speaker, on Alberta . . .

An Hon. Member: — Well Ralph's at 60 per cent. What's Roy?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well he's . . . because it's politically expedient, that's what he's saying. Ralph's at 60 per cent. But, Mr. Speaker, there's no principle there. There's no principle in Alberta. That's the difference, Mr. Speaker.

I have a copy here from *The Edmonton Journal*, February 17. This is from *The Edmonton Journal*, February 17, and the headline is, "Welfare demands leave woman worried for future." Did you hear that? Welfare demands leave woman worried for the future. And I quote, and it says:

Take retraining or be cut off welfare. The ultimatum from Social Services worried Fern Donovan, struggling to look after her severely handicapped daughter.

Last month, Fern was told . . . that she had to take retraining . . . or (she was) cut off welfare . . . (but get her) friends or neighbours to look after Janine or put her into a day-care program or a group home so she could work.

Home care agencies have told Fern they won't accept Janine in their day (care) programs because she needs one-on-one support and they don't have the necessary staff due to government cutbacks.

An Hon. Member: — That was in Saskatchewan that happened.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — No, that's in Alberta.

An Hon. Member: — It happened here too.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That's a hypocrisy here. This is in Alberta. Now this is in Alberta. Now I have my colleague from Souris-Cannington, who comes from my home area, talking about all the good things Ralph Klein is doing. I have a copy, Mr. Speaker, of his Christmas greeting, the *Carnduff Gazette*. Now he's supporting Ralph Klein's ravage attack on low income and unemployed people. He's doing that here tonight. And I

have a copy of his Christmas greeting to his constituents and he says, and I quote:

The celebration of Christ's birth is a very special time of the year. It is a time for re-uniting and sharing with our families, our friends and our neighbours.

We open our hearts to those less fortunate than we. That's what he said:

We open our hearts to those less fortunate than ourselves, and by doing so we receive the warmth of love which is the true spirit of this season.

Now that's what he says at Christmas time, Mr. Speaker. Then he promotes the support to Ralph Klein and the savage cuts he's making to low income people. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how he lives with himself.

Mr. Speaker, then we have the leader, we have the Leader of the Opposition, in his Christmas message, and I'll just quote a couple of sentences here. But I have heard . . . I have read about his attacks all over this province in local newspapers, about his attacks on all kinds of people that are unemployed and on social assistance, and what he would do — and young people — what he would do if he was premier. But then, this is what he says at Christmas time, and he's been promoting — the Leader of the Opposition has been promoting, as has the Liberal leader — Ralph Klein and his model. And this is what he says.

Well he starts out by saying, "I really like Christmas." Well that's good. He says the most important thing about Christmas is that we can treat others with kindness, love, and respect. And he says, now that is something . . . then he says:

That's something we should aspire to all year round . . . And in doing so, we're all able to see just a little more clearly the things that are truly important in life; our family; our friends; . . . being kind to others; and trying to make the world, at least our little corner of it, a better place.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what Ralph Klein is doing, his attacks on low income and unemployed people, is not making the world a better place. Well the member from Shaunavon says, tell me what you're going to do. Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest he read the throne speech, he read the budget speech, read this speech, but that more importantly he go back and talk to some of his constituents because, Mr. Speaker, that member will be so lucky to win his own nomination that we will never see him back here again after the next election.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that this government, with our communities, is . . . we're working very hard to providing opportunities, Mr. Speaker, and I would plead with the minister from Wilkie to work hard, to take his critic responsibilities seriously, work very hard to give me constructive ideas, to work hard to create positive images towards unemployed and low income people rather than feeding in to the punitive, negative stereotypes that he's been doing.

Mr. Speaker, he attacks unemployed and low income people every time he gets up here. But, Mr. Speaker, whenever he or the Liberals or the members opposite come to me with a question or come to me with somebody from their constituency who's on social assistance, every single time they want more money for that person. Without fail, whenever they bring a situation to me they want more money for the client. Yet they continue to vote against every initiative that helps families and then they categorize everybody else as being shiftless and lazy. But somehow the people they bring to us are legitimate, Mr. Speaker. That I find unethical.

