The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of concerned citizens with respect to young offenders:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to establish a task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem with youth crime in Saskatchewan, in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts, as well as crimes of violence, including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are primarily from the city of Regina.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present petitions from concerned citizens of Saskatchewan on the issue of young offenders:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan, in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts, as well as crimes of violence, including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present petitions on behalf of those concerned about Working for Women. And I'll read the prayer:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to continue the services of Working for Women, Saskatoon, who have a 16-year history of successfully providing cost-effective, accessible services to women in poverty by reducing their barriers to training and employment.
>
> And as in duty bound, your petitioner will ever pray.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too present petitions today. The prayer reads:

> Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reverse the municipal revenue-sharing reduction and commit to stable revenue levels for municipalities in order to protect the interests of property taxpayers.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reduce the PST by 2 points in the 1997 provincial budget;
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime;
>
> Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to change the big game damage compensation program; and
>
> Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to assist women in poverty by continuing the services of Working for Women.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Tuesday next move first reading of a Bill, the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 1997, free votes.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly, 13 students from Gray School in the community of Gray south of Regina here. The students are kindergarten to grade 5 and they are sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Accompanying the students are the three teachers, Mrs. Kim Engel, Mrs. Bev Birch, and Mrs. Penny Wiebe; also chaperons Gail Stuermer, Tanya Boesch, and Neil Vernon.

And, Mr. Speaker, many of our members might remember earlier this week on the front page of the *Leader-Post* there was a front-line story, "Tiny schools can do it." And I'm sure that the community of Gray is very proud of this achievement and we look forward to their school and community being open for many years to come.

And I will be meeting with the students later on. And I ask all members to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and to the Assembly, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, three very important people in my life. The members of course are familiar with my good wife Carole, who is always delightful to be here supporting. But more importantly today, I'd like to introduce my daughter Laurie — from Calgary — McKerracher, and the young person in the basket who has made me a grandfather, Hayley Dawn McKerracher.

Would members please join in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to join my colleague from Indian Head-Milestone in welcoming the group from Gray. This is where I started my education, was in Gray, so I do know that small schools can do very, very well and I just want to welcome them here today also.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the House this morning a very distinguished guest seated in your gallery. She is Dr. Karen Mock, and I would ask you to stand as I introduce her.

Dr. Karen Mock is the national director of the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada, which is a national agency dedicated to combating racism and bigotry. She is a registered psychologist and teacher, specializing in human development, interpersonal communications, multiculturalism, and race relations. She's widely acknowledged as one of Canada's foremost experts on anti-racist education.

She is in Saskatchewan as part of the marking of International Day for the Elimination of Racism. She is being hosted by Carol and Dave Abbey, and members will recognize Dave Abbey, who is with her today, who is the League for Human Rights contact for the B'nai Brith lodge here in Regina.
I ask all members to join me in extending a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I as well, on behalf of my colleagues and the Leader of the Third Party, would like to extend a special welcome to Dr. Karen Mock as well; that we're pleased to have you with us this morning, and we wish you well in your ongoing endeavours. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, not to sound too repetitive, I too wish to welcome Karen here today. I consider her a friend and a mentor in the area of specific, practical measures to eliminate the evil of racism. And I have been very pleased to both share speaking engagements with her, and also to share a profession with her as a psychologist.

And I want to tell this Assembly that if ever you want to hear about solid, practical, human ways with a compassionate touch to eliminate racism, please contact the B'nai Brith Society. They're very good and Karen is a leader in helping us to figure a way out of the morass of the evil of racism. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of this day — the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — it is an honour for me to stand before the Assembly and ask everyone to renew their commitment to overcome all forms of racism and discrimination that we face today in our society.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a society that is composed of many diverse ethnic and culture groups. Members of this Assembly are representative of that diversity, and must reinforce and recommit ourselves to overcoming all forms of racial discrimination. Let us use the opportunity of this special day against discrimination to continue to build bridges of understanding and a society free of racism. We must overcome all forms of racism and discrimination and show that we respect, accept, and celebrate the cultural diversity of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all members of this Assembly will join me and recommit themselves to the elimination of racial discrimination in our society. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I join the members opposite also and rise today as Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day in Saskatchewan.

Racism is an ugly disease that is spawned from ignorance and hatred. Racism is a disease that leaves scars that are hidden but felt for ever by those who are targeted with unwarranted remarks and unfair treatment. Racism is a disease that we have a cure for and that cure is zero tolerance. We should all do our part to promote multiculturalism.

In fact I recently attended an annual banquet organized by Herman Slotsve, president of the Potashville Multicultural Council and past president of the Saskatchewan Multicultural Council. It was a fantastic evening highlighted by the guest speaker, Corporal Jim Nadon of Yorkton, who spoke on his time as a peacekeeper in Bosnia. Mr. Speaker, he gave a great speech, and I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to hear him tell of his experiences to listen very carefully.

I would like to thank all those volunteers across Saskatchewan who devote their time and energy to wiping out racism.
Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Closure of Working for Women

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a sad

day. It's a day of disappointment and a day of disillusionment for many Saskatoon citizens. Today, Mr. Speaker, Working for Women, an organization that has successfully helped women in poverty, will be closing its doors after 16 years. It is apt that I quote from the March 1996 budget address to illustrate a point.

> But in meeting new realities, we must be guided by the enduring values of our past — values (like) . . . compassion — the conviction that all, whether rich or poor should have access to essential services . . . We have listened. We are responding.

Mr. Speaker, these words and the words of the 1997 budget address yesterday ring very hollow indeed for the hundreds and hundreds of women who mourn the loss of this great service.

As I speak to this Assembly this morning, boxes are being packed, leased equipment is being returned, furniture is being given to other non-profit organizations. To the selfless, dedicated people who have served at Working for Women throughout its existence, I say thank you publicly. Thank you for caring about these too often forgotten Saskatchewan women.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Black History Month in Saskatchewan

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to report on a ceremony I attended last month but today seems the appropriate time to mention it. I was proud to represent the government at an event honouring Black History Month in Saskatchewan, a joyous event which featured speakers, musicians, and dancers performing dances from the Caribbean including the limbo.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a diverse cultural representation, as we know, but numerically people from black cultures are a small minority. It would be easy for them to get lost in the cultural mix.

As well, I suspect most of us make the hasty assumption that a black person in Saskatchewan is simply an American Black who travelled north. And certainly there is a connection going back to the underground railway of the pre-Civil War period.

But black culture in Saskatchewan and in Canada is much richer and varied than that. We have people with Caribbean backgrounds and African and Asian, and I was happy to see last month their efforts to sustain their culture.

Mr. Speaker, a black historian wrote, "If a race has not recorded history, its achievements will be forgotten and finally claimed by other groups." I am glad to see that one more group in our society recorded its contribution. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tisdale Bantam Ramblers Hockey Team

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency is notorious for its hockey, and today I want to recognize yet another very dynamic hockey team from Tisdale. The Tisdale Bantam Ramblers advanced to the SAHA (Saskatchewan Amateur Hockey Association) Bantam B provincial final for the second straight year after defeating Southey 12-4 in the semi-final series last week.

The Ramblers are the defending provincial champions that will now meet the winner of Drake and Lucky Lake in the provincial Bantam B final. Please join with me today in congratulating the Tisdale Bantam Ramblers, coaches Colin McPeak, Wayne Hoffus, and manager Loren Forer, and wish them the best of luck in the final provincial series.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Project in Guyana

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, today is International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination; yesterday was budget day in Saskatchewan. The juxtaposition of those two days for a social democratic government is not a coincidence.

There are many things to praise in this budget, but two stand out: its prudence and its humanity. It is balanced, responsible, and it furthers our commitment to improve the lives of those who deserve to share our advantages.

But social democrats, Mr. Speaker, look beyond their immediate borders with the same combination of prudence and compassion. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to associate myself with the efforts of one of our Crown corporations to aid in the development of one of the poorest countries in our hemisphere.

I am speaking of the SaskPower project in Guyana. I am proud of that project.

If we believe in eliminating racial and economic discrimination, we must back it up with action — talk the talk and walk the walk.

Unfortunately, because some people don't like this initiative, I also need to point out that SaskPower's investment is risk insured, so the people of Saskatchewan will not lose. They will almost certainly profit from this enterprise, financially and altruistically.

Because of our investment, Guyana, a country with less than a million people, will be able to improve their life circumstances. Like Saskatchewan in the '40s and '50s, they will be electrified by SaskPower. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fund-raiser Banquet

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night, as many of you know, I, along with many members of the Assembly, attended a fund-raiser banquet downtown in Regina. Everyone, everyone had a good time. Mr. Speaker. I honestly didn't think I could draw that large of a crowd. All went very

well though. The food was good, the company was good, and I hope the entertainment was good as well.

Next year, when the Deputy Premier has his event, I'm hoping that the Premier will show up because I think it would be a big boost to the Deputy Premier's leadership bid. Really though . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Probably not. Really though, Mr. Premier, I think it would be . . . I think it'd be much easier if we just, if we all just nominated the Deputy Premier as the pope. That way, all of his colleagues would only have to kiss his ring.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dinner Theatre in Pasqua

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This coming weekend in my constituency, the people of the community of Pasqua will once again be challenging the system. Visitors to Pasqua's newly renovated community hall will be able to see two or more dinner theatre performances of the Pasqua Community Club's five-act play, which is called *Challenging the System*.

Funds from these performances will go to finish renovations to the stage in the community hall.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, in, well a new role for me as critic for live dinner theatre productions in the Thunder Creek constituency, I joined with many of your constituents in fact to watch an enjoyable event. Not only were we well entertained, but also we were treated to a good country meal.

I'd like to congratulate the writer and producer, Larry Shaak. Congratulations are also due to the Gadd, Champion, Rose, McDowell, Bespalko, McDougall, Ringer, Greenwood, Gorgichuk, Pion, Best, Aitkin, and Gill families for their hard work and dedication to their community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Decorum in the Assembly

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that as Speaker you have made every effort to improve the decorum of the House. I would like to call your attention to a disturbing situation which occurred during yesterday's proceedings.

With so many guests on the floor of the Assembly it would be easy for an event like the budget speech to become disrupted due to people moving about unnecessarily. I was pleased that during the Finance minister's reading of the budget speech this did not occur. All members on both sides of the House remained in their seats throughout the entire speech, as did the invited guests.

Unfortunately the situation changed dramatically when the member for Melfort rose to give his response on behalf of the official opposition. Ten government members, fully one-quarter of the NDP (New Democratic Party) caucus, left the Assembly during the member from Melfort's speech . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. The hon. member knows that for debating purposes, reference to attendance or absence of members is not permitted.

I also want to remind the member that there is a forum for raising points of order, and that members' statements are not to be used; they are not intended to be used for that purpose.

It's sounding very much to me as though the hon. member is making a statement which is more appropriate to points of order. I'll let him continue but I want to advise him that if it is in the same vein, that it will be out of order and I'll rule that way.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Highways Funding

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my question is for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, before your government came to power in 1991, you told the people of Saskatchewan that our highways were Grant Devine's golf courses — they're 18 holes to the mile — and the people agreed with you. The highways were in terrible condition. However, since taking office your government has cut $187 million from the Highways' budget

Mr. Minister, Mr. Premier, will you stand in this House today and confess that the sprinkling of monies for highways announced in yesterday's budget will do little more than water the fairways in what have become your golf courses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I realize how difficult it is for the opposition this morning to attack the good-news budget that the Minister of Finance delivered, and in the consequence, we get this form of a question.

I leave it to the people to judge whether or not $2.5 billion over a 10-year program for highway rebuilding and restructuring is a sprinkling, or whether it is a major rebuilding of the infrastructure. I think judging by the reaction of the public and by the journalists and by those in the business community and in the labour community, they're going to accept the Minister of Finance's approach and this government's approach: $2.5 billion over 10 years without a penny of assistance from the federal Liberals' infrastructure — without a penny of assistance — is a tremendous step forward to making sure our highways infrastructure is in good shape.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question to the Premier. I'll tell you, in the upcoming days we're going to be explaining very well what this two and a half billion over 10 years is really going to mean.

Mr. Premier, the two and a half billion dollars to be spent on our highways over the next 10 years is less than half of what you will collect in fuel tax and licensing fees. In fact your government will have a two and a half to a three and a half billion dollar surplus over that same time period while our

highways continue to crumble.

Mr. Premier, you know that this amount of money will not even maintain the highways in their present state of disrepair. Will you stand in the House today and ensure the people of Saskatchewan that your government will stop siphoning the gas tax from the Highways' budget and use it for the reasons it was raised?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this is voodoo economics at its worst — or at its best. What the hon. member for the Liberal Party is saying, that approximately $350 million — is it, Minister of Finance, in that neighbourhood? — raised with respect to fuel tax should be dedicated to Highways in its entirety. How his minister . . . his critic of the Department of . . . ministry, will get up and square that circle today when he criticizes the budget in terms of spending money for hospitals and health care — I'm sure his line is going to be, it's not enough.

How you'll square that in terms of saying that our tax cut is not enough. How he'll square that with respect to balancing the budget, in other words, tackling the debt and keeping it down, I don't know. But I'll tell you one thing, the economics and the math simply doesn't work with that kind of logic.

And this is going to be an interesting test about the credibility of the Liberal caucus. Because right after question period, I want the journalists and everybody in Saskatchewan to pay attention how that question — $350 million dedicated; even if you could spend it, you couldn't in one year — squares with what the Liberal critic is going to be saying in his criticism.