So I challenge the critic to bring positive suggestions, not ideas that are rooted in attacks on low income people, which is what he did again on Thursday, and I take great exception to that. Mr. Speaker, his leader is talking about a 1-800 fraud line like they had in Manitoba. Well in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, they spent \$700,000, dial-a-cheat signs all over the highways, and they found out that 3 per cent of the people on assistance were cheating. But, Mr. Speaker, they spent \$700,000 and recovered 230. Mr. Speaker, when that member . . . when that party was in power, they spent \$650,000 on accountability equipment and on accountability measures and they recovered 200,000, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to send over to that member, two full pages of the accountability controls, the measures that we've taken to be accountable in the social assistance program. But I repeat, we're doing that to be accountable, not to be punitive and negative and intrusive. We're doing it to be accountable and the auditor is satisfied, and if the auditor is satisfied, Mr. Speaker, I'm satisfied.

I'll just mention very briefly, I am the critic for seniors too. I'll mention very briefly. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm the minister for seniors, that's right, correction. I'm the minister now for seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that one of the great joys I've had over the last 17 months has been to meet with senior citizens across the province. Mr. Speaker, we've had extensive discussions. I've been in virtually every community meeting with seniors. The seniors organizations met with our full cabinet recently. Mr. Speaker, senior citizens know that we had a big mess to sort out. They're concerned about their children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, they're appreciative that low income seniors got a bit of a seniors' income plan increase. Seniors are very appreciative of the special drug support coverage that they got, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are represented on the health boards proportional to their population. They're very involved in a meaningful way in the life of their communities and ensuring that other seniors have the support to remain independent and involved. They have been very involved working with us to try and develop abuse protocols for senior citizens.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Health met last week at the new senior citizen . . . new seniors mechanism, Sask Seniors Mechanism offices in the opening of their new office, when he

announced the new money, the new \$20 million, Mr. Speaker, he got an applause after every one of the initiatives.

And, Mr. Speaker, seniors know that we are working hard to provide them with the kind of independent supports that they need, and that we have increased home care by 100 per cent in the last four years, Mr. Speaker. So they're appreciative of that, but I know that the Minister of Health will be going over the initiatives as it relates to seniors.

But seniors support the notion of not putting money into bricks and mortar but putting money into services that support them to be more independent and they're supportive of us handing over support to local health boards and their involvement there. And of course they're very supportive to the health care renewal and the preventive health promotion aspects.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just quote briefly, very briefly, on again what external people say about the health care announcements of last week. And I quote from the *Star-Phoenix*, I believe last Friday, Mr. Allen Backman, a Saskatoon professor of health care administration, and he was referring to the minister's announcement on the \$20 million of new money. He says, and I quote:

(This) is "really good news" that will mean "huge improvements" in quality of life for many seniors (in Saskatchewan).

(He says) The focus of health care has to shift more to the community and this budget is a "very constructive start" (in doing that).

It will mean more respite care, increased day programs and round-the-clock home care. Fewer people will end up in nursing homes who could manage on their own with appropriate help, (says Mr. Backman, or Dr. Backman).

(2000)

So again, Mr. Speaker, that's an independent view. I think Dr. Backman is well respected in the health care field as being knowledgeable, progressive, and very much attune to what's happening throughout the world. He is very, very positive about the initiatives in health care, Mr. Speaker.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleagues for this budget. It's positive; it's sustainable. Mr. Speaker, it sets out a plan and we've delivered on the plan so far, and I know that from my discussions with my constituents on Friday, they have every confidence that we'll deliver on the debt reduction plan. They also have every confidence that we will continue to attack the job creation strategy and initiatives and be successful, as we have been, Mr. Speaker, in balancing the books.

Mr. Speaker, I again say that I am proud to have the opportunity to be able to speak to this budget debate. I am very proud to . . . I'll be able to represent the constituents of Saskatoon Eastview-Haultain, and not only for the past seven, but hopefully for many years to come, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that we do have the confidence of those people and I believe that one of the things that they appreciate about the government, Mr. Speaker, is that we have balanced debt reduction with job creation, with sustainable health care, with agricultural diversification, with balancing the social objectives in the way that is truly . . . typifies the Saskatchewan spirit, and, Mr. Speaker, unlike the Alberta approach, which is simply devastating for low income families.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the constituents in my constituency, they know that the Tories are filtering over to the Liberals. They know these are going to be the same old people. They will never again go back to the dark days of the 1980s. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just about decided not to get up. The minister was telling everybody what I was going to say and what I was going to do and he seemed to be occupied with the member from Wilkie. I was kind of wondering if he was just maybe stalling around to whoever he thought was listening to him and gone to bed because I was getting pretty drowsy myself.

Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps on talking about Alberta. I would say he thinks you protest too much. You talked about Manitoba only making a difference of 3 per cent. Well in Saskatchewan, my friend, if you would make a difference of 3 per cent in the abuse of the system, that'd be \$15 million. Your budget, your spending has gone up by 42 million as far as I can figure out taking a quick look at the book. And if everything is so good and so rosy as you try to paint it, how come it's only the welfare budget that seems to be going up leaps and bounds? If everything was so good why aren't people working?

And I take exception to you, sir, when you said that I used the word shiftless and lazy. I never did, never once, and I take exception to that. You talked a lot about the slash and burn of Alberta; well over here it's rape and rob in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I don't have . . . I don't intend to take a lot of your time tonight, Mr. Speaker, talking about the budget. There's isn't too much to talk about.

The minister talks about not having enough money to look after those folks that need a little extra help. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know very well you've got a tonne of money sitting in CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) that you won't use. You could take that out and give that to those disabled people that need a little extra help which you refuse to give them, then I could maybe be a little bit more sympathetic to your problem.

Mr. Speaker, this budget was balanced on the back of the Saskatchewan taxpayer; that's who balanced this budget. Not the boys on the other side. Anybody can balance a budget if you reach deeper and deeper into people's pockets. You took a billion-two extra taxes out of the people of Saskatchewan, and then you try to tell us that you did it; that you're the great, good guys. Yes, right.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the budget where the only family that gains is the government's very own family of Crown corporations. That's the family that benefits by this budget. Not the family that the minister likes to get up and talk about over there. He hasn't helped any families. He's maybe paid a whole bunch of money out but he hasn't helped them any. Have you found jobs for them? No, just hand out, hand out more money. That's what you figure you're helping people. Well I can tell you they don't want your hand-out. They want a hand up. They want a job; that's what they want. You've lost a thousand jobs net, and then you try to tell us that you're helping people. You've got your foot on their neck and you're ramming them down deeper.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something here. According to this budget the family of Crown corporations, CIC, did not pay any dividends at all, not a bit of dividends to the revenue fund. Now had they paid the \$60 billion into the government that they budgeted last year, the 1994-95 surplus would have been 229 million instead of the 119 million, Mr. Speaker.

Well the NDP (New Democratic Party) family, the family of Crown corporations, is \$60 billion richer, while the average working family in this province continues to suffer under the government-imposed taxation load. And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it's very ironic that the party claiming to represent the working people is cashing in on his pay cheque.

Mr. Speaker, the average working man is seeing his disposable income slowly disappear under this NDP regime. Thousands — thousands were forced onto welfare under this NDP government. We started out with 57,000, now you got 83,000 and a population of less than a million. Yet this is the NDP government that promised to end poverty, not build on it and spend 500-and-some-odd million dollars on it. You're going to end it; no food banks. All that was going to be done. Well I haven't heard tell of any food bank close lately.

And a mere six years ago, Mr. Speaker, at the 1989 NDP annual convention, the now Premier, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, vowed to end poverty in Saskatchewan — end it. Well we've went from 57,000 to 83,000 welfare cases. How is that ending poverty? In fact he pledged to eliminate poverty by the end of his first term in government. And that was in the *Star-Phoenix* of November 20, 1989.

Well when the minister get up there and tries to dazzle us with a bunch of figures, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is look at the facts and you'll find out what kind of a job they've done.

Now just prior to 1991, the general election, he went a step further, stating he would make no promises that he couldn't keep. That was in a news conference on September 20, 1991. Well guess what? Since forming the government, the number of people on welfare has risen to record numbers — record, record numbers — record numbers. Never have seen them that high before. And you stand on your feet over there and try to tell me that you're doing a good job. Now you tell that to the people out there that's on welfare.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in August 83,069 people — 83,000 in a population of less than a million . . . and over in Alberta they got two and a half million. And they only got 57,000 on welfare.

An Hon. Member: — That's because they give them jobs.

Mr. Britton: — Yeah, right. Well it's declined a little bit. Well you know, Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't so ridiculous, it would be pitiful.

According to the most recent statistic that's available to us, you still got 80,000 people on welfare in this province. And that's in your own quarterly report. You still got 80,000 people out there.

And when the NDP took power, as I said Mr. Speaker, there was 57 — 57 in 99. And this is ending poverty, you go from 57 to 80? Well that's just an increase of 23,000. That's since the member from Riversdale became the Premier of this province. Well I would like to know how his constituent think about that, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said there are 23,576 more people on welfare than there was in 1991. Now, do these numbers reflect on any action on behalf of a Premier that promised to end poverty? Well I say no they don't.

Instead we have as many people on welfare as there is — and I want you to listen to this — as many as the combined population of Estevan, Lloydminster, Melfort, Melville, North Battleford, Swift Current, Weyburn and Yorkton. That's eight of the twelve cities in Saskatchewan would be on welfare, if they all lived in those cities. And the minister gets up there and tries to tell us that they're doing a great and wonderful job. Well, I guess.

Well of course the NDP takes no responsibility for that. He don't take no responsibility. It's not their fault. It's not their fault. They never done anything wrong.

It couldn't be the result of the high taxes, sky-rocketing utility rates, and the oppressive labour laws. Oh no. No no.

The Social Services minister blames it on the federal government. He's been blaming it on them for the last two years. Now he's got a new one. He said the federal government . . . the high number was because the federal government decision not to provide assistance to off reservation Indians. Now most recently he's blaming it on the federal government UIC program. That's what done it.

Well, as usual, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have chosen to blame someone else for their miserable statistics, rather than to come up with solutions. All we've asked the minister, at any time, was to reduce the cost of welfare, get jobs for these people. We didn't tell them to turn them out in the street; we said get jobs for them.

Why are people being forced onto welfare? Well let's consider the NDP's actions just prior to this budget. Just a little bit of an

overview. The annual tax and utility rate increases — well we all know how far they went. They went so far you had to give some back. Then you eliminated the child dental plan and the prescription drug plan — great family people.

An Hon. Member: — Except for MLAs.

Mr. Britton: — Yes, that's right. You cancelled the senior citizens heritage program . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They did, the great, wonderful family people over there. This great, big-hearted minister over there.

You eliminated the Saskatchewan Works program. And you've demonstrated a lack of economic development and minimal job creation. You have done a dismal job in job creation. You've got 1,000 less jobs and you've got 23,000 more people on welfare. And you're trying to tell me . . . You want to tell me you're doing a good job, and you want some help? I don't want to help you do that kind of . . . I don't want to help you do that. If I was to go . . . Do you want me to go and help you get 40,000 more on? Is that what you want me to do?

(2015)

And you talked about the removal of the abuse detection. Well you're misleading the people. There was a \$6 million abuse identified, and they brought that down to \$2 million. There was a \$4 million right there. So you tell . . . When you tell the people it was only \$200,000, that's not the truth. Telling half of the story.

Well another thing you did: when you disbanded the investigating unit, you changed the policy cutting off benefits to those recipients who drop out of work or job search. You did that. Yes, you did.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's disastrous policy decisions and lack of controls on who receives welfare in our province has compounded the financial strain on our social service net.

Mr. Speaker, there are people forced to live on the meagre amount provided by welfare, but there are those who choose to live on welfare. Well, Mr. Speaker, welfare should not be a way of life. Welfare should be a second chance. It should be a hand up, and not a hand-out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — This government needs to re-evaluate its method of distributing welfare and the rates that they provide to recipients. Maybe, Mr. Minister, if you want some help, maybe you should look at a two-tiered system. Maybe you should help those that really need it instead of sticking to your policies. You told me the other day, the policy. You can't help this poor lady that can't work because your policy. Well where's your heart? Is it all written on your heart? Where's your heart?

I raised the attention to you. What did you do? You told me you had gone as far as you could within the policy. Well thank you very much. Well, Mr. Speaker, this lady has cerebral palsy. She can't work. She is unable to work. And he tells me she has to

live on the same policies, same amount of money as anybody else. Well thank you very much.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, overall, the disabled in Saskatchewan are eligible for a mere \$40 extra in disability assistance — \$40. Well I do not agree. I do not agree with the NDP administration when they state the poor are poor, that one person cannot be poorer than another in the eyes of the social assistance system.

Now don't go down with me, sir. There are people who are poor and need help. And there are people who are poor and can't help themselves, and they need more help. Mr. Speaker, if that were the case, the Department of Social Services wouldn't be designated individuals as employable and unemployable. If that was the case that there was just one level of poor, then why would you have two designations? The sad reality, Mr. Speaker, is some people are physically unable to work, people like Mrs. Dougherty, Mr. Speaker. That has to be recognized.