I think, Mr. Speaker, this tells you all that you need to know about the incredibility of the Liberal Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier is correct. The figures don't add up, because you're still only spending 32 per cent back into our highways from what you raised from those fuel taxes.

Mr. Premier, through the freedom of information, through the freedom of information, my colleague from Thunder Creek has discovered that your Department of Highways ordered close to 7,000 bump and warning signs for the past year, and only you know how many bump and warning signs have been ordered for this year.

Mr. Premier, can you assure the people of Saskatchewan that if your government is not prepared to spend enough money to fix our highways, that at the very least you will commit enough money to purchase and install the adequate supply of bump and warning signs to alert our drivers there's the potholes in this highway system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the only pothole that anybody should take note of is the pothole that the hon. member finds himself in this morning as a result of the question that he's put. He is in such a big political pothole on this question. How in the world he can object to $2.5 billion, 25 million a year, going into highways — how he can object to that, I don't understand.

And I'm going to be asking again the press and the members of this Assembly to watch how that expenditure call by him squares with the official critic of the Liberal Party on the Department of Finance.

Keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that it is also the same Liberal Party that wants — according to the *Leader-Post*, November 26th, 1996 — tax harmonization. They want the GST (goods and services tax), their federal tax, to blend with the PST (provincial sales tax). That is a tax increase. That's what he wants.

And yet on the other hand, he wants an expenditure in the numbers which he gives us with respect to highways. It is incredible. That may be the Liberal Party position — tax harmonization, doubling the tax levels, as they are in central and in eastern Canada, Atlantic Canada — it is not ours. Ours is the balanced approach and that's exactly this budget stands for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Government Funding

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, when this government delivered its budget yesterday, municipal governments were crossing their fingers that they would receive a reprieve from the massive downloading that has been a constant under this government. Unfortunately what they received was anything but. Urban revenue-sharing grants have been slashed by $17 million, while revenue-sharing grants have been cut by another 12 million. These cuts represent a 30 per cent reduction in revenue sharing that our communities depend on.

Mr. Speaker, this government has indicated that the time has come to invest in people; yet they continue to divest themselves of programs and services that local governments provide. Will the minister explain how she and her government can possibly justify another 30 per cent reduction in funding for our local governments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Here they go again, Mr. Speaker. Here they go again. Let's total up this now. Somebody get a calculator out. We're going to do it.

We got the so-called Highways critic, the Liberal member from Wood River. He would ask us to spend $325 million a year on highways — there couldn't be that many companies building and constructing highways.

Now we've got the member from — where is he? Saltcoats? — the Liberal member getting up. He wants more money for the municipalities, notwithstanding the fact that they're going to get a tax credit obviously in their purchases from 9 to 7 per cent; notwithstanding the fact that there is additional funding by way

of the infrastructure program of $35 million being dedicated; notwithstanding the fact that the Minister of Municipal Government will, in the next several days, get the details with respect to revenue sharing and the like — all of those. He wants more yet.

Just keep totalling it up. We're almost at about a half a billion more in expenditures. Now get up, one of you, and call for a further tax reduction and make that square. I tell you, if you can make that circle square, you are a Houdini. Unfortunately — or fortunately for the people of Saskatchewan — nobody's believing in black magic from you people over there in the Liberal Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, municipal governments would have been just satisfied if the downloading had've quit. But no, that didn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, this question I must direct to the Minister of Municipal Government. Because of the government's latest exercise in offloading, some municipalities will see their present funding levels sink to less than 50 per cent of what their funding was when this government came to power. This latest round of cuts, on top of previous offloading, will put dramatic pressure on local governments, with no option but to raise local mill rates dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, I have two alternatives for the Minister of Municipal Government. Number one, resign her cabinet post to show her colleagues on that side her disgust with what she is continually being forced to do to cities, towns, and RMs (rural municipality); or two, cross the floor and cleanse your soul, Madam Minister; feel good about yourself. We've already moved one seat from there to here. Join the wave, Madam Minister.

Will you finally do the first positive thing since 1991 for municipal governments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I said at the beginning this is going to be a very tough day for the opposition with respect to the budget. And that question proves it, all right.

He points out that we've already lost one member from our side over to the Liberal Party. And I know he's so warmly received by all the members of the Liberal caucus that you use him as an example.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Liberal solution to all of this, apart from wanting to spend now about a half a billion dollars more in the budget, their solution is harmonization. That's their solution. And where it's been harmonized, the GST and the PST, by Liberal governments in Atlantic Canada, the tax increase has doubled. That's his answer.

And he wants us now, in addition to the Highways department, to add more, notwithstanding all that I've said has been given to the municipalities. They know how to handle it. They are efficient and they can do it and they'll rise to the task.

Believe me, there's no resignation coming from this side of the House on this budget. If anybody should resign, it is the entire Liberal caucus for putting out these contradictory messages.

And by the way, the next questioner from the Liberals, will you please ask me in the question . . . indicate in the question whether you still favour harmonization. Do you or not? Tell us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Sales Tax

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was quite a day. First the Liberals adopt the PC (Progressive Conservative) gambling policy — a province-wide referendum — then the NDP adopt the Conservative PST policy, and cut it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Madam Minister, the hundreds of petitions we tabled over the past two weeks called on you to go one step further. The people who signed our petition also want you to table a long-term plan for further reduction in the PST in years ahead. That's what was missing in yesterday's budget, Madam Minister.

Since you're in the mood to adopt PC policy, will you table your long-term plan for further cuts to the PST?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say categorically, we do not — I said this yesterday; I repeat again and I underline — we do not accept PC tax policy. Because we . . . well and the Liberals say they can believe it because they're in the same camp virtually, the same, Liberals and Conservatives.

It doesn't matter. When the Conservatives are on the rise all the Liberals run over to you. When the Conservatives are on the downfall, all the Conservatives run over to the Liberals. So it's the same group. But we will not buy that policy and I'll tell you why we won't buy it. We see evidence of it in Ontario and in Alberta. That's what we see. We see a hack-and-slash policy. We see a tax policy in Alberta and Ontario that says we're going to cut basic services to Ontario people and give them a tax cut at the same time.

We see Mr. Charest saying he's going to give them a tax cut and the numbers don't even make sense. Believe me, the last thing that we need is PC tax policy. What we need is the policy we've adopted — balanced, debt reduction, program enhancement, PST reduction. Every tax reduction that we give, as we did yesterday, is here to stay so long as this government's in office; it's going to be responsible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious from the Premier's comments that he's thinking more about the federal election than the provincial election upcoming, or concerns himself more about that. I would wonder why he's so worked

up about the federal election.

It's been quite an amazing transformation, Mr. Speaker. For years we could not get the NDP to admit that the PST will cut . . . or will create jobs. Now you can't seem to shut them up about it. There's no one as devoted as a new convert though, I guess, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I feel the same pride as when one of my children would learn an important lesson. Of course it doesn't take my kids six years to learn something as simple as the fact that cutting taxes will increase employment.

Madam Minister, the CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business) is calling for further cuts. The taxpayers' association is calling for further cuts. The PST coalition is calling for further cuts. Will you do what everyone across this province is looking for and asking for? Will you come forward with a plan and a time frame for further cuts and the ultimate elimination of the PST?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, now we have the Conservatives. There they go again, back to the future. Let's just give the tax cuts. Let's just cut. And when asked, where does the money come from, the Tory answer is, don't worry, the money will look after itself.

Well I tell you, we will not follow PC tax policy. I'll tell you what our policy is. Our policy is to make a tax cut when we can afford it, when the people of Saskatchewan can afford it. Because we will never, ever allow this province to nearly drown in the ocean of red ink that we found this province in on November 1, 1991, thanks to PC-Liberal tax policy.

You ask, what's the game plan? I'll tell you what the game plan is. We said it right from 1991 when we were sworn in. We're going to reduce taxes when we can afford it. Because when we reduce taxes, they are reduced for ever to benefit the people of Saskatchewan. That's when we're going to reduce taxes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Government Funding

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Finance. Madam Minister, not everyone is completely happy with your budget. SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) president, Murray Westby, says provincial finances may have turned the corner but they haven't come into town.

Madam Minister, municipalities appear to be one of the groups that were overlooked in yesterday's budget. SUMA president says there's been another 42 per cent cut to urban revenue sharing. That means increases to property taxes, increases that could offset the positive impact of your PST cut.

Madam Minister, you could address this problem by simply living up to your commitment to give 10 per cent of the VLT (video lottery terminal) revenue to municipalities. Will you do that today, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this is a similar question to the ones raised by the Liberals, and my answer therefore has to be similar.

I believe that many of the urban leaders will say, when they take a look at their calculations on the reduction of the PST from 9 to 7 per cent, that there's a huge savings. I believe in fact the mayor of Prince Albert says that that alone is likely to be a saving in Prince Albert of over $100,000.

I've already indicated — the question — also about the answer respecting $35 million for infrastructure which is going to go back to the municipalities, and other benefits as well which are sprinkled throughout this budget, as the Minister of Municipal Government will indicate in the due course in the elaboration of the budget and during the course of the budget debate.

Municipalities will be able to handle this budget well enough. They've done it in the past. They've been very much partners with us in helping us overcome this difficulty, and our contribution to them has been as good as we can make it. I can tell you one thing in closing — it's one heck of a lot better than what we see happening in Tory Ontario to municipalities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — It's probably very true that municipalities have been a great partner because they're the ones that have been caught carrying the load in the end. So I guess they deserve all the credit. So we agree with you on that.

Madam Minister, even if you account for the fact that the $28 million cut to revenue sharing is partly offset by the elimination of hospital levies, municipalities still come up about $14 million short. This year VLTs are expected to suck about $130 million out of Saskatchewan communities, so even a return of just 10 per cent would just about cover the revenue-sharing cut and help councils to hold the line on property taxes.

Madam Minister, the Manitoba government recently announced it is going to give back 10 per cent of VLT revenue to municipalities and allow municipalities to decide how that money should be spent, based on their own priorities. Madam Minister, will you follow Manitoba's example, give 10 per cent of VLT revenues to municipalities, and let them decide how they want to spend it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well again, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the House, and those who watch the proceedings of this House, will see the fundamental contradictions in both of the official opposition parties . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And the Leader of the Conservatives says it's not true. Of course it's true. You got up and you congratulated the Liberals a few moments ago about adopting the PC policy to do away with VLTs, and yet your member gets up and says, hey, let's take the money from the VLTs and give it back to the municipalities.

I mean if this isn't a fundamental contradiction, I don't know

what is a fundamental contradiction. You can't walk both sides of the street you know, and say I'm for VLTs sometimes, and sometimes I'm against VLTs. I've got two hip pockets — sometimes I'm for it and sometimes I'm against it.

Now I know I've got the Leader of the PCs actually riled up on this thing, but listen to the answer. Listen up. One hundred per cent of the money that we get from VLTs goes back to the people in the community. It doesn't go to my pockets; doesn't go to your pockets. Everything that is raised comes back by way of tax reduction, more for health care and more for education — more to the people of Saskatchewan. That's our policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Judges' Salary Dispute

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would dearly love to get into this debate about finances, especially when we see the Premier talking about fiscal responsibility when he's added more than half — double the amount — that was added in the '80s as far as total debt. But I've got another important question that's got a . . . that we've got to raise here this morning.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that drew a response and I expected that. Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order now. Order. Order. The Chair's having a great deal of difficulty being able to hear the hon. member from Moosomin put his question. I'll ask all . . . Order. I'll ask all hon. members to allow the hon. member from Moosomin to put his question.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on a serious note, a question to the Minister of Labour. Mr. Minister, you've been ordered by the court to provide information regarding your handling of the judges' salary dispute. And, Mr. Speaker, as we hear this morning, the minister is refusing to provide much of this information by trying to hide behind the doctrine of cabinet secrecy.

Mr. Minister, we can support cabinet secrecy to a point. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot if it stands in the way of justice. Mr. Minister, the cabinet certainly isn't above the law. You've been ordered to disclose information to the judges' lawyers. Mr. Minister, will you today provide that information that has been required of you?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Here, I'll take this question and answer it on behalf of the government. First of all, the obvious answer, which the hon. member I am sure will accept, is that this is before the courts and it has to be played out by the courts eventually, through the courts of Appeal, maybe even the Supreme Court.

Without speaking to the issue in specifics, I simply want to say that I am a believer in the parliamentary tradition of cabinet confidentiality. That is the way in which public policy decisions are made. It is the way deliberations can be honestly undertaken. You cannot have a situation where the deliberations in contentious and difficult public policy are going to be scrutinized all the time, perennially and perpetually, by either the courts or by the Assembly. The accountability is here through question period or in the way that we have the legislature operate.

Now that's a very long-standing principle of parliamentary democracy. I think it's a principle worth defending here in parliament and in the courts. In the meantime, with respect, now returning to the judges' case, let the judges decide what that issue determines and in due course we will comply with the appropriate orders as they finally are completed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University Funding

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is for the minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education.

Yesterday's budget provided the reinstatement of some funding for Saskatchewan universities. I take that as an admission by this government that it was wrong to cut funding last year. Despite suggestions by the Finance minister that the university funding in this year's budget might help students escape further tuition hikes, the universities say that's not likely because they are trying to operate on the same level of funding as was provided in 1995, and they are coping with additional inflationary costs, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister admit that the operating grants provided by the government will likely still not be enough to prevent further tuition hikes this year?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, there they go again; there they go again. This time they have turned off their ears totally to what the people in the university community are saying, Mr. Speaker.

Now I know what the Leader of the Opposition is saying. But here's what the president, Don Wells, says, of the University of Regina, "For universities in this province, this is by far the best budget we have had in a decade."

We've only been in office since six years.

Here's what Natashia Stinka, a University of Saskatchewan students' council leader from Saskatoon says:

> It is really encouraging to see that the government has reinvested in the university and has given students priority.

And here's what Rick Jamison, U of S (University of Saskatchewan) budget manager, says:

> It's possible tuition increases might be reconsidered. I am sure that with this announcement (Mr. Jamison says) there may very well be some reconsideration of that tuition set.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well now, that's what the public says.

An Hon. Member: — Terrific.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The Leader of the Opposition says,

terrific. If it's terrific, why didn't you say that in your question? Admit that this is a terrific budget, pure and simple. Because it is a terrific budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, if the Premier would have been listening, he would have noted that our comments about the fact that indeed a burden has been lifted from some of the cuts that were imposed by this government last year is correct. But we're not looking ahead. The Premier is blind to the fact that there are additional costs. The universities are of course, very, very grateful that indeed that cost has been eliminated.

What I'm looking for, Mr. Speaker, is whether the Premier or the minister can explain to this House what strategy will be put in place to ensure that a quality, affordable post-secondary education is available to all students in this province. Answer that question, sir.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the strategy has been already unfolding before the member's eyes. We asked Harold MacKay . . . By the way, he is a member of the Liberal Party, for the hon. member's remembrance.

Still, still, still, in spite of your position, Mr. MacKay delivered his report which talked about the necessity of the universities to cooperate. And that is now working.

In addition . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member says he doesn't like that. Nothing is good enough for the member opposite. He says, what's the strategy? I'm telling him the strategy.

We've laid out the game plan, pursuant to Mr. MacKay. We've laid out in yesterday's budget the increased funding for the universities, which the presidents and the managers of the universities are welcoming, and the students are welcoming.

Where's the beef? What in the world is the complaint by the Liberal Party? You can stand up and say for ever that it's not good enough, that it should be more and more and more and more and more. You can be contradictory all that you want. But please, let's get real. Get realistic and acknowledge the fact that this budget compared to where we were five years ago . . . Forget about five years ago — this budget will be unmatched by any government in Canada in 1997. That's what I say.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 30 — The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 30, The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 3l — The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 31, The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 32, The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statues Consequential Amendments Act, 1997/Loi de 1997 apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines lois

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of Bill No. 33, The Miscellaneous Statues Consequential Amendments Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 34 — The Young Offenders Services Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 34, The Young Offenders Services Amendment Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 35 — The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1997 Loi de 1997 modifiant la Loi sur les victimes d'actes criminels

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 35, The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 1997.

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

Bill No. 202 — The Balanced Budget Amendment Act, 1997

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 202, The Balanced Budget Amendment Act, 1997 be introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 203 — The Direct Debt Reduction Act

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 203, The Direct Debt Reduction Act be introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 36 — The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, The Health Districts Amendment Act, 1997 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 37 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 37, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 1997 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 38 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 38, The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 1997 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

Bill No. 39 — The Multiculturalism Act

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 39, The Multiculturalism Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

(1100)

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order regarding decorum in the House, I bring to the Speaker's attention, Mr. Speaker, what I believe is to be an inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour by members during special events such as the budget speech yesterday.

While the member from Melfort was speaking in response to the budget speech, a number of government members left their seats, both to leave the House and to wander around the chambers. At that point in time, Mr. Speaker, a large number of the guests that were invited to the floor also left. It's very disruptive, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it shows disrespect to the institution of this legislature. I would ask that you review and make a ruling on that.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order! If hon. members want to put their remarks on the record regarding the point of order raised by the hon. member for Cannington, then they are permitted to do so now. Otherwise I'll ask that they refrain from making their remarks.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak to this point of order. If the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, is concerned about the quorum, I think we ought to consider the quorum question in total. We ought to consider the quorum question about the members in attendance at votes that have been held in this House over the past, and it should not be done in a forum of this type but it should be done and proceeded to the proper place, and that is to the Rules and Procedures Committee, at which we could look at the attendance of the government members, of the opposition members, and of the members in the Conservative and third parties.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I want to endorse the comments of the member for Prince Albert Carlton and add one or two additional comments.

I was Finance critic for some four years in opposition. I've an idea of what you go through. It is rather difficult. When the Minister of Finance has concluded her remarks and the speech is done, the cameras start rolling and some of the members need to make comments outside. So do some of the guests. It is a difficult role to fill because you're speaking to a room which is emptying on you, and it is difficult.

However it is a day when there is more news interest in this place on that day than any other. Of all the days we sit, this is the epitome of interest. And members have to make statements and the public have to do so as well.

It's difficult to do, but it has been ever thus. It was thus when I was speaker. You just simply have to give your remarks to a Chamber which is emptying and keep in mind that the larger audience is on TV, and don't see it.

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that my personal concern — I echo the House Leader of the government in this — was not so much the members who left because at least they departed from the Chamber and were not a problem. My personal concern was with those government members who milled around in the Assembly, visiting, chatting, and of course encouraging the guests to do the same. So the guests also were visiting, chatting and milling around.

I don't think our guests would have been so rude had not the government members in fact started it and encouraged it and initiated it. I think our invited guests would have had far more decorum and respect had they not been given such a poor example.

So while I understand, as the Government House Leader has said, that some hon. members, especially the Minister of Finance, may well be called out to . . . they may well be called out and have to leave the Assembly, my concern is not for the members who left the Assembly. My concern is for those members who stayed in this Assembly and, I think, conducted themselves in quite a disgraceful manner and encouraged our invited guests to behave likewise.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, having been a member who has sat on both sides of the Assembly, I just want to make a comment or two regarding the procedure yesterday and just make a correction. First of all, we're not talking about quorum or votes and procedures. We're talking about decorum. We're talking about this institution and how it operates on special days such as the Speech from the Throne or budget presentation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was on the government side of the House when a number of budgets were presented. I was on the government side of the House when the current House Leader for the government was the Finance critic and made speeches, and I heard the criticisms that were levelled at that time. But at least, Mr. Speaker, as I recall, I recall, Mr. Speaker, a time when most members, if not all the members, sat and while you may not have appreciated the comments that have been made by members, you respected the institution that we are here representing and the people we represent.

And. Mr. Speaker, I also was quite cognizant of some of the comments being made by some of the guests behind me about the milling and the fact that they had a hard time hearing what the member from Melfort was saying in his address, in his response to the budget speech yesterday.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think whether or not there's a specific rule that states members should show respect, I think it just comes naturally, Mr. Speaker. If we were to ask the students that were here, ask the other guests, they would expect that we would show respect; we showed respect to the Minister of Finance.

I think the members would all recognize that, and I think there is a forum we follow as well that allows the Finance critic of the official opposition to then make a short response to the speech and then allow for the mingling afterwards with the guests.

And so that's the thing that we're addressing here, Mr. Speaker. The fact that there is a decorum that we believe should be followed by the institution.

And we would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you take the time to review this matter and come back to this Assembly with what you would perceive would be a proper understanding of the whole question so that it doesn't happen in the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I've listened carefully to the remarks of all hon. members and am prepared to make a ruling now.

If members refer themselves to the rules of the Assembly, they will note that rule no. 20 deals with the matter of decorum in our House. And I would encourage all members to make themselves familiar with the rule on decorum and to use that not only as a guideline but as a requirement of conduct in the House.

Now in looking at rule 20, members will recognize that rule 20, decorum, deals with, as it's expressed in our rules, with the authority of the Speaker, with conduct of members when the Speaker is on his feet, with the interruption of members, and passing between the member speaking and the Chair, and with respect for the symbolism of the mace, and as well with respect for the Chair.

It may very well be that the members of the Assembly would see it as appropriate to revisit the rule on decorum and to give further definition to that as befits the conduct of this House.

Having said that, I think it has been an appropriate airing of concerns of members of both sides. It is often the case when reflecting on conduct and behaviour, that it is most convenient to reflect on the conduct and behaviour of other members, and oftentimes most appropriate to reflect on the conduct and behaviour of ourselves.

And I would ask all hon. members to give serious thought to the member's comments made in the point of order raised by the hon. member for Cannington, to reflect on those, and to commit ourselves to conduct ourselves in a manner that is befitting the respect for the House and its proceedings.

I know that all hon. members are honourable — I have no doubt about that — and would want, through our conduct, to reflect the importance of this institution. Having said that, I simply offer that as advice for reflection by members; but in the context of the rule on decorum as it applies to our House, the point of order is not well taken.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of open, accountable, and responsible government, I am pleased to table a response.

The Speaker: — For item no. 1, is tabled.

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.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it's a

great pleasure for me to pick up where I left off yesterday in terms of the budget response. But I also would like to go a little bit more in depth into the real numbers that lie behind the rhetoric we heard from the Minister of Finance yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I always find the titles the Finance minister assigns to her budgets to be very interesting. A couple of years ago it was *A New Day Dawning*. Last year we heard the government was *Preparing for the New Century*. And this year the Finance minister chose *Investing in People* as her theme.

Mr. Speaker, what these titles have in common with each other are, they're all being authored by the Finance minister with an obvious diversion from reality. A new day did not dawn in Saskatchewan. The problems that have plagued our province for so many years are as present today as they were then. Saskatchewan, unfortunately, is still the poor cousin of the western provinces.

As I alluded to you yesterday, our most valuable export today, just as it has been for many years under this government and others, is our people. And why is this, Mr. Speaker? Why do our young, our talented, our best, our brightest all feel the pull to other provinces? Why don't they stay in Saskatchewan to start their careers, raise their families, and enjoy all the good things that this province really does have to offer? Simply put, Mr. Speaker, they can't.

They are forced to leave Saskatchewan because this province does not afford them the opportunity to pursue their professional lives here at home. That was true under the Tories, who if anything made it even more untenable to stay here, and that trend continues under the government opposite.

This is a government which probably tries very hard to create meaningful jobs here. I'm sure there's no one more frustrated in the province than the Economic Development minister every month when the job stats are released. I'm sure that the members opposite are trying to create jobs. The problem is, they don't have a clue how to do it — not a clue, Mr. Speaker. And with this budget it doesn't look as if they're going to learn the error of their ways any time soon.

At the same time, and as the Minister of Economic Development was releasing fancy documents such as the *Partnership for Growth* and the *Partnership for Renewal*, this same government was busily enacting job-killers, such as The Labour Standards Act and the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. The Economic Development minister's self-professed desire to create jobs simply does not square with the other actions the government has done — nothing but harm small business, kill jobs, and send our children packing.

The numbers don't lie, Mr. Speaker, so let me repeat them for the government members. Last year in Saskatchewan this government created a mere 1,000 jobs. That's the number, Mr. Speaker — 1,000. Next door in Manitoba, 24,000 jobs were created. Why the great difference?

I still haven't heard the Economic Development minister properly explain that, because he probably can't. Because there's no logical reason why Manitoba is doing so much better than we are, but it's the reality, Mr. Speaker. And this government, this Premier, this Finance minister, can't hide from those simple facts.

In February 1996 the unemployment rate for youths between 15 and 19 was 11.7 per cent. One year later, it stood at 15.7 per cent. That's a one-third increase, Mr. Speaker. And what about the quality of the jobs that have been created here? — low paying and part time.

The Canadian Labour Congress stated that Saskatchewan has more low-paid, part-time workers than any other province. Fully 72,000 women work part time, and Saskatchewan women lead the nation as multiple jobholders.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president, Barb Byers, recently told the *Leader-Post* that nearly half of those female employees earn less than $7 an hour and 82 per cent have no pension. And according to Ms. Byers, over the last 15 years the number of women who hold down more than one job has increased by 372 per cent.

In the North there's an overall unemployment rate of 25 per cent, yet this government does nothing to promote sustainable economic development or job creation for those living in the North.

This government's job creation record is nothing short of miserable, and the bulk of the jobs that are being created are low-paying, low-quality jobs. It's a shameful record, Mr. Speaker, but they stubbornly cling to The Labour Standards Act and the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement like they were their own children to be protected no matter what the cost. And the cost has been high, Mr. Speaker.

The government's long-overdue move to set back the PST to the same level it was when they took power is not the answer. And I hope that they see it. Yes, it's part of the puzzle, but it's a long way from the whole answer to our job creation problems.

Saskatchewan taxes are still highly uncompetitive, and we still pay nearly $800 million more today in taxes than we did five years ago. In his column today Bruce Johnstone aptly sums up what many are thinking:

> So inured are we to the pain of high taxation that we rejoice at the first sign of relief, forgetting for the moment who inflicted the pain in the first place.

Saskatchewan still has the highest income tax rate west of the Maritimes. Only Quebec and Newfoundland collect more in gasoline taxes. And even with this cut, the government tax take for the average family is the highest in the country outside of the Atlantic provinces.

And if they need more numbers to drive that point home, Mr. Speaker, here's more numbers. Let's look at employment in the retail trade sector. Between 1992 and 1996, that sector grew by 3 per cent in Saskatchewan. And before the members opposite begin cheering that figure, Mr. Speaker, they should look again at our neighbour to the east. Between 1992 and 1996, employment in Manitoba's retail sector grew by 14 per cent —

nearly five times the rate of growth in Saskatchewan.