In other provinces, Mr. Speaker — let's take Ontario for an example, Manitoba and Alberta — the disabled are given special consideration. Mr. Speaker, I believe that our province may want to consider providing additional benefits to the disabled. I would then join with the minister, if he would come to me with a proposal like that. And as this goes on, I intend to pursue that issue, Mr. Speaker.

It is my opinion that the government should focus more attention on getting the people who should not be on welfare, out of the system. And I refer to the able-bodied employables and those collecting welfare fraudulently. Other provinces have had great success, in spite of what the Minister says, in discouraging welfare abuse. And I, Mr. Speaker, am not, never was, and never will suggest that people . . . every person on welfare does not deserve it. There are probably not a lot, but if we had those off, we could then look after the other people better. And we do know that there are people who are abusing the system.

Last year, Manitoba implemented a 1-800 line and I'll tell the Minister what happened there. The ongoing cost of this line are about \$4,000 per year plus staff time. A minimal cost, Mr. Speaker, when you take into account that the Manitoba government anticipates that they will recover 1.5 million in abusive claims. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the five months that this line has been operating, the corrective action has been taken in 188 cases. Now that's not a big number, but it's 188 cases. That has produced a potential annual savings of \$837,000 on 188 people.

Now this money then could go to help those that I was speaking to the minister about, who was totally, totally unable to work. And I will address those at a later date because I don't intend to take up a lot of time tonight, Mr. Speaker, because I would prefer to get on to the business of the House. And I look forward to taking a few of these matters up with the Minister at a later date. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very pleased to rise in this Assembly today to speak in support of the budget for the province of Saskatchewan which was tabled by our Finance Minister on Thursday last. This budget represents a turnaround, Mr. Speaker, that is no less than remarkable for and by the people of Saskatchewan. We have come from the depths of despair in 1991, to the threshold of a new dawning of hope and opportunity in 1995, in only three and a half short years.

I recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, knocking on doors in my riding of Saskatoon River Heights prior to the election in 1991 and having people say, what can anybody do? Things are such a hopeless mess. People sense that the affairs of the province were out of control and had lost hope.

I remember well the for sale signs on front yards which threatened to outnumber election signs, especially blue ones, and the moving vans blocking the driveways as I went from door to door. This was even before we were able to keep our promise to open the books of the province and reveal the awful truths for certain. But the rumours were out there that the provincial debt totalled \$15 billion. I recall trying to reassure my future constituents that no matter how negative things seemed, good management could make repairs and restore the traditional confidence of Saskatchewan people in themselves to control their own destiny.

I put it in the context at that time of a home owner who owes three times his or her annual salary on a mortgage. This is not unusual, and people understand that this kind of debt is spread over a long period of time that will allow enough residual income to provide for a decent standard of living. With careful planning, families can provide for their needs and finish with a house all paid for. This approach seemed to provide some reassurance in using it as a parallel to the provincial financial situation.

Then I was elected and appointed to the Treasury Board and the Crown Investments Corporation. As the magnitude in systemic nature of the legacy of debt began to unfold before my eyes, I began to have misgivings about my confidence prior to the election that good management alone to turn things around. We did have to take measures to reduce programming in some areas, reduce funding to third parties, and increase some taxes and fees — distasteful things for us to do. But this was done after thorough, objective analysis. And though people were asked to make sacrifices, the hallmark of our actions was balance, fairness, and sustainability.

Well, Mr. Speaker, three and a half years is a relatively brief time in the history of a province. And with this turnaround come-back budget it can be truly said that the period from 1991-95 was short-term pain for long-term gain. I stand in my place in this House today totally vindicated in that everything I told voters in 1991 about economic recovery through prudent management while maintaining our compassion for each other and our quality of life has proven to be absolutely true.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Teichrob: — This accomplishment belongs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to all Saskatchewan people. Not only are we the first government in Canada to balance our budget; we did it the Saskatchewan way, the best way — first and best, Mr. Speaker, first and best. We are now, as the Finance minister said last Thursday, in a position to dream new dreams. With one year of a budget with a positive balance almost behind us and a clearly laid out plan for four more years ahead, individuals and businesses can take comfort in the truth that the province is back on track. They can now turn their attention with confidence to making plans to build and prosper in an atmosphere of predictability, honesty, dignity, civility, and decency, which form the Saskatchewan tradition.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, as the song says, happy days are here again. Yes, much more needs to be done, but with some successes behind us and a clear goal ahead of us, at least we can whistle while we work, as another song says.