Let's look at the service sector. Between 1992 and 1996, employment in Saskatchewan service sector grew by all of 1.8 per cent — less than 5,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. In Manitoba, a 6.6 per cent increase — over three times our rate. Will the reduction in the PST help these sectors? Yes, Mr. Speaker, it will. Is it enough? Absolutely not.

As I stated in my brief remarks yesterday, we are pleased to see the sales tax rebate on building materials and equipment for livestock and agricultural activities. This will no doubt help to build the hog industry in Saskatchewan, which seems to be a goal of this government. But I think the Minister of Finance should have expanded her view a little wider.

As I stated yesterday, the tax rebate should have included the construction machinery institute and industry. The numbers over the last number of years show us that this industry has been particularly weak in Saskatchewan. Between 1991 and '95, investment in manufacturing in Saskatchewan fell a whopping 82 per cent, Mr. Speaker. At the same time, our friends in Manitoba saw a 75 per cent increase. Clearly, this is a sector of the economy that needs a lot more help than this government is willing to give it.

Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to see that the Department of Economic Development has changed its name, probably out of shame. So now it's called the department of economic and cooperative development. Are we to believe that this government is going to concentrate on only one form of economic development from now on — on cooperatives? Are we to believe that small business, the main engine of our economy, is now going to be left out of this government's plans? If they ever were part of the plans, I suppose, to begin with. I suppose it's not surprising, but it's a shame.

Mr. Speaker, before I move to specific line departments, I want to touch on an issue that's been of major concern to the people of Saskatchewan for many, many years. It's the issue of government accountability and openness.

(1115)

In the '80s, we saw the Tory government running rampant with little regard for the accountability to the legislature, to the people, or to anyone. It was a period of secrecy. It was a time when even the Provincial Auditor was constantly denied access to government information — information the people had the right to know.

It is also a time when the budgets were presented well into the fiscal year and special spending warrants were used over and over again to circumvent the scrutiny of the legislature. And looking at the financial record of that government, one can see why the Devine Conservatives were so concerned about letting anyone know what they were up to.

In 1991, the situation has improved to some extent. Frankly it couldn't have gotten any worse. But from where I see it, we still have a long way to go for complete openness and accountability and a complete financial picture. It's not good enough for the members opposite to say that they have a good record in this area simply because they're better than the regime that preceded them.

The people of Saskatchewan deserve to know exactly how the government is spending their tax dollars every step of the way. It's simply not good enough when up to 40 per cent of the government's financial activities are set apart from the budgets we see in this House and hidden under the Crown Investments Corporation.

The Provincial Auditor himself has professed deep concerns about this government's accounting practices when it comes to the use of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) money to operate the government. The days of keeping two sets of books, one for line departments and one for Crown corporation activities, have got to come to an end and we have to have a complete financial statement. The people of Saskatchewan deserve to see the whole picture when it comes to government activity, and that's not the case at the present.

It's especially true given the important role these entities play at budget time. Last year we saw the government use cash from the sale of Cameco shares to balance the budget. This year, the government dipped heavily into the Liquor and Gaming fund to balance the budget. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the government took almost four times more money out of this fund than it did last year. That's a big whack of cash, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan simply aren't given the opportunity to scrutinize it.

And speaking of the Liquor and Gaming fund, I was just a little distressed last night when I watched on the television news to hear that the government now considers the Liquor and Gaming fund its very own stabilization fund. It makes one wonder about the standards of the government members opposite when gambling revenue and liquor sales are considered our security for the future.

I'm also concerned about the use of special warrants, one of which we learned only about days ago, just prior to the resumption of the legislature. It's starting to look a lot familiar to the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to touch on some of the important line departments in a little greater detail than I was able to touch on yesterday. We heard the minister stand in this House and give us a glowing account of increased spending in very important government departments such as health care, Education, Social Services, and Highways. And again I wish to touch on these as well.

But first I want to talk about a department that wasn't mentioned in yesterday's budget speech, Mr. Speaker. And little wonder. The Municipal Affairs department received yet another unbelievable cut-back in the budget. I'm sure there were mayors and reeves throughout Saskatchewan who are still reeling from the continuing gutting of local governments: revenue-sharing grants to urban municipalities will fall to under $27 million from 43 million; grants to rural municipalities will fall to $20 million from $32 million last year.

Yes, the government will explain away part of this reduction by pointing to the removal of the hospital levy. This is the way the NDP put it, Mr. Speaker: take it out of one pocket and pretend to put it in another. Local governments have shown this government the way when it comes to lean and efficient government. With every budget brought down by this government, local government leaders have had to learn to be a little more creative in order to spare their ratepayers from excessive tax hikes or service cuts.

But this year's budget could be the final nail as far as sparing local taxpayers from steep tax hikes or deep service cuts. In fact Murray Westby, president of SUMA, said yesterday that because of this government's actions, tax hikes are inevitable now. That will more than take care of any cut in the PST for municipal taxpayers. Again, Mr. Speaker, the government puts the money in one pocket while it takes it out of another.

We see this in other areas as well. Let's look at education. The government claims it is giving our K to 12 schools an $8 million increase in the coming year. On paper that may be true, but let's look a little deeper.

Last year the government negotiated a new contract with Saskatchewan teachers. The cost of the wage increase are borne directly by the cash-strapped school boards. So what are these costs? Eight million dollars, Mr. Speaker. So essentially what the government is doing is helping to cover the cost of its own handiwork. There's no new money for schools.

We've just seen six schools slated to be closed in Regina. With no new money being spent in this area, I'm sure we can expect more schools to close in the future. As others have stated before me, many of these schools aren't being closed for lack of students, Mr. Speaker, now it's a lack of money — pure and simple. And this budget doesn't do anything to cure that.

In fact a new contract for teachers will soon be negotiated. I don't see any money here to help boards cover the cost of the coming wage increase. Again students will be the ones left to suffer, Mr. Speaker.

The story is much the same for our universities. Last year the government announced the universities would receive a cut this year. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance announced that the cut had been cancelled. Obviously that's good news for our university students, but it's hardly what I'd call a spending increase.

This is a government that wants to be looked at as seeing towards the future. But if our schools and our universities are such a low priority for this government, I'm scared to see the future under the NDP. And this illusion, this carrying more money, carries on and on.

We've heard about a $2.5 billion program to fix our provincial highways. Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is it's exactly the same budget our highway crews are working with now, with a little more sprinkling on top of our potholes, with 30 million more will be spent in the coming year — only $30 million. And that only represents 40 per cent of what the government takes in in gas taxes and registration fees.

Over the next 10 years, while the government spends its 2.5 billion, it'll collect much more than that in surplus gas taxes and registration fees. So essentially what they're saying to Saskatchewan residents is to take a good look at their highways as they stand today, because that's about as good as they're going to get.

And that's simply not good enough, Mr. Speaker, not when school buses are travelling longer distances. And it's not good enough when ambulance drivers are telling us they're concerned about transporting the sick and elderly over these disgraceful roads.

And what about the sick and elderly, Mr. Speaker. What's here for them? Not much. Overall, the health care budget will climb about $16 million, not the $51 million the government claims. Most of that increase was spent last year to quell the unrest that had cropped up in Saskatchewan. That's about a 1 per cent increase — 1 per cent, when we see people marching in the streets against the government.

Mr. Speaker, it's going to take a lot more than money to cure what ails the health care system. The system this government has set up virtually ensures services in smaller centres will eventually close, with most services centralized in the larger centres. All people in this province deserve an adequate level of health care, and too many are having to go without, Mr. Speaker. This 1 per cent increase will do nothing to fix that problem. Only a major rethinking of the entire health system will be sufficient to let people feel secure again.

Yes, it's true the government spends nearly a third of its budget on health care, but that's meaningless unless the money is getting to the people who need it. We need much more of a commitment by the government for increases in acute care services and long-term care, especially in rural areas. And that won't happen unless the present system and the present funding formula are changed.

I'm sure my colleague from Arm River will have much more to say on this in the days ahead because I know he is getting as many calls from citizens concerned about the government's health care policy today as he ever was.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to touch briefly on social services. While the member from Humboldt will speak much more in depth in this area, there are some things that I wish to point out today. By the way, I agree with the Regina *Leader-Post*, which went out of its way to commend my colleague for Humboldt for all of her care and work in this area.

Mr. Speaker, despite the NDP's promises to rid our province of child poverty in its first term, the problem is even worse today. Yesterday's announcement of $13 million for a child action plan is welcome news. However I want to point out to the members opposite that in many areas of this province there are no hot meal programs and so forth. We have to watch for poverty in all parts of the province, not only in the cities, because poverty is all around us. And unless we take serious action against it, the problems of youth crime and child prostitution will not be solved.

I hope the government is true to its word that it is now ready to tackle these problems. Especially when one looks at the welfare numbers. In December 1992, there were 57,199 people on social assistance in Saskatchewan. Last year that number was down to 81,000. Clearly more has to be done. The fact the Social Services department is actually receiving a reduction in funding this year, however, doesn't fill me with a lot of hope.

Let me quote from Lorelee Manning of the Regina council for social development. She said, and I quote:

> What this budget will continue to do is deduct a portion of the child tax benefit from people on social assistance, and that should've stopped. That's a federal initiative to fight child poverty and the province is taking it back. This government is taking it back away from the people most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, despite the glowing words to the contrary from the Minister of Finance, I don't believe this budget invests in people who are still paying taxes that are too high and receiving far too vital services for their trouble.

This budget does take a few small steps to where we should be, but it's not nearly enough.

Mr. Speaker, I do of course support parts of the budget. I support the PST reduction, but there are many other things I simply cannot support. There is much work to be done for our people, but judging from their past actions, I have no confidence that this government will ever make a true investment in the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the minister from Canora-Pelly:

> That the budget motion be amended as follows:
>
> That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted:
>
> recognizes the modest tax relief set out in the government's budget but regrets that the government continues to impose the highest levels of taxation in western Canada; and further regrets that the government has failed to show a financial commitment in the areas of highways and transportation, municipal government, education, health care, and social services; and further regrets that the government has again failed to take adequate measures to improve the climate for small and medium-sized businesses which are the engine for growth in a modern economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Given the frivolous nature of the amendment, we were thinking momentarily of voting it off forthwith and getting back to the true amendment. But it might not have been thought to have been sporting without a bit of warning, so we won't do that. It momentarily occurred to me we might just vote this off right now and get back to the motion, but we didn't do that.

I do want to enter into the debate however, briefly, Mr. Speaker. I have been . . . I am the, I am the . . . I think I'm the only person who's been a member of Treasury Board from 1991 continuously through to 1997. I've been a part of each of these budgets.

(1130)

I remember the devastation with which we were left by the Conservatives in the 1991. I ask myself sometimes, Mr. Speaker, what would have happened if the Conservatives . . . what would the Conservatives have done with the budget had they been re-elected.

My initial thought was there would probably have been a fire sale of the Crown corporations. However when we gained a true measure of the enormity of the problem, I truly believe that if the Devine government had been re-elected, this province would probably have defaulted on its obligations. I think we were that close to total disaster. It truly was. We had some bad moments with the budget.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to give some of the credit where the credit is due — to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, you may recall one of our members, one of the members saying, I'm going to support this budget; I think it's going to defeat me, but I'm going to support this budget for my children and my children's children. I remember that comment being made by one of our members. Said it very sincerely. This person was prepared to face defeat to deal with what was truly a crisis.

What was so heart-warming, Mr. Speaker, about the process was that as difficult an issue as this was for New Democrats, who had a great deal of difficulty coming to terms with downsizing government — that's not what we put countless hours into the election for — what was so heart-warming for me was the reaction of the public. Like so many stoic soldiers, they shouldered the load, carried on, accepted deep, deep cuts, some of which hurt — hurt a lot. They accepted it. They shouldered the load. And today indeed the sun has shone again.

But it was a very difficult period for the people of Saskatchewan. And I was truly, truly impressed by the extent to which Saskatchewan people were prepared to make sacrifices, prepared to accept some awfully tough medicine, including all of the changes to the health care. I know that it's been controversial.

But I truly believe if members opposite were elected — and I think they're a little ways from that actually; I made some comments the other day which suggested they're politically a little ways from it, and I'm not sure they're quite ready for office either —but even if they were elected, I think there would be few of the changes in health care which at the end of the day they'd change. As critical as they may be, I don't think they'd change a whole lot, what we've done in health care.

All of this, the public accept it with a realism, and in fact returned this government to office with the largest majority of

any second term government in the history of the province. Now that is a pretty fair record when you consider how deep, how deeply we cut the budget. That's a pretty fair record. It speaks not to this government's political skills, although I like to think that we have a few, but I think it speaks more to the public acceptance of the need to deal with deficits.

Mr. Speaker, it was said of Mao Zedong, the Chinese general secretary, said of the French Revolution: prior to the French Revolution, no one had ever dared found a nation on freedom, equality, and fraternity; after the French Revolution, no one dared found a government on any other basis.

Our first budget was a little like that. Prior to that budget of 1992, when we cut so deeply, no one had ever dared truly tackle a deficit. All governments paid lip-service to it. No one dared do it.

After we did it, Mr. Speaker, governments dared not do anything else. Governments which didn't tackle the deficit were defeated. Governments which honestly faced up to the difficulties were re-elected. And so somewhat like the French Revolution, we changed public attitudes towards deficits in Canada. And it happened here in Saskatchewan, something I think members of this Assembly and the public of Saskatchewan can be truly proud of.

There was a journalist who isn't always unflatteringly . . . unstintingly flattering of the NDP, Paul Martin, who said in a column the other day that Saskatchewan is the soul of Canada. I think that's true in many ways. It has been true in many of the social movements, Mr. Speaker. It was here in this Assembly that Canada's health system, which is so important to Canadians, was born. It was here in this Assembly.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was here in this room that the tidal change in public attitudes towards public debt in Canada occurred. No one had ever honestly tackled debt until we did. After we did it, no one dared found a budget on any other basis but a realistic tackling of debt. Even, I may say, Mr. Speaker, even the Liberals eventually came on board. Even the federal Liberals have begun to make a bit of a dent in the federal deficit. I think that's a testimony, not as I say entirely to the . . . It's not only the political skills of this government, it's a testimony to the reserve, the deep reserve of good sense that the Saskatchewan public have. I was very proud yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't want to take a very long period of time. I just wanted to rise in my place and congratulate the public of Saskatchewan. I do so. It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that I'll be voting against the amendment and in favour of the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly my great pleasure to rise and speak in support of the budget. First of all I would like to thank the finest Finance minister in Canada for a very, very good budget yesterday. It was just a great news for the people of Saskatchewan.

Equally important, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the many people in the Department of Finance for the many hours of work that they did in preparing this budget, and in particular the deputy minister, Mr. Jones, and Larry Spannier, and the other fine people in the Department of Finance that have worked on this budget.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about investing in people. It's about prosperity and jobs, which increase our quality of life. It's about lower and fairer taxes built on sound financial management. It's about keeping promises. We always said when our financial house was in order, we would provide a balanced management approach for the people of Saskatchewan. This balance, Mr. Speaker, as we outlined a few years back, is a third of the so-called surplus dollars going towards debt; a third going towards government programs and services; and a third towards tax cuts.

Speaking of our debt, Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong economy because we have our deficit under control. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth straight budget that we have balanced here in Saskatchewan, and we predict three more to come before the end of the century.

Mr. Speaker, anyone who has a loan or debt knows what interest can do when it gets out of control. And certainly the interest here in Saskatchewan over the past number of years has been a real millstone around the necks of the people of Saskatchewan. Fortunately interest rates have dropped in recent years, but back in 1994-95, Saskatchewan people paid $870 million annually for interest expenses. Last year it was 790 million. We are predicting it will be down to 760 million in this coming year. And hopefully by the year 2000 we could be under $700 million.

But, Mr. Speaker, we just think what we could do with all that money if we had it to spend on hospitals, schools, education, roads, and other programs for the people of the province. However we have that debt. We inherited it through mismanagement by the previous government, but we are headed in the right direction.

Speaking of debt, Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to be able to pay down $150 million in our crop insurance program debt which will make crop insurance more available and more acceptable for the people of Saskatchewan. In fact farmers can insure their crops for as little as $1 an acre.

People often ask, well what do we spend the money on, Mr. Speaker? Well we have consistently spent one out of three dollars on Health — about 33 per cent of our budget goes to Health. Nineteen per cent goes to Education. And sadly, Mr. Speaker, the next highest consumer of our budget is interest costs, which is a total of 15 per cent of our budget. Social Services take 10 per cent of our budget, and all the other programs, such as Agriculture, Highways and my department, consume the other 24 per cent of the budget. So, Mr. Speaker, there's not a lot of room to work around in spreading out these dollars, because all of these areas are very important. Another third of our surplus budget dollars will go towards government programs and services.

And again, we have a sound economy. We have done a great

job in investing in the people of Saskatchewan. And to prove this, Mr. Speaker, we know that business investment in Saskatchewan is up 18 per cent; housing starts are up 40 per cent; retail sales, up 8 per cent, three times higher than the Canadian average; unemployment is 6.6 per cent, the lowest in Canada; manufacturing shipments are up 10 per cent. Again, the highest in Canada.

We will be spending new dollars on infrastructure and services for the Saskatchewan people. We will be spending another $23 million to municipal infrastructure; $117 million for Saskatchewan training system.

Mr. Speaker, jobs are very important and there's many opportunities. We must direct people to where the jobs are, and to do this we need training and expertise in a number of areas, and we're working in that direction.

There'll be $640 million to build an upgrader infrastructure. And — this is really important to people in rural areas — $2.5 billion for roads over the next 10 years. This year alone $200 million — an 18 per cent increase in Highways' budget — will be spent on roads and highways.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we are adding another $57 million to our health system. School operating grant is up 22 million over the next two years. School capital funding, up 40 per cent, and along with university capital grants to purchase equipment and technology.

Enhanced government programs give better quality of life and lead by example. For an example, we are back-filling federal cuts to university operating funds. Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the federal government sees fit to spend hundreds of million of dollars to register legitimately owned firearms by citizens of Canada, and yet they are prepared to take money out of important things like education.

Transition funding for the national child benefit program, a brainchild of the Saskatchewan government here and the people of this province, is important and will receive money. We will double the funding for the action plan for children.

For our communities, Mr. Speaker, we will be putting $11 million into the Canada-Saskatchewan agriculture infrastructure program. Community-based health services will receive another $11 million. And lottery licence fees are down $4.5 million, which means that money will go directly to the sports and recreation organizations which are very important to our various communities around the province.

We will be directing money, Mr. Speaker, towards things like the Western Development Museum, which needs repairs, in Saskatoon. We will continue to put another million dollars into the 911 emergency phone service.

Our increase of $1 million to RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) services in rural Saskatchewan, which is again very important to the people of rural Saskatchewan. And in the North, Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to put another $6 million into social housing and northern sewer services.

Mr. Speaker, the final third of the so-called surplus dollars will go to tax cuts, and this will encourage growth for tomorrow and enhance the well-being of today. And, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, since 1992 this government has been offering tax reductions and incentives to various businesses, and the people as well.

We've reduced the income tax rate for small businesses; removed sales tax on 1-800 numbers; we've reduced the manufacturing process tax to 10 per cent. We've improved the tax benefits for Saskatchewan truckers; and aviation fuel taxes dropped from 7 to 3.5 cents a litre.

(1145)

As well, Mr. Speaker, the new tax cut enticements include an investment tax rebate on new and used manufacturing and processing equipment, new sales tax rebate for materials used for livestock and horticultural facilities. And the list goes on.

Businesses however are not the only ones to receive benefits in the way of tax cuts. A few years back we introduced the personal income tax cut of up to $300 per family. That will be continued. Also education and health tax exemption will be extended to medical devices, which are very important to some of those who really use them.

And probably the biggest announcement yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and the largest commitment to tax reduction was the reduction of our E&H (education and health) tax from 9 to 7 in '97.

Saskatchewan now has the smallest manufacturing business tax rate in Canada.

Our friends opposite often like to compare Saskatchewan with Alberta. Well, Mr. Speaker, with yesterday's budget the effect of small business manufacturing tax in Saskatoon, rate would be 36 per cent, versus Calgary, where there's free enterprise, at 43 per cent. So indeed, Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon is a better place to invest than in Calgary.

Also on a personal basis, Mr. Speaker, a young person in Alberta can spend upwards of $3,000 to insure their vehicle, compared to around 6 or $700 in Saskatchewan. Alberta doesn't have a sales tax, but they do have health care premiums. Sales tax for a family in Saskatchewan with a $50,000 income is $715. Health premiums for the same family in tax free . . . sales tax-free Alberta is over $800. Obviously the Alberta family is paying more than the Saskatchewan family in taxes.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan last year was cited as the best place in the world to live, and we certainly agree with that. And that is why our population is growing. We have the lowest job rate and many other signs to prove that Saskatchewan is the best place in the world.

A comparison of taxes and household charges also show that Saskatoon is the lowest place in Canada to live — even lower than Calgary again, Mr. Speaker. We are very proud of the fact that we do not tax things such as children's clothing, electricity, home heating fuel, restaurant meals, and other essential

services. But we do find that it's strange that the Liberal Party opposite supports the federal Liberal Party in their goal to harmonize the sales tax with the provinces.

Under the Liberal harmonization in the Maritime provinces, Mr. Speaker, the annual sales tax rates average $1,500 for a family, and here in Saskatchewan, 715 — less than half. And perhaps the members opposite may wonder why we do not support sales tax harmonization. I think it is very obvious when our tax rates are half of what the people that do experience harmonization have to pay.

People of Saskatchewan have worked together; they have stuck together. And following the very irresponsible and senseless, runaway spending of the 1980s, today we are proud to reap the benefits of five years of tough choices, of cut-backs, of doing more with less, and of sacrifices. The people of Saskatchewan have earned and deserve the many positive aspects of this budget, the most noticeable being again the sustainable sales tax cut from 9 to 7 in '97, a tax cut that every resident of Saskatchewan will benefit from.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly comment on the Environment and Resource Management budget highlights. And again I would like to use this opportunity to thank the very find people in the department. I have never worked with such a more dedicated and hard-working group of people, ranging from the office staff to the environmental protection people, the fire fighters, conservation officers, the people that run our parks, and many other aspects of this department. They are a great group of people doing a great job for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we will be spending an extra $490,000 on inspection and regulating funding for the environment. Our environment is very important, and we want to ensure that it's managed and looked after in the best way possible.

Big game crop damage. A prevention program will be reinstated. It was slated for cancellation, however we've recognized that the issue of big game damage is very real, especially the last two years, Mr. Speaker, and that $325,000 will remain in that budget. And we'll be talking later in this session about the big game damage program which we have initiated, and there's very good, positive results coming from that.

Forest fire suppression. Forest fires are a thing that happens every summer here in Saskatchewan. And to combat this natural phenomena, which does cost millions of dollars in the loss of timber and impact on the wildlife, we will be increasing the fire suppression budget by $5 million. More recently we've been able to take the opportunity to purchase two planes for fire-fighting purposes. They cost $7.2 million. They are Canada Air CL-215s. They will be very useful in the upcoming fire season and future years as well.

Probably one of the most important, and things that I am certainly proud of in our budget, is an increase in the capital spending for our provincial park systems. We've gained $1.7 million, Mr. Speaker, for our infrastructure replacement in our parks. And with 2.4 million visitors using our parks annually, again virtually everybody in Saskatchewan will benefit from this expenditure. It'll create jobs, provide recreational opportunities, and preserve our wonderful park system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Scott: — All in all, Mr. Speaker, this is a good news budget. The people of Saskatchewan throughout this province were talking about the various aspects of this budget which will make their lives better, make the province of Saskatchewan a better place to live in. And we will continue to be the best place in the world to live. And it is certainly with great pleasure that I support this budget and look forward to the debates that will continue. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and let me say at the outset how happy I am to be joining in this budget debate. And I want to say at the outset, because it's been some time since I actually made a speech outside of question period or estimates in the House, how proud I am to represent the very fine and hard-working people of Saskatoon Mount Royal, my riding. I'm very pleased to have the honour to come to this place to represent my neighbours. And I think they will be pleased, Mr. Speaker, with what we have done in this budget.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, very briefly, looking back to 1991 when I was first elected to the legislature, many people looked at the problems we had in our province and many people said, Mr. Speaker, that the province should declare bankruptcy, because we were in such bad financial circumstances that people didn't believe that we'd ever be able to get out of them.

And I remember the tough decisions that had to be made at that time. They were tough, and some of them were depressing, and many of them were regrettable. But as the member from Regina said earlier this morning, they were decisions that had to be taken so that we could arrive at the point that we're at today, which is a point where we have a good budget, a positive budget, a budget that will bring us more jobs, more money for social programs, less taxes, and less debt. And who can argue with that, Mr. Speaker? More jobs, better social programs, less tax, less debt — not bad.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think this is a budget that has in it, vision and action — vision for the future; actions being taken today which will ensure that we have a positive future.

I want to quote verbatim, a report that was on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, contrasting the New Democratic budget here in Saskatchewan with the Liberal budget in Newfoundland.

CBC had this to say:

> It is budget day in two provinces. In Newfoundland the news is dismal — 1,700 public sector workers will lose their jobs and there is no sign of a tax break for one of the poorest, most highly taxed provinces in the country.
>
> In Saskatchewan, the picture is a lot brighter though. There

> is more money for health, education, and social programs, and some tax relief as well. The most surprising announcement is a cut to the provincial sales tax. Midnight tonight it drops from 9 per cent to 7. Universities will not only not be cut, the government is back-filling all of the federal cuts to those institutions. School boards will also not be cut, and instead they are going to receive $8 million more in operating expenses.

Mr. Speaker, more jobs, more money for social programs, less tax, less debt. That's the record of this government; that's our commitment.

I want to take a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to contrast that kind of record with the record of the Liberals, who are of course in power in Ottawa. I think a recent headline in *The Hill Times*, which is a newspaper that covers Parliament Hill, Mr. Speaker, says it all. It says this: "In power, Grits sing different tune."

And how true that is, Mr. Speaker, because they always say one thing in opposition, something quite different in government. We've seen the Liberals in power in Ottawa opposing the Mulroney agenda when Mulroney was in power, Mr. Speaker, saying that they would do things differently on free trade, on the GST, which they said they'd get rid of; on social programs and on jobs.

And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you what they did, in the words of Brian Mulroney, who said they're doing a better job of carrying out the Mulroney PC agenda than we did, Mr. Speaker. That's what they're doing.

The Liberals here talk about . . . oh, they're always saying we should have more money for health care, Mr. Speaker. And this government does put more money into health care. But what do they do? I tell you what they do. They cut $7 billion out of health, education, and social services. That's what they do.

An Hon. Member: — Million or billion?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Billion with a B, not million with an M.