This fair and responsible budget sets out targets in four main areas — debt management, tax reductions, health renewal, jobs and training.

Firstly on debt management. Although much has been accomplished, there needs to be a continuation of the common sense approach to renegotiation and careful management of the '80s megaprojects. Debt in the Crowns has been reduced but needs to be reduced further. Future surpluses will be applied to debt. Indeed \$540 million will be applied in this current fiscal year with projections for a reduction in the total debt of 1.2 billion by 1999.

This begins a positive cycle of reducing the size of the debt which reduces the amount required for annual interest payments which in turn allows for progressive and sustainable tax reductions. Truly we are on track to building a brighter future.

Tangible proof of that truth is to be found, Mr. Speaker, in the significant tax reductions contained in this budget, tax reductions being the second of the four initiatives I wish to address.

There are three major tax incentives to businesses. The cut in the aviation fuel tax, which according to press reports has been well received; a reduction in the rate of corporate tax paid by manufacturers and processors; and an investment tax credit to encourage manufacturers and processors. These measures should result in more value added activity inside our province, providing more jobs for our people and more opportunity for enhanced research and development to sharpen the leading edge we already have in areas such as farm equipment manufacture, for example.

But the tax reduction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is closest to my heart is the conversion of the deficit reduction tax to the debt reduction tax, now that the deficit is gone, on an annual operating basis, and the application of that reduction in a progressive way to benefit all individual taxpayers in Saskatchewan. And by progressive we mean that it will provide the most relief to those who most need it. This issue is probably one of the reasons I sought election in 1991 and the reason I am

in this House today. It is as a result of my experiences as a business person and an employer.

Early in 1990, I was preparing T-4 slips for my more than 20 employees for the previous year. These were farm employees and workers in a retail operation with two mall outlets, mostly young, some students and part-time, and mostly paid just above the minimum wage. As I was typing in the totals of withholdings for income tax, Canada Pension Plan, and unemployment insurance on the T-4 slips, I realized that there was something seriously wrong with the picture. I went and dug up a set of employer deduction tables from about 10 years earlier. The comparison shocked me and shook me.

It struck me that through the '80s, while right-wing governments diverted our attention and stressed us out with interest rate and monetary policy fiasco, a constant barrage of CUSTAs (Canada-U.S. Trade Agreement), NAFTAs (North American Free Trade Agreement), and nattering about globalization and entrepreneurship, they had quietly and insidiously used the income tax system to create a new class of working poor in this country.

During that decade while taxpayers' money was being generously dished out to the Westrays, the Pocklingtons, and the like, the income tax system threshold had been slowly lowered to go deeply into the pockets of honest, hard-working, low income people to the point where, for example, a single person with no dependants, working full-time, 40 hours a week for a minimum wage, would pay almost \$1,200 a year in income tax.

As I reflected upon this as a social democrat, it occurred to me that there were proportions both tragic and comic in this. The comic part was that our political movement in Canada has been accused by the corporate and right-wing elements of society of being social engineers, for embracing philosophies which include compassion, safety nets to address the human condition.

(2030)

These progressive changes in the tax . . . These regressive changes in the tax system were most certainly social engineering, but this time it was done by right-wing interests and was producing an extremely negative effect. The tragedy of this kind of an agenda makes victims of good, honest people, many of them young. It doesn't only take money from their pockets, Mr. Speaker, it robs their spirit and violates their soul. Have you ever been served by a clerk at a gas station or at the service level somewhere, for example, who was less than pleasant. No wonder. It's one thing not to be able to get a job at all, and quite another to get one or two, work as hard as you can, then take home so little after taxes that you can't even meet your own basic personal needs sufficiently, let alone drive a car, take a vacation, save for an education or a rainy day.

This is what creates cynicism and hopelessness and causes young people to drop out of the system, onto UIC, then welfare. We need to meet the eagerness and initiative of our young people with opportunity and a promise to keep the tax man out of their pockets when they are building their skills in lower

paying entry-level jobs. We want them to do those jobs which will always be there, but we want young workers to move on, not drop out.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, means that over 6,000 lower income earners will pay no Saskatchewan income tax, and there will be reduced taxes for all earners.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Teichrob: — These changes will be effective July 1, 1995, which coincides with the publication of revised employer tables by Revenue Canada, and will continue throughout our plan to 1999.