And this year, Mr. Speaker, to contrast Liberals with New Democrats, the Liberals in Ottawa, who last year took $47 million out of our health care budget in Saskatchewan, this year will take another 53 million out — $100 million lost to health care by the Liberals in two years.

What are we going to do, Mr. Speaker? We're going to put that money back in, and more so. We're going to back-fill every Liberal cut in health care, in education, and social services, and then we're going to put some more money in on top of that, because we believe in public medicare, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to remind the Liberal Party of something that hasn't been raised in this House lately, or at all, perhaps. And that is, the Prime Minister, who of course is a Liberal, set up a . . .

An Hon. Member: — Are you sure?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, or a Conservative. It reminds me of what my mother said when I asked her what is the difference between the Liberals and Conservatives. And you know what she said? She said, well when one's in, the other's out. And there is no other difference because the Liberals govern like the Conservatives governed, except maybe they're even worse, Mr. Speaker. If it's possible, they might even be worse.

But I want to tell the Liberals that the Prime Minister of this country set up a national forum on health care a few years ago to advise the Liberal government what they should be doing in health care, and that committee was chaired by the Prime Minister. And the Prime Minister has been strangely silent, Mr. Speaker, since that committee reported, because you know what they reported?

That committee reported that the Liberal cuts to health care should stop. That committee said that the level of funding for health care from the federal government should be frozen at the '96-97 amount. Which would mean, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberals would have to put in $53 million in this new fiscal year into health care in Saskatchewan and they'd have to put big amounts of money into the health care budgets of every province.

But they're not going to do it. They are not going to take the advice of their own national forum that was chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. And I say that that is shameful, Mr. Speaker. And what we get from the Liberals instead is opposition to public medicare. And I'm going to get into that in a minute. They have a long-standing opposition to medicare — and further cuts to the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party will do everything it can to convince people that well, if they were in power things would be different. And I have to say, don't listen to what they say, look at what they do, Mr. Speaker — what they do.

When the New Democrats proposed medicare originally, they opposed it. New Democrats will propose public medicare; Liberals oppose. New Democrats will build public medicare; Liberals will cut public medicare. Liberals will gut medicare, Mr. Speaker; that's where they stand. And that's the difference between the Liberal Party in Canada and in Saskatchewan, and the New Democrats, Mr. Speaker.

(1200)

And I want to say that I was surprised to see the member from Arm River get up the other day and say this in this House, he said:

> Our leader (referring to Dr. Melenchuk) is a strong proponent of one-tier health system . . . We do not believe in cash register medicine, (he said.)

That's what he said. But I want to refer the House, Mr. Speaker, to what Dr. Melenchuk said. This is in the *Leader-Post*, November 27, 1996. He said this, "Private surgical clinics should be permitted to open in the province." That's what he said. So that the Liberals in the House say we should have public medicare, one-tier medicine. Dr. Melenchuk, outside the House says no, we should have private medicine.

Now the Liberals . . . I want to say something else that Dr. Melenchuk said. He said, private hospitals would not be two-tiered, he said. It's a safety valve, he said.

And of course on November 27, 1996 in the *Leader-Post*, he was talking about private clinics delivering the same service as hospitals and making a profit. And you know what he said about that, Mr. Speaker? He said, "I don't have a problem with that." That's what he said. He said we should privatize the hospitals or at least have private hospitals competing with the public hospitals.

And then the member from Arm River says that we're misleading people when we say they're in favour of two-tier private medicine. Now who do we believe? Do we believe the Leader of the Liberal Party or do we believe the member from Arm River? Because they don't have their facts straight and they don't have their stories straight, Mr. Speaker.

I want to mention something else. This government introduced a Bill in the House last spring which outlawed two-tier medicine. It was called The Health Facilities Licensing Act. And that Bill was also put before this House in 1995 but not passed by my predecessor Minister of Health. And when that Bill was introduced in the spring of 1995 outlawing two-tier medicine, do you know what Dr. Melenchuk said? He said this, it was ". . . a significant threat to the fundamental principles of freedom and choice." That's what he said.

Because his idea of freedom and choice, Mr. Speaker, is the freedom to go without medical care if you don't have a lot of money to pay for it. That's the kind of freedom that they have in the United States where 40 million Americans have no health care coverage. Is that our idea of freedom? No, it is not our idea of freedom, Mr. Speaker.

Now returning to the member from Arm River who says he doesn't like two-tiered medicine. On STV (SaskWest Television), May 1, 1996, he said this: "If there are people that are prepared to pay, then I think we have to let them pay," he said.

Now I might add the Conservative leader chimed in at that point and said this the same day, if people want to and are prepared to pay for the services, why wouldn't you allow it?

Well I'll tell you why we won't allow it, Mr. Speaker. Because our vision for health care is that everybody in our province is equally entitled to health care services regardless of how much money they have, Mr. Speaker. And we are not going to allow either the Liberals or the Conservatives to bring in a system whereby you get better service or faster service if you have more money. We're not going to allow it.

And then we have the member from Arm River saying in the House on March 17 that they want to repeal The Health Districts Act because, as they said in the House yesterday, they try to pretend they want more democracy and local control in health care. But what they're proposing, Mr. Speaker, is to do away with 30 democratically elected health boards and replace those boards with 450 boards, as we had before, all appointed by the Leader of the Liberal Party.

And I want to refer members, Mr. Speaker, to the *Hansard* for March 17 where at page 226, in the first column, the member from Arm River said four times in one paragraph that the members of health boards should all be appointed. I don't think the people of the province are going to accept that, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take issue with something else the Liberals have said, and this fits in with what they've said about the failure of the Liberal government in Ottawa to support health care, and that is, they say that the federal government has no obligation to support Canada's medicare system. That's how far the Liberals have gone, Mr. Speaker. And on March 17 the Liberal from Arm River said:

> (As) Our leader has . . . stated, Mr. Speaker . . . the provision of health care in Saskatchewan is a provincial obligation . . .

So in other words they say, don't worry about the Liberals cutting health care and the Liberals gutting health care and the Liberals being opposed to public medicare — that's your problem, they say. And we say, no. We say Canadians, from one end of the country to another, should be able to look to the federal government, even if the Liberals are in power, to support the medicare system.

And the Prime Minister's national forum, Mr. Speaker, which the Prime Minister is not listening to, said that that would mean that in Saskatchewan this year the Liberals should put in another $53 million. But they're not going to contribute that money, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately.

But I want to turn now from the fairly dismal, and I have to say disappointing, record of the Liberals in office, to something that I think is much more positive, Mr. Speaker, and that is what has been announced in the budget of yesterday that was presented by the Minister of Finance.

And I want to provide the members and anybody watching with a contrast because, unlike the Liberals, who are cutting health care spending, health spending in the budget that was presented yesterday will see an additional $56.5 million of new money go into health. Because we are on our way to achieving our goal — not the Liberal goal of getting rid of medicare, but our goal of the NDP — to having a sustainable health system.

And I want to recognize, Mr. Speaker, the tremendous effort that has gone into getting us where we are today. It has not been easy to get the health system on a secure and stable foundation, but we're there. And we've achieved this despite the cuts of the federal Liberals to our social programs. We've kept our health system strong while at the same time we've been engaged in a tremendous effort to get the province's finances in order.

Last year we added $40 million new money to help districts reduce debt and manage the pace of change. Now we have the opportunity to do even more. There's more funding to strengthen every part of the health care system. Funding to district health boards, Mr. Speaker, is going to go up by more than $50 million, which will be approximately a 4 per cent increase — something we haven't seen for a long time;

something you won't see, by the way, in Liberal and Conservative provinces.

The new funding will allow us to do several things. It will allow us to secure and sustain hospitals and nursing homes, to enable that home care and nursing homes are available to everybody who needs them, to strengthen rural emergency health services, and to continue to build more effective wellness programs, home care, and community services, and also to improve workplace stability in the health system.

And I want to say a few words about that, Mr. Speaker, because 30,000 of our friends and neighbours in Saskatchewan work in our hospitals, nursing homes, home care, and community health services. And those workers have raised some issues during the last few years. They've experienced some insecurity and changes in the working environment. They experience a lot of pressure on the job, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes they have felt unable to provide the kind of caring, compassionate services they want to give to people. And we want this situation to improve.

We want health workers to be able to do the kind of job they want to do, Mr. Speaker. We want them to give us their ideas and suggestions, to stop worrying about their jobs. We want to increase funding in the hospitals and nursing homes and the home care and community services. And at the end of the day we want the health care workers to give people the kind of caring and compassionate care that they want to give. Overall therefore, we'll be increasing funding to hospitals by about $22.3 million and we'll be increasing funding for nursing homes by $10.9 million or about 4.4 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue doing what we've been doing to make our medicare system sustainable, to keep the system that we pioneered in this province and that we have. That's our vision. And our vision is not going to be deterred by any federal Liberal cuts to medicare. And our vision is not going to be deterred by what the Leader of the Liberal Party says and what the Liberals say in this House about getting rid of public medicare and setting up a two-tier system.

Mr. Speaker, we simply will not allow that to take place and neither will the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We're going to increase funding to health care to sustain and support quality health services in every corner of the province, whether you're talking about specialized surgeries or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) in Regina and Saskatoon or primary health services in Buffalo Narrows and Beauval.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the 30,000 people that work in our health system are excellent people. We have good doctors, good nurses, and good support staff. And day after day we listen to the Liberals say in the public that our health system is in crisis. That's not what the Prime Minister says. That's not what people are telling us from all over the place.

But I want to put this challenge to the Liberals. If the Liberals say that we don't have a good health care system, as they like to say to people because they engage in fearmongering about health care, as they always have, I put this challenge to them: you get up in this House and tell us and tell the people of the province where in the world they have a better health care system than we have in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'd like to hear them say that, Mr. Speaker. And they won't get up and say that anybody has a better health care system, because there is no such place.

I was shocked when one of them got up in the last session and said to this House, and to the people of the province, that she had some concerns about our health care system and why didn't we provide compassionate care like they did in the United States.

Now imagine, Mr. Speaker, anybody making that kind of statement. I got up and I mentioned to the member from Kelvington-Wadena, the Liberal who said that the United States system was better, what about the 40 million people that have no health care coverage? What about the fact that health care costs are the biggest cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States? What about that? And that's the kind of system that the Liberal Party thinks is compassionate?

Does this explain why, when medicare was introduced, the Liberals opposed it so strenuously? Does this explain why the Liberals voted against The Health Facilities Licensing Act that outlaws private medicare? Does this explain the Liberals saying that they agree with the federal cuts to the health care budget?

Mr. Speaker, these questions must be answered by the Liberal Party. If the Liberal Party hopes to regain any credibility with the people of the province, the Liberal Party is going to have to reconcile its stand in favour of private, two-tier medicine with some of the rhetoric that we hear in this House, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say to the members opposite that there is nowhere in this country and nowhere in this world where you will get better health care treatment than right here in the province of Saskatchewan. That's been the case in the past, that's the case today, and that will be the case in the future, Mr. Speaker, as long as we never, ever, put our health care system in the hands of people that advocate private health care. It should never happen.

(1215)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I feel confident, Mr. Speaker, that it won't happen. Because the people of this province, my neighbours in Saskatoon Mount Royal, are going to have a look at this budget, people from all across the province — city, rural, northern, southern — and they're going to say, what are the Liberals complaining about? This budget gives us more money for health care, more money for education, more money for social services, less tax, less debt. And I don't know why, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are opposed to this budget.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Bjornerud: — To introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Bjornerud: —Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, my very efficient constituency assistant, Loretta Ritchie, and her friend, Deanna Armbruster, whose family are constituents of mine from the fine constituency of Saltcoats. I would ask the members present to please welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Gantefoer.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to say in closing that I recently put out a newsletter in my constituency, and in it I had excerpts from a new book called *Life Before Medicare: Canadian Experiences* about the hardship that people had before we had our medicare system. And also in that book, here in my newsletter, is some information about the current United States experience.

Now the Liberals are fond of advocating a U.S. (United States), two-tier-style medicare system. I want to read a letter into the record, Mr. Speaker, that I'd put into my newsletter, and it says this – it's from Neville Nankivell, an American, and he says:

> As an American and a survivor of this system, let me enlighten those Canadians so inclined (to the U.S. system).
>
> I paid Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums for many years. In 1984, I was diagnosed with cancer and as a result had a kidney removed. This procedure cost me personally $42,000 over and above the amount paid by Blue Cross, totalling $160,000. I was then refused further health insurance due to what was described as a risk factor.
>
> As a result I now have no insurance, no job and no money. My only hope is to survive 10 years when at age 65, I shall be eligible for (U.S. senior's benefit) . . . which in itself only allows partial coverage.
>
> Please let the word go out to those Canadians who hearken to the propaganda of the medical lobby, (and he could have added the Liberal party) be it in the U.S. or in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's the sort of system that the Liberal Party fought for in 1962. That's the sort of system you have if you listen to what the Liberal Party says today. And I can see them protesting. All I would do . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member says don't talk about 1962.

Well then let's talk about 1995 then, Mr. Speaker, where the current Liberal leader, Dr. Melenchuk, had this to say: "Private surgical clinics should be permitted to open in the province," he said.

Let's talk about 1996, where the member from Arm River, the Liberal member, said, if people want to pay, then I think we have to let them pay. That's what they said in 1996. Or further: ". . . it's a provincial duty to fund health care in this province." No money from the federal government, he says.