These tax measures are reinforced by other steps towards a progressive reduction in the cost of living for Saskatchewan people. I'll cite a few. One, our promise to hold the line on utility rates. Indeed gas rates, as announced, are down six and a half per cent retroactive to January 1, with adjustments being made on householders' bills in March. There will be a three-year freeze, as announced, on SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) rates. SaskTel rate reductions have already been in place, amounting to \$17 million on long distance since 1993, and 7 million on domestic rates since 1994. This is all good news, Mr. Speaker, for Saskatchewan people.

The fourth area that was targeted was health care, and health care renewal; health care being defined as more than medical intervention for the sick. It has to include good housing, good jobs, education, and a good environment to prevent stress-related illnesses and disease. We will be moving to the second phase of our health reform, emphasizing the movement from institutional care to community-based care and to prevention.

We have announced \$20 million increase in our home care budget. This will provide for round-the-clock care for seniors and disabled people in their homes where they would prefer to be and where they can get more efficient and personalized care. This will provide 450 jobs for nurses, counsellors and other people at the service level. And in addition to all of this, Mr. Speaker, fees will drop for home care 17 per cent as of April 1st.

The last area and a very important area, is jobs and training. We have previously announced the JobStart initiative and that will combine training and work experience, and will help young people to get off of welfare. In the post-secondary sector of that initiative we will focus on jobs in the small-business sector for graduates from our post-secondary institutions.

Another important initiative that is really not emphasized enough, I think, is the improvements that we have made in enhancing the distance education, and the SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation) which provides training, opportunities, and enhancement of existing curriculum and subject material particularly to rural and northern areas in the province.

As well it's not well enough known, I think, the role that SCN and the film industry and the expertise that has been developed

in this province, plays in the economic side. There are many people involved in jobs in this area and it's a growing field. Our reputation in Saskatchewan as a training ground for not only the creative people — the writers, the actors — but the technicians is receiving worldwide attention. And in fact, we've received many awards on the national and international scene for productions that have taken place in this province and been produced and directed by people from Saskatchewan. In fact, in the last year we received some Genie awards, and indeed an Oscar. An academy award for computer animation was won by a native of Saskatchewan.

This is a very important area and it fits together well with the expertise in communications, and the access to the Internet that SaskTel, with its huge pool of expertise, is able to provide. And this will be an area that will be targeted to not only have development take place within the province, but to sell that expertise abroad to other countries who need it.

This government strategy of targeting assistance to growth sectors of our diversifying economy is working. One such example which is particularly close to my heart is the biotechnology sector centered at Innovation Place on the University of Saskatchewan campus. Since the 1970s, I spent a total of 24 woman years, overlapping of course. This budget proves that our administration can do addition.

I served on the College of Agriculture Advisory Committee, the University Senate, the VIDO (Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization) and Biostar boards and the Saskatchewan Research Council, for a total of about six years on each particular entity. And in those capacities, starting even back in the late 70s and early 80s, one could readily identify a potential unfilled for the biotech industry to be supported and developed.

Our strategy of targeting this area of endeavour has at last attracted national and international attention to this place. The influx of companies setting up shop in Innovation Place has created an exciting synergy providing many high-quality jobs and opening up new opportunities for the industries they serve including agriculture, energy, mining, forestry, and others in our resource-rich province. It is very gratifying to see these most recent developments, and I'm confident that there will be within our strategy many more, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, I think that it is safe to say that our strategies are all coming together as are representative, and having the honour to represent the people of Saskatoon River Heights in this legislature. I can truly report that over the weekend, as I was shopping in the mall, going to church, meeting people on the street, that a large number of people, dozens, approached me without solicitation, to congratulate us on the job that the government is doing and particularly to mention that they really thought that it was a good budget. So, on their behalf, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to make these remarks this evening in support of the budget and I certainly will be voting in favor of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to entering into this debate, Mr. Speaker. I want to make comments on the budget itself. I want to welcome new staff who are working here in the Legislative Assembly, including the pages. I want to offer some objective criticism to the exaggerated views of the Leader of the Third Party and the Leader of the Official Opposition. However not wanting to get into it at this late hour and breaking up the flow of what I have to deliver, and being near the time of adjournment, I move this debate do now adjourn.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 8:41 p.m.