Let's have a look at what the Leader of the Liberal Party said when we outlawed private medicine. He said . . . This is what he says to outlawed private medicine and U.S.-style Medicare, Mr. Speaker. He says it's " a significant threat to the fundamental principles of freedom and choice."

Well I don't care, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Liberal record, if you're talking about 1962 or 1995 or 1997; the Minister of Post-Secondary Education said it the other day — a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal. And they will never change, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — But as long as we're on this side of the House, we're going to have the vision to take our system forward and we're going to have the dream that everybody is entitled to medicare regardless of their income.

And I want to close, Mr. Speaker, with a quote from Joel Barker, who said this. He said:

> Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. But vision plus action can change the world.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak on the budget, and I want to commend the Minister of Finance for the budget, as well as the Premier, and of course all of my colleagues. And I don't think that the amendment this morning by the House Leader — I see he's kind of chuckling himself; he's sort of chuckling himself — was a serious amendment. I don't think that he really believes that his amendment is in step with where Saskatchewan people are at.

At any rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to especially thank the people of Saskatchewan for their sacrifices over the years, and secondly . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well we've always made it clear that we made some very tough choices. But with

the support which was evident in 1995 in the election, the support of Saskatchewan people, they didn't believe, the Saskatchewan people did not believe, that you could cut taxes, as the Liberals were promoting, and have an 8 per cent growth rate every year, every single year. And they kept erasing the figures and putting new figures in. The Saskatchewan people didn't buy it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the privilege of knocking on a lot of doors in my constituency this past fall, and of talking to a lot of my constituents. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the commitments that were in the budget, investing in people, enhancing programs for improving the quality of life, and giving some tax relief were the priorities — in that balanced way — were the priorities that people told me at the door were their priorities.

Mr. Speaker, this is the best . . . this my ninth year in this Assembly and this is the eighth budget that I've had the pleasure of, well I guess the pleasure of hearing, because it is a pleasure to be here.

Mr. Speaker, over those eight budgets, there have been some times when there were some faces that were pretty long, and some down times. Yesterday was not one of those times. There was a different mood in the Assembly yesterday and outside, than I have seen in any other budget, although we saw some indication of that kind of mood changing in the last budget or two.

It was an indication that the sacrifices and the hard work has paid off, where we are able to continue investing in the economic development and the economic activity and the jobs for people, enhancing the quality of life, lowering the taxes, and of course continuing with that theme of sound fiscal management.

We saw this morning where the opposition would want to spend another half a billion dollars and even cut more taxes, and I don't know how the numbers will add up.

But, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't believe the mood out there yesterday. Last evening, last evening, because I knew I was going to speaking today, I made a point of watching all of the TV stations, listening to the radio stations. And, Mr. Speaker, here's a bit of a sampling of what I heard on the news last night. And I was channel flipping to make sure that I caught all the stations.

I saw Michael Rushton say, and I quote, "The government accomplished their goal of financial stability." That was a direct quote from Michael Rushton.

An Hon. Member: — Yes, good for the people.

Mr. Pringle: — Good for the people is right. That's what I said. That's what we've been saying. Because in Saskatchewan we do it together.

Lloyd Boutilier, chamber of commerce, was quoted as saying — I took notes as he was speaking — he said, a very good budget, very positive, good for business, best budget in a long time. And then he referred to the E&H reductions, he referred to the PST cut, the tax credit, and so on.

University students. University students said they appreciate the investment in education. That's what university students said last night on the news.

Mr. Harrison from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) said, a very good budget, very positive. Very positive, he said. The Regina mayor said he is not unhappy at all with the budget. Dr. Wells, University of Regina, said, a positive budget, the best budget in a decade. And the university are saying they will reconsider their tuition fee increases.

I was trying to find a group that is unhappy. I couldn't do that. Casey Davis, chamber of commerce . . .

An Hon. Member: — No, just the Liberals.

Mr. Pringle: — Well just the Liberals. Just the Liberals. Even the third party leader wasn't unhappy, Mr. Speaker.

Casey Davis, chamber of commerce, pleased that the government is responsive to business. A merchant at Southland Mall here in Regina said, quote, "This will help my business."

Chair of the Regina Health Board said, the good news, we'll be able to manage well; in the Regina Health Board, we'll be able to manage well.

Now I realize that the opposition members view the elected health boards as puppets, and I'll speak to that in a few moments. But the Chair said, the Chair said, we'll be able to manage well.

Dan Kelly, Canadian Federation of Independent Business said, "there will be significant new jobs created based on the budget."

Lorilee Manning, representing poverty and women's groups said, "they've targeted money to the needy families." She was on a panel last night. She said, "a good beginning, in fact I applaud this good beginning." Her worry . . .

An Hon. Member: — But . . .

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, but, is right. Her worry is that the federal Liberals will not put their money there for the child benefit. That's what she said.

Barb Byers, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour said, "a very good budget, the best budget in 15 years."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I won't go into all the articles about the headlines. *Star-Phoenix*: "Budget recognizes province's sacrifices," "Budget shows promise," "Province's priorities in the right place," "Child benefit scheme welcomed." If we had some federal help, it'd even be better. "Funds will help exploited children." All the things that they have been calling for. "Initiatives draw praise."

One could go on and on, Mr. Speaker. But these views, the

views that I've talked about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the various perspectives, from the Federation of Independent Business, to the chamber, to poverty, to women's groups, to university presidents, to small business, to students, everyone would have to agree, I think, that that's a pretty good cross-section of the public of Saskatchewan.

Those comments, the only people standing alone are the Liberals, which is why they didn't ask one question yesterday about the budget. They didn't ask one question. At least the Tories were asking about the PST. They took credit for it, which is kind of funny. As my colleague from Redberry says, that the Tories had everything to do with the PST going from 7 to 9 per cent and absolutely nothing to do with the PST going from 9 to 7 per cent. And that's exactly right, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — I thank the member from Redberry for that piece of wisdom, because that is very true.

Mr. Speaker, but those views that I quoted from, a cross-section of public opinion, are all positive and they're hopeful and they're optimistic. Mr. Speaker, that's the Saskatchewan way. These were examples of people dealing with reality out in their communities, wherever they . . . whatever group they represent.

Mr. Speaker, those comments, I think, help give people a sense of hope. They speak to the sense of opportunity to community and they sort of foster and convey us a positive mood in the province. Mr. Speaker, even the national press — and there's been lots of national press; yes, I watched the TV for a long time last night — the national press was very positive too. And the reason they were positive about the Saskatchewan budget is because they were comparing the Saskatchewan budget — the balanced approach of program enhancement, tax relief, and money towards the debt; that balanced, fair approach — to what the provincial Liberals are doing in their provinces and to what the federal Liberals are doing nationally.

(1230)

And of course the House Leader of the opposition talking this morning about job losses . . . in today's paper we see that 1,200 job losses in Newfoundland, Liberal Newfoundland. In fact it said on TV last night, 1,600 job losses in Liberal Newfoundland.

Well no wonder he didn't make any comparisons to the Liberal provinces when comparing our job record. He had to pick a Manitoba or an Alberta example where he had the facts all, he had the facts all mixed up. But that's another point.

So, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we've done it in a way that's balanced and fair, and not like the federal Liberals. And I'll talk about that in a minute.

What we're trying to do is strengthen families. Good families make strong communities and vice versa. We're trying to strengthen communities. And I'll give a few examples in a minute, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike the federal Liberals . . . And you would have to, any objective person would have to acknowledge — I know the minister . . . the member from Melville will agree with this; he's a fair person — will have to acknowledge that by the federal government eliminating the Canada Assistance Plan, they have removed a 30-year guarantee of five basic rights for low income people. I know that the member from Melville would acknowledge that.

They've taken 7 billion, the federal Liberals, $7 billion out of human service programs, as was pointed out by the Minister of Health. They've put back into child poverty, maybe the middle of next year; we haven't seen that yet. They cancelled their national day care program, so who knows about this one. Taken out 700 . . . $7 billion and they're willing to put back 600 million, which is one-thirteenth of what they've taken out — one thirteenth of what they've taken out.

Now you would not see that as supporting low income people. And we know that in the last four years the number of families and children living in poverty in Canada during the regime of Mr. Chrétien has doubled. Family poverty has doubled, has doubled in the last four years under that regime.

So, Mr. Speaker, they've got no transportation policy nationally. Then they've got the nerve — no national transportation policy, the only country in the western world without a national transportation policy — they've got the nerve to criticize a 2.5 billion provincial transportation initiative. I don't know where they get off, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Over 10 years.

Mr. Pringle: — Over 10 years. Yes, well what is the federal . . . Table your phone calls to the federal government asking for their national transportation policy.

Mr. Speaker, they've pulled out of social housing. They've abandoned first nations — $50 million increase cost to this province by the federal Liberals abandoning their commitment, their constitutional guarantee to first nations on social assistance.

So, Mr. Speaker, who is dismantling Canada and contributing to the absolute erosion and dismantling of all the social programs that have defined this country over the years as the greatest country in the world to live in?

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I take exception to is the misinformation — if I can say it that way — the misinformation that the Opposition House Leader was conveying to the House. I think it wasn't done intentional; I'm not suggesting that. I think it just is such poor research that they're getting from Dr. Melenchuk that they need to hire someone who is qualified in research.

Mr. Speaker, it keeps talking about out-migration. Well there's a chart in the budget that is factual that in fact shows that in-migration has occurred for the last 14 quarters, the last 14 quarters, so that we now have 1.024 million people. So, Mr. Speaker, migration is back into Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

He also says that we do not have a clue, he says that we do not

have a clue in how to create jobs. How does that explain the fact that we've got the lowest unemployment rate in Canada? He says it's explained by the fact that everybody is moving out. Well, they're moving back, Mr. Speaker — 6.2 per cent, I believe . . . 6.6 per cent.

And he talks about how well Manitoba is doing. Their unemployment rate is over 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's rate is not even as low as ours, Mr. Speaker. And he hasn't even mentioned any of the Liberal provinces. Mr. Speaker, I understand why, because as I said, Newfoundland has just laid off either 12 or 1,600 people, or will over the next two years. But we're not about to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, then the House Leader talked about low paying jobs, the one's that we've created have been low paying jobs. That's not true to start with. But then he also then in the next breath was criticizing us about our labour policies where we're trying to give benefits to people working part time and to bring everyone up through a better minimum wage increase and so on. They oppose all of that.

On the one hand they try to have it both ways — criticize us for the kind of jobs we're creating and then well we're trying to lift people up, and then attack those policies that would in fact lift people up. So I don't understand where they've coming from.

He also talked about, and I have to counter this, he talked about the no-commitment to education. Well he clearly wasn't watching the news last night, because that's not what the students were saying and that's not what the presidents of the universities were saying, Mr. Speaker.

And he also talked about the social assistance case-loads going up. Again that is poor research because the social assistance case-loads have gone up in this province. Everybody knows that is willing to be objective, because of the federal government offloading on status Indians, and secondly on the massive cuts — four cuts by that federal Liberal government in the last four years to the UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) program. Everybody knows that, which has dumped people back onto the social assistance case-loads in every province. No province is happy about that.

So, Mr. Speaker, this doom and gloom that we heard yesterday from the Opposition House Leader, and this morning, I know that it embarrassed some of his colleagues. I know there were some announcements in the budget where the member from Kelvington-Wadena and North Battleford were applauding, were clapping. And I really respect that. I appreciate that. I respect that because they were willing to . . . well they want to get re-elected, for one thing, and they were willing to at least be fair about the budget.

And the member I think lost all credibility though when he started talking about this out-migration, which is not the case any more. He talked about Manitoba's job creation rate which is 24 times higher than Saskatchewan. That is nonsense. That just isn't true. They talked about the roads and no commitment to the roads, to our transportation system.

I think what really though, Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on — and I know this was alluded to by the Minister of Health this morning — where the Liberals continue to say that the health boards, the elected health boards, are puppets of this government. I can't think of anything more offensive to say to Saskatchewan people and communities, that electing people to represent them, that they're puppets of the provincial government.

As the Premier pointed out yesterday, one of the members in the . . . the elected members on the Regina Health District is the Liberal Party president of Saskatchewan. I wouldn't presume to say that she was a puppet of the Liberal Party. She's elected by Regina constituents. And I think if you don't respect the fact that elected . . . people have a right to elect their representatives, and then you call them puppets of the government, that says something about your view of democratic elections. So I think that . . . I hope they quit doing that.

The other thing is, that perhaps explains the reason why the new Liberal leader would fire all of these people, which is what he's saying. Because he says that you need more expertise and understanding than ordinary people can give. And I heard one of the members says from their seat this morning that the reason Dr. Melenchuk is so qualified is because doctors know the most about health care.

Certainly doctors know a lot about medicine, but I wouldn't say that they know the most about health care necessarily. But collectively, everybody coming together, is what has built a good health care system in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Speaker, one more point about the Opposition House Leader's comments is he says that — I heard him say this last night on TV — he said that at 2 per cent there was no proof that a 2 per cent reduction in the PST would result in more jobs.

An Hon. Member: — He didn't say that.

Mr. Pringle: — That's the essence of what he said. I'm paraphrasing, but that is what he said.

An Hon. Member: — Oh, no, no, no, that was another person.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, he did. I took notes at the time. Then he went on to say, in the next breath, that the Liberals were calling for a reduction in the PST in 1995 because it would create jobs.

So where does he stand on that issue? Where does he stand on that issue?

Mr. Speaker, the thing I found the most strange about what they . . . And he's the only one that's spoken, so he's the only one that I can draw any comments from because nobody else has spoken because there's not much they can say in a negative way about the budget.

But what I found strangest of all is what he said about health care — in this sense, pretending he was interested and concerned about health care. He criticized this province, the

provincial government, for back-filling 100 per cent of the Liberal cuts, and then adding 51.3 million, which is a 5.2 per cent increase over the approved budget last year. Yet he had the gall to defend the Liberal cuts in the first place.

If there's two parties in the health care — I know the member from North Battleford will understand and agree with this — if there's two parties in the health care system contributing to the money, to the revenue, how can you criticize one party that back-fills the cuts of the other and then adds some more, but then not criticize the party that actually makes the cuts? I fail to understand that.

So this goofiness, I think, is why nobody was quoting from his speech last night. I flipped around on all the stations to see if anybody was quoting from the Opposition House Leader's speech and nobody was quoting from it because it didn't make any sense. It didn't make any sense. Mr. Speaker, it didn't make any sense because of his inconsistency. Not only that, people sitting behind him were laughing during his speech because they're better informed than he was. They knew that the stuff he was talking about was simply nonsense, as I've tried to expose.

Mr. Speaker, what I think . . . they were laughing yesterday, but I think what they'll be realizing today is that he's not responsibly carrying out his duties because he's not sticking up for Saskatchewan people; he's sticking up for Ottawa, who are making the cuts. And we're back-filling and adding money and he's criticizing us. Well people can see through that. The Saskatchewan electorate is much more astute than that.

An Hon. Member: — You bet they will.

Mr. Pringle: — Yeah, you bet they will.

I want to make a comment as well on what the member from Saskatoon Greystone has been saying. She was the Liberal leader. She was a Liberal when it was clear that Working for Women was going to lose their funding. Now she's pretending she's concerned about that and introducing petitions and tabling petitions and making a statement today. I would like to know how many times, I would like her to tell me, how many times she has given a phone call to her friend Morris Bodnar, MP (Member of Parliament), or Georgette Sheridan about the cuts for Working for Women. These are not provincial cuts, they're federal cuts. I'd like to know how many phone calls she's made to Ottawa. I bet she hasn't made one phone call to Ottawa, and I bet she hasn't made one phone call to Georgette Sheridan, her close friend, or to Morris Bodnar about the cuts for Working for Women. If she's really concerned, she'll take her concerns to the right place.

Mr. Speaker, for the balance of my comments — I'll just be a few more minutes — I want to talk a little bit about some of the social initiatives that I think were . . . define the difference between this Saskatchewan government and the people of Saskatchewan, than the budgets from other provinces, Tory, Liberal, and certainly from the federal budget.

Mr. Speaker, what's in it for families? Twenty-one, 20 . . . in addition to all of the other things that I won't refer to like the PST reduction, education investment, infrastructure, roads, and so on, $24.7 million additional money into the action plan for children. Mr. Speaker, that translates into family income benefit increases, 3.3 million; supplementary health benefits for low income working families; more money to child development and nutrition grants; more money to northern community development funding; money into child care in terms of the improvements to the facilities and the equipment improvements.

Mr. Speaker, we've put new money into child care every year — I know the member from North Battleford agrees with that — every single year, new money into child care. The federal Liberal government abandoned their national day care program, which was a cornerstone of the 1993 platform; and the reason they're not being held more accountable for this is that the child care community is not a powerful lobby group. But it's a very important group in terms of the support to families and the quality of support that families need. But we put new money in every year and again this year as well, into the salaries for child care workers.

(1245)

Housing initiatives for northern residents, which opposition members say was needed. Transitional money, 6 million into the national child benefit, where we're putting our money up front, begging the federal government to join us because we need their support. The low income provinces, poorer provinces, need the support of the federal government. We're calling for a national child benefit. More assistance to helping people obtain child support orders. More community-based outreach programs for young people and young women prostituting on the streets, which again is what the opposition has been calling for. Further development on the community-based alternatives for juvenile justice, again which they've been calling for. Additional money for children that are challenged, with challenging behaviours. Additional money to the child advocate's office. Again I want to remind members opposite that Saskatchewan is the only province that has a child advocate that reports directly to the Assembly, to the independence of the Assembly. And we set it up that way so that the child advocate's office could monitor the progress of children's services and public policy related to children and families without any fear of interference by ministers.

As we know, the Alberta Minister of Social Services fired the child advocate a couple of years ago. No other province that has a child advocate has the advocate report directly to the Legislative Assembly, and I'm very proud of that because we're not afraid to be monitored. In fact we view that as a way to make more responsive government.

But expansion of that office; expansion of the successful mothers' support program; additional money to early intervention supports; the expansion of the teen-infant centres, Mr. Speaker, foster home rate increases. And one that I am very happy about because it was 10 years ago that I was the provincial . . . And we worked together, the provincial president of the Saskatchewan human services association, where we were trying to work towards good salaries and benefits and stable funding for the NGOs (non-governmental organizations), now called community-based organizations.

I talked to several of my friends in that sector yesterday. They are very delighted that we're making great strides on their salaries, their benefits, their pensions, and new money to some fixed-cost funding for those organizations. And many of those people are — because of the low wages over the years — have really been low income families themselves, as you would know, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm very excited about that and I look forward to that three-year plan where we try to bring those . . . bring everybody up instead of dragging everybody, pushing everybody down, which is what the House Leader of the opposition did this morning by attacking working people and the labour policies that would support bringing them up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a couple of quick things related to the federal budget, because again this defines the differences, and these people aren't sticking up for Saskatchewan people and criticizing the federal government. But I want to talk about one Liberal MP that I have a lot of respect for, who is talking about reality, and this is an article in the *Star-Phoenix*, January 18, '97, says, "Former minister critical of Liberals":

> Former Liberal defence minister (and I quote) David Collenette says government cuts (that is federal government cuts) are threatening the integrity of social programs.

He said — I'm continuing to quote — he says:

> In dealing with (our) . . . deficit, (this) . . . government "has created some pretty rough justice — we have to be honest about that," . . .

He goes on to say:

> . . . social programs such as education, health care and pensions, arts and culture are being sacrificed and national standards are being weakened.
>
> "The reason kids go to school hungry is because their parents don't have jobs . . ."
>
> Collenette also criticized his party's cuts to the funding of CBC, which he said has been crucial to the survival of Canadian culture.

Well at least Mr. Collenette, who's part of the Liberal government — he doesn't even live in Saskatchewan — he's being honest about the situation.

And let's repeat what he said. He said that the social program cuts . . .

> . . . he said social programs such as education, health care and pensions, arts . . . are being sacrificed and national standards are being weakened.

He's saying that about his own government, and you people won't even stand up and say that from the Saskatchewan perspective. So who's standing up for Saskatchewan?

I want to quote one other article, I want to quote one other article about the federal Liberal approach. And again, I know that the member from Melville will appreciate this. There's no point in the member from Melville sticking up for the federal Liberals. You ran as a Reform Party member in the last election federally. You won't get to the Senate anyway. You're not a legitimate candidate to go to the Senate so you might as well stick up for Saskatchewan people.

I have another quote here from Mel Gill, who is the executive director of Children's Aid Society in Ottawa. Mr. Gill was the Co-Chair of a recent national forum on poverty, where Saskatchewan, by the way, was given a national award for the action plan for children.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gill says, he says, I quote:

> Poverty has grown under the Liberals in Ottawa. (He says) they've taken $7 billion out of the former Canada Assistance Plan, which affects programs like child protection.

He also says that Canada has the second highest rate of child poverty among the developed countries next to the United States.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mel Gill is saying this. David Collenette is saying this. Everybody is saying this. So the federal Liberals are getting off the hook by this group here, the provincial Liberals. They've got no economic development plan. Over 10 per cent unemployment in Canada, 4 per cent higher than the Saskatchewan unemployment rate. Do you think we've contributing to the Canadian unemployment rate?

So the feds have no unemployment economic development strategy. They've got no transportation plan for Canada. They've pulled out of active participation to supporting education, health, and social programs. There's no national poverty strategy federally. They've reneged on their agreements around the GST and the day care program. And you're defending them and you're defending them.

The bottom line is that under the federal Liberals . . . child poverty has doubled under the federal Liberals in just four years. We put $6 million in this year and they're perhaps going to put some in in a year and a half. And you criticize us. Table the calls you've made to Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, the inequalities are expanding and increasing under the federal Liberals. As Collenette, Mr. Collenette, said, we've had some pretty harsh justice. And I agree with him. So I don't understand why these opposition Liberals are not speaking out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can't wait for the federal Liberals. Like in medicare we couldn't wait, we can't wait in other areas as well. So we're . . . We've developed the economic development strategy where this is the fourth or fifth year. I won't go over the retail sales and all the housing starts and all the other indicators that are very positive. My colleagues will do that.

We're continuing to . . . and we're continuing to progress on

health care, which everybody else is trying to model, except Alberta and Ontario, because they're decimating health care. We're continuing on the farm support policies, where the federal government has abandoned farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, we're doing our own thing on the family poverty strategy, and we'll just have to hope that when the federal Liberals see that we've got something good here they'll say, me too, which is what those members will do.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition Liberals criticize what we're doing at their own peril. As long as they do, that doesn't bother me because they will be over there and we'll be over here. So as long as they're over there, Saskatchewan people will continue to build.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — And, Mr. Speaker, that's what this budget does. It continues to build. I want to close on a quote that was relevant in November '96, when it was made. It is even more relevant today. This comes from *The Globe and Mail*, Saskatchewan five years later. You'll remember this. I quote:

> Five years ago, the province of Saskatchewan was in crisis. When the New Democrats took office on November 1, 1991 they inherited a burden of heavy debt, even heavier than they'd imagined. Mr. Romanow and his government, those high-spending, irresponsible, weak-kneed, bleeding-heart socialists, resolved to clean up the financial mess left by Grant Devine and his Conservatives.
>
> Last week, five years later (well this is six months later, which is even better) we were reminded of their success. Are there lessons here? Yes. The government identified the danger signs immediately and addressed it. It set its course; it plotted its course, its destination, and every step of the way it ensured it had the support of its constituents.

I have no doubt — after watching all the news last night, I'm really excited about getting home today and talking to my constituents — I have no doubt, after hearing the budget speech and the comments last night, that we will continue to have the support of our constituents for many years to come. Therefore I'll be supporting the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm mindful of the time, and I have a fair number of comments I want to make on this budget and obviously on the Liberal motion. What I'd like to do today is make a few preliminary comments, and then obviously the bulk of my comments, I'll make on Monday.

Mr. Speaker, budgets are fundamentally documents about choices. Budget statements define governments. And I think they define the political movements behind the parties that are in these offices.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted today to be able to stand and support this budget presented by this New Democratic government at this time. Mr. Speaker, this budget is a budget that is, I think, embraced, and is very much in tune with where Saskatchewan people are coming from.

We all know that five years ago — almost six years ago now — when this government took office, it took office with a very difficult agenda ahead of it, a very difficult road. And it had to make very difficult choices.

I say, as a member of this caucus who joined in 1995, that it is with the greatest of thanks and the greatest of respect that I have for the more senior colleagues who served during those difficult years and made the very heart-wrenching, difficult decisions that have brought us today to this wonderful point in our history — to this turning point for Saskatchewan's economy, for Saskatchewan's people, and for the Saskatchewan experience.

Mr. Speaker, I say that with the utmost sincerity and thanks to each colleague individually because I know it was difficult. And I am extremely proud, as a new member, to have joined this caucus.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about some of the choices that that caucus made and this caucus has made now. In comparison to what's happening in other parts of our country, I found it interesting, reading through *The Globe and Mail,* to take a look at two particular items.

First of all, yesterday, apart from it being Saskatchewan's budget day, it was also Newfoundland's. Now we all appreciate Newfoundland has difficulties — we all appreciate Newfoundland has difficulties.

The Liberal government of Newfoundland put forward a budget. And I think it's very interesting, because it's based on the same right-wing Tory philosophy that we saw in this province for years.

Let me just quote for you from *The Globe and Mail* yesterday. The Finance minister says, and I'm quoting now from *The Globe and Mail*:

> He told reporters that the province could have been in a position to balance the budget this year, but chose instead to expand spending.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen this before. We saw this before with the Conservative Party in office that could have balanced its budget, but instead decided to expand spending to the point that they were spending $1.2 billion more a year than they were taking in in revenue.

Mr. Speaker, this was the approach embraced by the Conservatives; this is the approach embraced by Liberals; this is the approach of the right-wing. And we hear this on the side opposite today even as they say, well you could have spent more, you should have put more in in spending.

An Hon. Member: — Tax-and-spend Liberals.

Mr. Thomson: — It's interesting, one of my colleagues says that they are tax-and-spend Liberals; in fact federally, it's worse

than that. They're tax-and-cut Liberals — tax-and-cut Liberals. Because what we have seen come forward from the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, in office federally, whether it's in office provincially, whether it's in the opposition, is a proposal that says taxes will increase to consumers, that they will increase spending — which are simply deferred taxes. When you have deficits, it's simply deferred taxes. Mr. Speaker, that's the approach of the Liberal Party.

Now I want to go into this at some length in terms of talking about the different approaches we have, particularly in terms of our tax structure today that we've introduced to stimulate the economy, to help rebuild the economy, to help create jobs for Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think I would prefer to embark on this on Monday. So at this point, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker: — It now . . . also having reached the normal time of adjournment, we're really adjourned. And I want to wish all hon. members an enjoyable weekend with your families and in your home constituencies.

The Assembly adjourned at 1 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS