

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about youth 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 every pray.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saltcoats, Bredenbury, Esterhazy, Stockholm, and Regina. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Presenting the following petition, and I read the prayer:

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 interests of property taxpayers.

And these come from a number of rural areas in the south-west.

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 establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime; and

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to change the Saskatchewan big game damage compensation program to provide reasonable compensation.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was ready to sit in deference to my fine colleague, but I would like to, through you, Mr. Speaker, and to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, introduce 28 grade 4 students that are seated in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teacher,

Betty-Ann Faber, and they're students from St. Marguerite Bourgeoys School in my constituency.

I've had the opportunity to be at St. Marguerite on a few occasions and have always appreciated the warm welcome. And it is indeed a school, Mr. Speaker, that is bursting to the seams.

I'm looking forward to meeting with this group after they've had a chance to sit through question period in the gallery and have a visit and a photo later on. I ask all members to join with me in welcoming this group from St. Marguerite School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You'd think after all my time in the House I wouldn't get so excited about introducing guests but it still happens. And I'm pleased today to welcome four guests from the Cancer Patient Lodge in Regina and four people accompanying them, James Debiene, Harry Sawchyn, Carol Lovett, and Mary Holash. We wish them all well and thank you for having the time and taking the time to show interest in the legislature and to join us today. So would everybody join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure and privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 15 students, grade 11 and grade 12 students from Martin Collegiate who are seated in the Speaker's Gallery. They are attended today or their teacher with them today is Peter Flasko, and I want to welcome the students and teacher here today and hope you enjoy question period. I look forward to visiting with you after question period if that's possible; if not, some other MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) will meet with you. But welcome, and hope you enjoy your stay.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Kelran Microbiologicals Expansion

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, Kelran Microbiologicals is expanding its Prince Albert operation. Kelran currently supplies biological cultural media to hospitals and labs in the prairie provinces. Its new division will manufacture and supply labs with products manufactured from polystyrene. Kelran will focus on its traditional markets but also plans to expand into the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America. And this expansion will mean 49 new jobs in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — That makes me happy, Mr. Speaker, but here's also something else that makes me happy about this announcement. There has been some discussion in this Assembly about the effectiveness of the Minister of Finance's budget to promote the Saskatchewan economy. Some members, not many, some members seem to think it won't matter.

Let me quote from the Kelran announcement by Randell Toporowski, CEO (chief executive officer) of the company:

This expansion is possible because of the efforts and determination of the Minister of Finance to create a financially stable economy in Saskatchewan.

And the sales reduction, he says, saves his company \$6,500 off the top of an equipment purchase for \$325,000. A \$6,500 saving matters to Kelran, Mr. Speaker, it matters to the people taking on those jobs, and it matters to all of us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Legislative Building Repairs

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was shocked earlier this week to read in the newspaper that we are in some danger as we sit in this Chamber, that this Assembly is crumbling, that it requires \$20 million in repair.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time for us to finally admit the egregious error in judgement committed 125 years ago when the capital was located on the banks of Wascana slough. Let us admit the mistake of our forefathers and return the capital to its rightful place in the Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, we do not suffer from the unstable land that is a problem here. In fact the original capital, the place it's supposed to be, is a beautiful height of land, a firm, stable hill overlooking the forks of the Battle and Saskatchewan rivers — a truly scenic, beautiful, and firm place of which to locate a capital.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand that part of the renovations consist of lifting this building. Now I say if we've already gone to all of the trouble and expense of lifting it, put some wheels under it, get it back to where it belongs.

Now if that's a trifle unrealistic, if that's a trifle unrealistic, the initial capital building is still there; it requires a bit of renovation.

I'm also pleased to advise that this has all-party support. The hon. member from Battleford-Cut Knife agrees.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Froehlich Floriculture

Ms. Murrell: — Mr. Speaker, we have heard many times how Saskatchewan producers have diversified their operations in order to remain competitive or maintain their viability. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention another family farm operation at Tramping Lake that has successfully diversified its operation.

Seven years ago David and Hannah Froehlich decided that they needed to supplement their farm income. Their venture, Mr. Speaker, produced Froehlich Floriculture, Saskatchewan's largest producer of cut and dried flowers. On 20 acres of land the Froehlichs grow approximately 30 different varieties of

flowers and harvest between 50,000 and 100,000 plants each year. In addition to the planting and harvesting, the Froehlichs also arrange displays — a remarkable accomplishment considering that gardening is just a hobby for them. The success of Froehlich Floriculture illustrates a versatility of Saskatchewan producers that they can adapt and incorporate new ideas and new methods to remain competitive.

Mr. Speaker, the agriculture climate of Saskatchewan is changing. There is no questioning it. How producers face this change is the question. The Froehlich adapted to it well and now have a very successful business. The success enjoyed by the Froehlichs is being repeated throughout Saskatchewan in many forms, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan producers are adapting, changing, and overcoming challenges. They are succeeding. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Expansion

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an exciting development at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The Wheat Pool has for years been Saskatchewan's largest company and truly one of its leading corporate citizens. As we learned this morning, the Wheat Pool is planning to expand its operation into Alberta and Manitoba. This latest move comes as the culmination of a dynamic period for that company.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Pool has developed a new, aggressive, market-driven approach to business. And surely they have left old habits and old ideologies behind and have focused on raising new capital and finding new markets. This was exemplified recently in their successful share offering.

That decision was clearly the foundation on which today's exciting announcement was built. We see here an organization that was previously fearful of private investment, that has since been able to use that as a springboard for greater things.

I think there is an important lesson here for the NDP (New Democratic Party) government. If some of our provincial Crown corporations adopted a progressive and competitive attitude that we see at the Pool, Saskatchewan's taxpayers would surely benefit.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus I would like to extend our best wishes to the Pool on their new venture, and I invite the NDP to watch closely the rewards that can be reaped from private investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tourism Saskatchewan Awards

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We often say, but we don't say it often enough, that things just don't happen, they are made to happen. They are made to happen by

knowledgeable, dedicated, energetic people who know what they are about. A cliché perhaps, but even clichés have some basis in fact.

This is particularly true of the tourism industry in Saskatchewan. Without mountains, a seashore or ancient monuments, we have to work like the dickens to get people to sample our more subtle attractions. And they do come, Mr. Speaker. They come in such numbers that tourism in Saskatchewan is the fourth largest economic sector in our province, a sector that directly employs 40,000 people — 40,000 people who make things happen and deserve to be recognized.

Last Friday, 18 businesses and individuals were recognized. Tourism Saskatchewan held its Awards of Excellence gala in Regina to present the awards in front of the 400 people who attended. All the winners are deserving, but two I want to mention.

First, Fred Heal of Saskatoon was presented with the Chairman's Lifetime Achievement Award, a distinguished award for a worthy recipient.

And, Mr. Speaker, the winner of the Rookie Attraction of the Year was something called Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw.

My congratulations to all the award winners and to all the workers in this crucial sector of our economy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Museum Volunteer Honoured

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are hundreds of people across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, who donate their time, energy and expertise in order to help preserve our history and their efforts cannot and should not be overlooked.

Recently the Museums Association of Saskatchewan acknowledged members who are actively involved in their respective local museums by awarding them with honorary life memberships.

Among those recognized was Ron Bell, a volunteer with the Humboldt museum. Ron was commended on his efforts to improve the quality of museums in his area. He has volunteered thousands of hours of his time attending museum conferences and advisory council meetings and has devoted a lot of energy to networking with the museums in the Humboldt area.

I would like to commend Mr. Bell on his efforts and thank him for taking the time to ensure the precious and diverse history of the people in the Humboldt area is preserved for future generations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Two Traditional Events Held in Lloydminster

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being born and raised in rural Saskatchewan, as other members of this

Assembly are, we are well aware of the deep traditions that exist in rural Saskatchewan. One of these deep-rooted traditions has been going on for 78 years in Lloydminster.

This tradition, Mr. Speaker, is the annual Pride of the Prairies bull sale. Results from this sale indicate that this was the third-best sale in the history of the bull sale, following 1994 and 1995. Four hundred thirty-seven bulls were sold during this show, with a total price reaching \$1.155 million, Mr. Speaker. Sales improved by almost \$200,000 over 1966 totals, which illustrates the improvement in the cattle industry this year.

But the bull sale was not the only significant event held in Lloydminster. There was also the third annual Midwest All-breed Stallion Services charity auction. This event, Mr. Speaker, raised over \$4,500 for the Lloydminster and Area Brain Injury Society.

People of this province have strong traditions and they also demonstrate a tremendous amount of community pride and spirit. I congratulate the success of both the bull sale and the charity auction for continuing a tradition and believing in the value of community. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Reform

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After the provincial budget was delivered last week, the Minister of Health indicated that he wanted two messages to emerge. The minister stated that nurses and health care employees should no longer worry about losing jobs, and communities should not worry about losing hospital beds and nursing home beds. We've achieved the number of beds we should have, he said.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House I called on the Premier to back up this statement by his minister and make a commitment that not one more care-giver will lose their job; not one more acute care or long-term care bed will close under this government. The Premier responded by indicating that it is "patently impossible and undesirable."

Will the Minister of Health set the record straight: does he stand by his promise or is his commitment undesirable, as the Premier has suggested?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I think the member from the Liberal Party should realize that there will always be changes in any system, including the health system. Nobody can or should say that the health system will never change.

But what I'd like to say to the member opposite is that the federal government set up a committee called the National Forum on Health a few years ago, which was chaired by the Prime Minister. And that committee recently reported and gave us a lot of good information about how we should change our health system. It more or less confirmed the direction our province is taking.

Health District Elections

And the other thing it did, Mr. Speaker, is it recommended that the federal government stop the cuts to health care that had been going on. That was the federal government's own committee, Mr. Speaker. And that committee, if its recommendations were followed, would result in \$53 million more money for our province for health care, Mr. Speaker. And if we got that money, we would cooperate with the federal government to bring about a national program for drugs and we would improve home care even more.

And I'd like to know if those members support those initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, it has been said that an honest man's pillow is his peace of mind, so I truly hope that the Minister of Health is able to sleep at night. While the minister is lulling the people into a false sense of security, the Premier insults the public by indicating an end to the gutting of health care as undesirable.

While the government sends out mixed messages, people in communities such as Eatonia sit waiting and wondering if the axe is going to fall on their local health centre. At present the people of this town do not know whether funding cut-backs will see their health centre reduced to an eight-hours-a-day clinic or completely closed. Because of this uncertainty the town's only doctor yesterday announced that he is leaving — something a number of other communities can identify with; Dodsland to name one.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the minister's earlier statements indicating that an end has come to the onslaught of health care cut-backs, will he make a commitment that the cuts have ended; that residents of Eatonia and other communities do not have to live in fear of losing their only access to emergency health care services?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, most people in the province, despite the fact that the member opposite may want to mislead them, are aware that, not only have cut-backs to health care ended in Saskatchewan from this government, we have back-filled all of the cuts to health care from the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

And if the member wants to talk about cut-backs to health care, what I'd like to know, Mr. Speaker, and what the people of this province would like to know is this: since the National Forum on Health, chaired by the Prime Minister who's a Liberal, indicated that the Liberals should put \$53 million more money into our health care system in Saskatchewan this year, and in every province, Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the Liberals in this House will join with this government in saying to the federal government, follow the advice of your own committee, stop the cut-backs to health care — which are all Liberal cut-backs, Mr. Speaker — and let's get on with the job of building a better health system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, there has been a long-standing practice in this province that we combine municipal and school board elections. And this has been done of course not only to save money, but in addition it has provided us with a higher turnout of voters than would otherwise be the case. Indeed, municipal elections I understand get out approximately 40 per cent of the electorate.

This fall, health district elections are scheduled two weeks before municipal elections. Our last health district elections only got out between 10 and 20 per cent of the electorate.

I would like to suggest to the Minister of Municipal Affairs that our health district elections be conducted simultaneously with the school board and municipal elections, both to save money and to encourage voter turnout. And I would ask for her reaction to that suggestion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have the opportunity to answer that question. I'd like to point out that the municipal elections aren't quite synchronized because the RMs (rural municipality) have elections every year on a rotating basis, so they're out of step with . . . But in terms of the health districts, it is a good suggestion. We are reviewing it, and stay tuned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Municipal Governments

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Municipal Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance announced in this week's budget that a reduction in the provincial sales tax is this government's way of rewarding people of Saskatchewan. And for seeing the light, we congratulate her for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — However, the \$29 million reduction in funding for municipal governments is going to result in many communities increasing their mill rates. The mayor of Meadow Lake indicates his community will have to make up \$80,000 because of these cuts. The mayor of Preeceville says his community will lose \$20,000. And as he puts it, and I quote:

The businessman may get to keep an extra \$30 a month of the money he's (collected) from the consumer(s) . . . But you come back to him and say, 'by the way we're raising your taxes three mills to compensate for . . . revenue-sharing grant cuts.'

Will the Minister of Municipal Government explain how her government can pat themselves on the back for reducing the PST (provincial sales tax) with one hand and on the other hand they simply are passing on a greater tax burden to the municipalities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, the estimate of the benefit of the sales tax in the PST to municipalities, rural municipalities, is about \$5 million annually, which is considerable. I'd also like to point out that in this year for example, we are returning \$16.3 million in futures to rural municipalities. We are giving them \$4.4 million of the infrastructure money and they will receive on the Crow offset \$21 million this year for a total of over 40 million — \$40 million — 36 of which is new money, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — The minister made the comment that \$5 million is a lot of money. Well then I'll remind her that 29 million is a lot more for these people to absorb after they've already been cut about 50 per cent of the funding since you come into power in '91.

Mr. Speaker, when Ottawa recently announced phase 2 of the federal infrastructure program, the Premier indicated that such a program is, and I quote, "something we need in this province." And that it only makes sense that if our cities, towns, and villages and RMs are to take part in this initiative, they must have finances to take part.

This government's decision to slash municipal funding by 30 per cent poses a very large roadblock in their way. As the mayor of Langenburg so aptly puts it, and I quote:

How do you find your share of the infrastructure money when you're getting the money taken away from you on the other hand. Somehow (it just) doesn't make sense.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Langenburg is right. It doesn't make sense. Will the Minister of Municipal Government explain how you intend to address this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to hear the member opposite acknowledge that a long-term plan for development and retention of infrastructure is a necessity. And perhaps he could pass that message on again to his federal cousins in Ottawa — the Liberals in Ottawa.

I also . . . This year the sharing in the infrastructure money will go 87 per cent to municipalities; the other 13 per cent is set aside for northern municipalities. So municipalities, for their infrastructure, will get 100 per cent of that money this year unconditionally, subject to the review process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Barley Marketing Vote

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, I don't think you or Ralph Goodale got anywhere near the level of support you were expecting out of your all-or-nothing question on barley

marketing. Over 21,000 farmers voted for a totally open market. I think it's quite clear, Mr. Minister, if they had been given the choice, a clear majority of farmers would have voted in favour of dual marketing.

Mr. Minister, for years you've been telling us that dual marketing is an idea being promoted by a small group — a radical fringe group — of farmers. Today's vote shows this is clearly not the case. Support for the open market has grown from about 3 per cent last fall, according to Ralph Goodale's own polling, to 37 per cent today. Support for dual marketing is 58 per cent according to your own polling.

Mr. Minister, will you immediately call on Ralph Goodale to call a question on dual marketing?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I give the member full credit for being very brave, Mr. Speaker. After taking a whipping like they did on the barley vote to stand up in this House and ask the question for dual market takes a lot of courage, but I give him credit for that.

And I ask the member to remember, I ask the member to remember this is a democracy. And nearly two out of every three people — basically two out of three people — support the Canadian Wheat Board, support the hundreds of millions of dollars . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Support the hundreds of millions of dollars that that board gives us and premium prices over the street price. And I'd just simply ask the member, why in the world do you continue to want to take \$350 million out of the pockets of western Canadian farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, farmers who support dual marketing are not trying to impose their will on others. They are not saying get rid of the Wheat Board. In fact the Wheat Board is . . . if the Wheat Board is working as well as you and Ralph Goodale say it is, many would still continue to market their grain through the Wheat Board even under a dual-marketing system.

These farmers are not trying to restrict your freedom, Mr. Minister. So what gives you and Ralph Goodale the right to restrict their freedom of choice?

Mr. Minister, there are a growing number of farmers getting sick and tired of the Liberals and the NDP telling them how to market their grain. In spite of all of the efforts of the Liberals and the NDP with a flawed question and trying to influence the vote, over 21,000 farmers voted for a totally open market.

Mr. Minister, when are you going to listen to them? When are you going to call for a dual-marketing vote?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can just put it very

bluntly by saying we are listening to the farmers of western Canada — two out of three.

I find it really amusing though, Mr. Speaker, as to how the coalition oppositions works together over here. One member here wants to take 300 and some million dollars out of farmers' pockets; members over there, the Liberals, they took 320 from the Crow, they took 250 from stabilization payments, they took \$65 million out of farmers' pockets by no train transportation regime that serves the farmers of this province.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are listening to that vote. I now call on the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Goodale, to for once and for all put this to bed. Let's get on with building a stronger Wheat Board now that we know that two out of three people in western Canada want the board. Let's build it stronger and stronger.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Construction Tendering Agreement

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, is for the minister in charge of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, two years ago SGI tendered a renovation project on its claim centre in your home town of Yorkton. That tender had to be withdrawn because nobody wanted to bid on this project under your union-preference tendering policy.

We have now been informed that this project is going to be re-tendered, but this time it is going to be tendered as an SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) project, allowing you to circumvent your own flawed Crown tendering policy.

Mr. Minister, isn't this an admission that your union-preference tendering policy isn't working? Will you admit that this flawed policy has caused a major problem for SGI in Yorkton?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer the question. First I want to advise the member opposite that initially when we looked at a facility in Yorkton for a new SGI, we looked at a new SGI building in Yorkton. When we reviewed the requirements for a facility in Yorkton, we found that we had a Highways building that was only 60 per cent utilized. So we entered into an agreement with the Department of Highways, and the property is owned by Saskatchewan Property Management, Mr. Speaker.

Now what the member opposite should know, that in this province we have reduced the number of leases by over a million dollars in this province. Because what we're doing in this province is using facilities to their maximum ability, not like the Tory administration of the past that ran up huge, huge expenses in this province, was leasing properties to their friends, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the minister that he cannot rewrite history. What happened in

Yorkton is history and everybody there knows what happened.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Third Party quoted from a national survey on Canadians' attitudes towards unions. That survey also found that just 25 per cent of Canadians feel that bidding on a publicly funded project should be restricted to unionized companies. In the Saskatchewan-Manitoba region, which was lumped together, that number is even lower. Just 19 per cent of the people support a union-preference tendering policy. Even among union members, less than 40 per cent support that kind of unfair policy, Mr. Minister.

Immediately after question period I will be introducing a private members' Bill to repeal the union-preference tendering policy. To the minister responsible for the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), will you finally listen to what the contractors and taxpayers are telling you? Will you support our Bill and repeal this unfair policy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that the answer is no.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gaming Addictions

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, few people would argue the fact that the expansion of gambling in this province has resulted in an increase in the number of Saskatchewan people who are unfortunately becoming gambling addicts.

The Liberal opposition believes that the Liquor and Gaming Authority, the arm of the government which has caused the upsurge in gambling addiction and related problems, should bear the cost of treating and rehabilitating the victims of its activities. At present the cost of providing these services is borne by health districts which, as everyone knows, are walking a very fine financial tightrope.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to serve notice that following question period I will be introducing the gambling addiction accountability Act which would address this fact. Does the minister in charge of Liquor and Gaming not agree that this is an issue that must be addressed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Health and the Government of Saskatchewan are doing a better job dealing with the problems of problem gambling than we've ever done in the past. We have, Mr. Speaker, a toll-free help line for anyone that has gambling problems. We're trying to reach thousands of young people. We're going to all the high schools with public education.

We're trying to be proactive and preventive, Mr. Speaker. And we recognize that addiction to gambling, like addiction to alcohol or drugs, is a real problem in our society. We're spending more per capita than other provinces are, Mr. Speaker, to deal with this problem. And we're going to continue to have

the best and most innovative programs in our country to deal with these problems as they arise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how we know just exactly what we're spending because there is no accountability for the spending of addiction treatment for gambling. And while this government continues to build up its Liquor and Gaming slush fund, it is failing to establish or address the true extent of the addiction problem in Saskatchewan.

We have recently commented about the explosion in the number of people attending Gamblers Anonymous meetings, the massive increase in the number of phone calls to the gambling addiction hot line, and the fact that the number of people actually being treated has ballooned — they've doubled in one year.

Mr. Speaker, it only makes sense that the department which benefits financially should also be accountable for the social costs. The Liquor and Gaming Authority is the agency which licenses VLTs (video lottery terminal) and other gambling activities. The cost of treating and rehabilitating gambling addicts should be shown as one of the expenses of this branch of government — not health care. And again this is the thrust of my private members' . . . Will the minister in charge of Liquor and Gaming make a commitment in this House to support my Bill this afternoon?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, once again what we see is smoke and mirrors from the Liberal Party because the member should know that any revenue that comes from Liquor and Gaming into the government, Mr. Speaker, goes into the General Revenue Fund. And what is it used for in the main, Mr. Speaker? It's used for health care and education.

Now the member complains, the member gets up and complains that a lot of people are getting help with their gambling problems. And I say to the member, if somebody has a gambling addiction problem in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that person is going to get assistance and help. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker; that's what we're going to continue to do.

And I also want to say to the member, because he gets up and tries to mislead the people about health districts having deficits — the members opposite, both Conservatives and Liberals, were talking a lot about health care deficits over the last few years, Mr. Speaker — the health boards will complete this year, Mr. Speaker, with an overall surplus and they'll have a bigger surplus next year. We don't need the smoke and mirrors from the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Fuel Rebate

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission ruled last year that this government was discriminating against farm women who were not eligible for the farm fuel rebate in spite of the fact that many are farmers in

their own right. As a result this government was forced to extend the rebate to women last year.

Saskatchewan's Finance minister indicated in September that this government may change the rebate policy for this year, but to date has made no announcement and we have heard no mention of this issue in the recent budget. Therefore will the Minister of Finance explain what commitment she is prepared to make to farm women in Saskatchewan to continue the program and adhere to the Human Rights Commission ruling?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the opportunity to clarify this. As we stated publicly, I think before the last House even recessed, we are complying fully with the Human Rights decision, and we said that we would review this program for the budget. Obviously the budget has passed. There has been no changes. The program is obviously sustainable as structured. So there's no new news here. We are complying with the decision. We are accepting applications that go back to the original date of the program. We are fully paying those applications and the program is sustainable for the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Child Prostitution

Ms. Julé: — I thank you, Madam Minister, for the clarification. There were many people asking about that.

My next question is for the Minister of Social Services or his designate. Mr. Speaker, recently I had the great pleasure of participating in a freedom march in north-central Regina. People from all across Regina, including the Minister of Social Services and the Women's Secretariat, were on hand. A dedicated group of community volunteers paraded through downtown Regina to raise awareness about the child prostitution problem and to warn the public that soliciting children for sex will not be tolerated.

Last week I introduced a Bill entitled, measures to combat child prostitution. Now that the Minister of Social Services has had ample time to review the Bill, will he be supporting it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to join with the hon. member opposite in that march. This is a very complex problem because as people in other places who have dealt with it even legislatively have found, if the underlying problems in the community aren't dealt with, a strictly legal solution is not going to solve this problem.

We have been taking a look at that Bill, and as the member acknowledged in her statements at that march, that her Bill may not be the appropriate action and there may in fact be some other action that's more appropriate.

So we've got an interdepartmental group looking at this. We've put substantial money in this budget into the child action plan, into child prostitution, into other community-based initiatives.

And I think if the members were to vote for the budget it would go a long way to solving this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that child prostitution is a complex issue for the Social Services, Health, and Justice departments to handle. But local community groups across the province are doing their part to raise awareness of the pedophiles preying on young children for sex.

Now it's the government's turn. And make no mistake, time is of the essence. These child victims need help now. If the minister won't act quickly to support our private members' Bill, what kind of a time line is he setting to establish new legislation governing the issue of child prostitution?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well again I would say to the member opposite that supporting this budget would be a good first step in this.

But I also have to say that one of the true solutions to this problem is the strength of the neighbourhood, the strength of the community. And I think it's all of our jobs to do as much as we can to support the work that the local community people are doing to organize, in that instance, the street patrols and the various activities within the community that are going to make that whole environment safer for the children and more difficult for the child sexual abusers who are in that community.

For myself, I've spoken with people involved in the community and said if there's anything we can do to help resource some of the community-based actions that are taking place we certainly want to get involved with them in doing that.

I indicated that they should call me at any time when they have anything they want me to be involved in, anything they think we can do. And we're just going to have to keep working together on this because it's a very deep-seated problem. And I agree totally with the member opposite; once a child experiences this kind of damage it takes a lifetime, and even then the damage is not undone. So we do have to deal with it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Canadian Wheat Board Vote

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased this afternoon to rise in this House and to report that a solid majority, two out of three people, of prairie barley producers, have voted to support the Canadian Wheat Board and to continue to have the barley market . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Nearly 75 per cent of eligible voters exercised their right to mail in their ballots to the federal government on this important issue, and the results are crystal

clear.

Mr. Speaker, our government is calling upon the federal government to make the results of this vote binding and to put this issue to rest once and for all. Despite an expensive campaign by the forces that wish to destroy the board, the farmers have made their wishes known loud and clear. Mr. Speaker, the federal government must put this issue to rest and move forward to strengthen the Canadian Wheat Board, and to build our grain industry.

I urge the federal government to put safeguards in place to ensure that grain moves in this country in a timely fashion to port in the future, and to pass legislation quickly that would give the board added flexibility in its continuing efforts to provide farmers with the service of marketing their grain while achieving premium prices.

The Canadian Wheat Board gives prairie wheat producers a competitive advantage worth \$265 million a year in premiums paid by foreign customers, and \$110 million a year in reduced-cost risk management.

Mr. Speaker, the board gives barley producers a competitive edge worth \$72 million a year. It is obvious that barley producers recognized that fact and voted accordingly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this ministerial statement, unquestionably, Mr. Minister, there is a result. There's no question about that. Farmers have voted something in the neighbourhood of 67 per cent in favour of a Canadian Wheat Board marketing base. Thirty-seven per cent, I believe it was, were voting opposed to the question of, do they want an all Wheat Board or do they want all open market, Mr. Speaker.

Unquestionably though, during the whole debate about this grain marketing, I don't recall one farm group — not one farm group — calling on the all or nothing question that we saw. Not one farm group, Mr. Speaker. The farm groups that were wanting change were wanting the dual marketing question to be included on that.

And the minister's own polling, his own polling indicated that 58 per cent of Saskatchewan farmers wanted dual marketing here in Saskatchewan. And if you look at Ralph Goodale's own polling surrounding the question of single-desk marketing, or open marketing entirely, the open marketing question went from 3 per cent of support to 37 per cent of support in the course of a few months.

Unquestionably the winds of change are a blowing, Mr. Minister, and you recognize it, and I think every other farmer across Saskatchewan recognizes it. People want to see change in this. The struggle will continue. This question is not over, Mr. Speaker at all.

And the important question on this is that we should recognize here in Saskatchewan, we clearly favour dual marketing. You

people don't. What is the Liberal's position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. All hon. members will come to order. Order.

Thank you to Sask Water Employees

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible) . . . river basins. High water levels are also expected along the Qu'Appelle and Souris River basins. Temperatures and amounts of precipitation which affect snow melt may reduce or increase the probability of flooding. This was the case in Swift Current last weekend where above-normal temperatures in south-western Saskatchewan triggered major flows in the Swift Current and Wood River basins.

Although some of the areas of Swift Current were flooded, damage was less than expected largely because of advance preparations and cooperation, coordinated emergency action, and communications between various government departments and local agencies including Sask Water.

Sask Water, Mr. Speaker, plays a major role during spring run-off. The corporation is responsible for hydrometric monitoring of water throughout the province, precisely tracking and predicting water flows, and communicating this information to affected municipalities, and in some cases, personal contact with the affected landowners.

Such extra efforts by Sask Water staff throughout the province are helping ensure everyone in affected areas . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The Chair is having difficulty being able to hear the minister's ministerial statement and I'll ask for the cooperation of all members of the House on both sides to allow the statement to be heard.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I think we have a difficulty here. Is it all right if I move to this desk? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try this again from this side.

I want to commend the extra efforts by the Sask Water staff throughout the province who are helping to ensure, in affected areas, everyone is aware of potential flood situations. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I can say that many Sask Water's employees have been working day and night including weekends since the spring run-off began.

Staff in the corporation's forecast centre have also been working around the clock, diligently monitoring hydrometric stations throughout Saskatchewan in order to provide the most up-to-date data on the spring run-off situation.

Mr. Speaker, Sask Water also issues monthly province-wide news releases of flood forecasts. This began in February and will continue until the run-off period is complete. As well, media advisories are being issued by the corporation in the event of spot flooding or controlled releases from reservoirs. News conferences updating the run-off situation are also being held regularly to ensure the public is aware of any potential

problems in their area.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that there has been much cooperation within the different departments, within Municipal Government, Emergency Measures, Sask Water Corporation, and the local municipal governments. But I want to in particular commend the people in the Swift Current area and those who have been responsible, volunteering their time preparing for situations with all of us . . . which all of us wish would not be occurring.

The people of Saskatchewan are managing the situation very well and I want to commend them for that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before providing for a response to the ministerial statement, I do want to remind ministers of the Executive Council that the purpose of ministerial statements is for announcements of government policy. Now I — order, order, order — I was listening carefully to the remarks made by the minister. Granted, with the confusion of the microphone, I may not have heard as clearly as I would normally be able to, but I do want to remind the ministers that statements are out of order unless they are announcements of new government policy. That's their purpose. There are other ways of making statements that are appropriate and other means.

Order.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I trust maybe what the minister for Sask Water was trying to say — if there was a lot of damages — that maybe his government would come up with some emergency funds to cover some of these damages. But in the meantime, I do want to thank the staff of Sask Water, as I'm sure the people of the province do, for helping them.

But I think we can't underestimate the fact that the people of the province are working together to make sure that the damage is as little as possible. That's what Saskatchewan people do do, is work together well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to start, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I really believe I did hear a statement of policy in the minister's address.

And I believe that what he was saying is that the government is strongly considering a policy whereby they will study water problems in our province and take initiatives that will in the future stop these kind of floods from damaging properties, especially in areas like Swift Current where we have asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs yesterday if she would in fact introduce a policy of examining what went wrong and helping people to understand how the system works and to find out if we can somehow, in that particular case, stop people from pointing fingers one to the other, saying, it's his fault; no, it was his fault; no, it was someone else's fault.

And if we can have that kind of an investigation, we not only can clear up a lot of misunderstandings within those

communities, but we can also then go back to the minister of the Water Corporation's new idea, which is to plan for the future.

Plans that were suggested by one of my constituents just yesterday that go along the lines that the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) used to have a dam on Swiftcurrent Creek. It was about a few miles west of . . . or rather east of No. 37 Highway but west of the Duncairn dam's present site. It was a back-up dam and what it did in effect was provide a back-up system for flood control.

Unfortunately of course, the CPR doesn't need water for its engines any more so the dam was allowed to wash out and disappear. Now we have some flood problems. If those kinds of secondary dams were put back into place under this new kind of policy, we would see flood control minimized I think, a great deal.

We also of course could put in dams in places like Battle Creek. And of course we were very happy over the past weekend to receive a message directly from the Governor of North Dakota, Mr. Schafer, who congratulated the Progressive Conservative government of the past for putting in the Rafferty-Alameda dams because this spring those two dams are going to ensure that Minot, a very beautiful city just across the border from us, will not probably flood. And they're very happy about that and they recognize the significance of those dams being in place for water control.

And so we do see that there is some hope for a policy coming out of this statement, Mr. Minister, or Mr. Speaker. And we encourage both of these ministers to now take very seriously the requests of people to study these problems, to plan for the future, to build flood-control dams, and to follow this piece of Liberal advice, which was to give some emergency aid to those people who are hurting at the present time.

We do have ranchers that have lost feed. We do have ranchers that have had bins surrounded by water. Some of their grain supplies are soggy and wet. They do need some immediate help. We suggest that you get right at it.

Infrastructure Works Program

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the provincial and federal government signed an agreement for a one-year extension of the Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure works program. The Canada-Saskatchewan infrastructure works program is a fine example of how much can be accomplished through cooperative action. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people know — maybe better than anyone in Canada — about working together.

When this government took office, the province was facing a financial crisis. We inherited a large deficit, a growing debt, and high interest payments. But Saskatchewan people turned to their long tradition of cooperation and community to restore the province's finances. And just last week when the Minister of Finance introduced the 1997-98 budget, we saw the benefits of working together. And now working together — federal government, provincial government, and municipalities — we

will continue to improve and upgrade the infrastructure of Saskatchewan and provide jobs.

Since the beginning of the program, the federal and provincial governments and municipalities have invested more than \$295 million in improvements to Saskatchewan's infrastructure. A total of 23.16 million will come from the federal and provincial governments; with the municipal contribution, this will provide more than \$34 million for infrastructure improvement in this province in the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, we will be encouraging communities to work together on infrastructure projects in the Saskatchewan tradition of cooperation. The entire federal and provincial share of infrastructure funding under this top-up is being directed to municipal projects. We expect that much of this funding will be spent on the province's transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, people want government to make sound, long-term investments. Our investment in Saskatchewan's infrastructure is a sound, long-term investment and also provides jobs now. More than 5,000 were created in Saskatchewan under phase 1 of the infrastructure program and some 1,200 in community projects benefited from the dollars it injected into the economy. It is anticipated that this funding will result in the creation of about 600 new jobs while once again helping communities complete important projects that will improve services to Saskatchewan residents.

Our commitment, Mr. Speaker, is to build for the future by investing in people for prosperity and jobs. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, infrastructure joint ventures and funding assistance is appreciated by everyone. But the downloading and the cuts to revenue-sharing pools since '91 by this provincial government have caused a great hardship to all. As the minister knows, rural governments, towns, villages — everyone — could not deficit finance; and they kept their house in order and now are being penalized very heavy for doing that by this government who did not keep their house in order or the third party's government.

So, Madam Minister, if you want these municipalities to be able to take advantage of programs such as you announced yesterday, you've got to quit the downloading and dumping on all forms of municipalities so they can take advantage of these programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You mentioned in this particular statement, Madam Minister, that cooperation is needed. And I think that's definitely there. I would hope though, that after you made the statement that all the money was going to the municipalities, that we'll see it all go there — every single last dollar.

I would also hope that as the information is sent out, that the municipalities are given a lot of leeway to do exactly what they want with that particular money and not have it earmarked in

ways that you probably see fit but may not be needed and necessary for those particular communities. I think it's very important that that takes place. Nothing is the same in any two communities, so any kinds of rules and restrictions that are put in place will definitely hinder the usefulness of this particular money.

With the way that this government has made it difficult for municipalities to survive over the last numbers of years, this is a critical program and my municipalities are already looking forward to getting this money and making good use of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Are there any further ministerial statements?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to all members of the legislature three guests that are seated in the Speaker's gallery.

Mr. Speaker, I'm privileged to introduce Taras Mazuryak, who is a curriculum writer from Ispas Secondary School in Chernivtsi Oblast province in Ukraine. Taras is here as part of an international agreement that was entered into between the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Prime Minister of the Ukraine.

This agreement called for a government-to-government exchange, particularly in the area of curriculum development. And we now have the Department of Education involved in the exchange, and Mr. Mazuryak is here for, I believe six months, involved in developing a Ukrainian-English language curriculum.

Joining Mr. Mazuryak is Vera Labach, who is a Ukrainian language development consultant with Saskatchewan Education located in the city of Saskatoon, my home city. And accompanying her is, I gather, her husband, Terry Labach.

And I would like to welcome our international guest from the Ukraine to the province of Saskatchewan along with the tour guides. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — To also introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome the guests.

Vitaemo vace, i dobre dehn. (Translation: welcome to you and good day.)

Taras Mazuryak, as pointed out, is doing a tremendous amount in terms of coordinating programs between Ukraine and Saskatchewan. And I know of many, many students who have travelled across to Ukraine as exchange students, to take part in cultural and educational trips.

And I welcome you; I understand a six months visit to Saskatchewan. I hope you enjoy the province very much. Also a welcome to Vera Labach.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave of the Assembly to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you several . . . or two very important guests of the Assembly. We have people from the very far North visiting the city and visiting the Assembly today. These people are from the beautiful town of Black Lake.

I'd like to introduce Edwin Alphonse and Philip Bouvier. I believe they're both here on behalf of the Uranium City hospital board. Edwin is a board director and Philip Bouvier is the Vice-Chair.

And I wanted them to know that I'm one of the first members to speak Dene in the Assembly. So I'll try it here.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 211 — The Gambling Addiction Accountability Act

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 211, The Gambling Addiction Accountability 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.

Bill No. 210 — The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy today to introduce first reading of Bill No. 210, The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be

read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 42 — The Wildlife Act, 1997

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 42, The Wildlife Act, 1997, be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, there was a point of order raised yesterday, last evening, and I would like to present the Chair's ruling.

Yesterday evening the Government Whip raised a point of order concerning the propriety of certain remarks made in debate by the Leader of the Opposition. It was the Government Whip's contention that the Leader of the Opposition had impugned the character of government members by, as he stated, making the suggestion that those members might have used confidential knowledge of the reductions of provincial sales tax for their own personal gain.

The Deputy Speaker indicated that the Chair would review the verbatim record before making a ruling. Having reviewed the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, I am prepared to rule on the matter.

In reference to the sales tax reduction I find that the Leader of the Opposition stated the following, and I quote:

And I'd be interested to know as to the large purchases that people make, especially the members of the government benches opposite. I wonder how many government members bought a brand-new car in the last, oh let's say, two months . . .

Order.

. . . and wonder about whether or not they invested the additional 2 per cent in sales tax.

It is stated in Beauchesne's, 6th edition, at paragraph 487(2) that:

Words may not be used hypothetically or conditionally, if they are plainly intended to convey a direct imputation.

From the cited remarks it is unclear that the hon. member meant to impute about the motives of other hon. members.

Beauchesne also states at paragraph 486(1) that:

It is impossible to lay down any specific rules in regard to injurious reflections uttered in debate against particular Members . . . much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking . . .

In this instance, upon review of video tape of proceedings, it is the Chair's considered judgement that the Leader of the Opposition's tone and manner did not impute dishonourable motives on the part of other hon. members and I find the point of order not well taken.

Order. Order. Hon. members will come to order.

Order, order. I will ask all hon. members to come to order. I will ask . . .

The Premier knows that members are not allowed . . . the Premier knows that the members are not allowed . . . Order! Order. The Premier knows that hon. members are not allowed to say from their desk what they're not permitted to say from their feet, and that Speakers' rulings are not to be challenged. I will ask the Premier to withdraw his remark . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I will ask the Premier to withdraw his remark challenging the Speaker's ruling.

I will ask the Premier to withdraw the remark challenging the Speaker's ruling.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, what remark did I make? I have to know what the remark is before I know what I have to withdraw.

The Speaker: — The Premier knows . . . the hon. member will be aware that he has made several comments in response to the Speaker's ruling, and I will simply ask the Premier to withdraw the remark and apologize.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and I apologize.

The Speaker: — Order! All hon. members will come to order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, in the interest of open, accountable, and responsible government, I hereby table the responses to questions 23, 24, and 25; and I respectfully request that question 26 be converted to a notice of motion for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — The answers to items 1, 2, and 3 are tabled, and item no. 4 is converted to motions for return (debatable).

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

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to stand here in my place and reply to the budget speech. It is an honour for me to represent the constituency of Lloydminster.

It was an honour in 1991 when I was just a novice at this, but when I was re-elected in 1995 the constituents of Lloydminster said to me, we want you to continue on the track that you have started on. We want your government to deliver accountable, financially, fiscally responsible government. And that is why I was re-elected in 1995, and that is what we are trying to do.

I want to thank a number of people before I start my main address. I'd like to thank the people of Saskatchewan for standing behind the government five and a half years. It was not an easy time for any of us. Most of us that are elected, on both sides of the House, really care for people, for the programs that we support, and we represent our constituencies to the best of our ability. And so it was difficult when we had to bring in budgets the first few years.

And I just want to tell the member from Melfort-Tisdale that we were very much aware of the financial situation in '91, in October '91 — I should say November 1, when we took over — in '92 and in '93. And we took the measures that we had to. Many times I felt physically ill when I looked at the situation and the decisions we had to make, because I say I believe people on all sides of the House really do care about the people that they represent. So I want to thank the people of Saskatchewan for standing behind the government.

When I look at the television and I see other places in the world where people actually riot in the streets, I have to say that I'm thankful to the people because they backed our government and they re-elected it with the second big second term majority that any government has enjoyed in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — I want to thank my colleagues. We are an extremely diverse group. Here we are together, with all our idiosyncrasies, with all our gifts, but with all our differences. And let me tell you one thing. I'd like to tell the member from Saltcoats one thing. We are not just back-benchers. We are not just back-benchers. What we are is people that represent our constituencies, and we do it in an honourable way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — When I was listening to the member for Saltcoats yesterday and he said we'd just all go together and speak together and just follow along with the Executive Council, I don't think that they really understand the process. So I'm going to explain it very slowly.

In our caucus all our debate is done within the four walls of that room. And if you think . . . and when you look over here, if you think that you can coerce or shut up any of these people that I sit with, you're wrong. We have our debates and then we vote.

And let me guarantee the member from Saltcoats that I'd rather be a back-bencher in this Premier's government than a cabinet

minister in Chrétien's government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — Any Liberal government.

Ms. Stanger: — That's right — any Liberal government. But I'll tell you one thing . . .

An Hon. Member: — One thing's for certain — that'll never happen.

(1445)

Ms. Stanger: — You're darn right it will never happen.

That leaves me to the third person that I'd like to thank. I've thanked the people of Saskatchewan; I've thanked my colleagues. And just before I go on to the next person, I'd like to say something about my colleagues. I'd like to say something about the member from Regina South, because the member from Melville said that he was a young upstart that didn't have life experience.

Well let me tell the member from Melville that the member from Regina South was not put in a closet when he was born. He was exposed to the world, and he's lived 29 years and a full life.

Also, he insinuated that the member from Regina South did not have any experience in rural Saskatchewan. The member from Regina South was born in rural Saskatchewan, was raised in rural Saskatchewan. He had to go to university in Regina or Saskatoon. Or is the Liberal member saying that we should have a university in every rural town? Of course that kind of is Liberal mathematics.

So let me just say in defence of the member from Regina South, if you want to know how valuable this member is, I want you to take out the *Public Accounts Hansard* and read the *Hansard* and *Public Accounts*. He is the same age as my youngest daughter; they worked together promoting the progressive movement that we belong to, and we value the member from Regina South.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — Which department is your daughter in?

Ms. Stanger: — My daughter teaches in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, and so does her husband. They're wonderful teachers.

Now to the third person that I want to thank. I want to thank the Premier of this province, the leader of our party, for what he has done for the last five and a half years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — He has presented our case across from coast to coast to coast in this country. And I can tell you one thing, when I look at the national media, when I read *The Globe and*

Mail, when I listen to people across this country, they tell me, you are so fortunate to have the Premier that you do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — I know the members of the opposition don't have an insight into our caucus, but let me tell you, if it was not for the leadership qualities of men like Roy Romanow, caucus

...

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Now the hon. member I think already knows that she has just used a proper name, and that's improper to do. On the rules of debate in the House, a member should only be referred to by the positions that they hold in the House. And I'll ask the hon. member to guide herself accordingly.

Ms. Stanger: — Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I kept telling myself, I can't say the Premier's name, but it slipped out. I know him so well, you see. That's the other thing — open and accessible leadership.

Okay, so I have thanked those three important groups: people of Saskatchewan; my colleagues who have hung in there through thick and thin; and the Premier who has been there for us at all turns.

I just want to say, before I get to the main part of my speech, that I was very surprised at the reaction to the barley vote this afternoon. I wasn't surprised as far as the third party was concerned. That's the one thing I appreciate about the third party. At least you know where they stand. You may not agree with them but you know where they stand. You know where we stand.

Now where were the Liberals? They were supposed to ... Maybe in their inexperience they didn't realize they were supposed to respond when there is a ministerial statement.

Now where exactly do the Liberals stand on this? They will have an opportunity this afternoon to get up. I'd like them to tell us where they stand. It would be interesting to see.

Now to get back to my speech, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say that when the budget was brought down, I was one of the proudest people in my constituency, but not the only one. And I sent out press releases to the *Lloydminster Times*, the *Meridian Booster*, and the *Maidstone Mirror*. And this is sort of the text of what I said.

It is extremely satisfying that we can now reinvest in people in the ways that have not been previously possible because of our financial restraint. Decreased taxes and increased spending on our social programs is a major accomplishment. Now is this enough? No it is not.

And I just want to say that, to the member from Humboldt, I commend her on the stand that she has taken on some social initiatives, but just to remember, please remember, the people elected on this side of the House really do care. I mean it isn't as if we are doing things deliberately without a heart. Most of us in this House agree with the problems that you have named.

The solutions maybe aren't that easy.

We know for instance that Alberta has put in a Bill similar to what you're proposing. The minute, the minute the money was taken away and the police were off, the same problems reoccurred. This is not a simple solution. I am with you; I agree it is a problem.

And I don't call it child prostitution. It's not; it's child sexual abuse, that's what it is. And I agree with you. Those kinds of issues, I'm with you. But just remember this situation was not created in a day, and not one law or one day can erase the problem. It's going to take all of us working together — opposition members, police, community leaders, the government, and everybody — to solve those kind of problems.

I also said in my press release, the 2 per cent reduction in the education and health tax is an added bonus to all the people of this province, but especially to those in my constituency who live so close to Alberta. And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the small-business people in my area have hung in there right through thick and thin and I want to acknowledge them and thank them. And they are going to prosper.

Everybody is aware that Alberta has no provincial sales tax. Reducing our tax puts the people of this province in a better position than many in Alberta though. A typical family in Saskatchewan will pay up to \$700 a year in sales tax. The same family in Alberta would not pay the sales tax, but they'll be paying over \$800 in health premiums. And not to criticize another provincial government because they run their province the way they see fit, but let's just say that when you have money you make some choices.

This morning I had an appointment at 11 o'clock. It was 5 to 11, and I saw a gentleman wandering around on Albert Street. And I thought if I stop — he obviously looked very confused — and I thought if I stop, I'll be late. And then I thought, darn it all, I'm going to stop anyway. I turned around and stopped and I said, can I help you? And he said, I'm looking for the T.C. building to pick up my health card. And I said, well look, get in the car and I'll drive you there.

And of course I didn't know this gentleman, so as I'm driving there he says to me, do you work for the government? I said no, I work for the people of Saskatchewan. And I said I'm part of the government. I explained who I am. He said, well I've just come here from Alberta, and he said, it is really a sad state, what is happening to people on social assistance and people on the lower end of the scale in Alberta.

Now that is just one person's opinion. But let me say to you, that is not happening here, because we have some new initiatives. And I won't go through them all; I'll just mention a few that I'm really proud of.

The national child support guidelines will be giving \$1.1 million to Justice, so those guidelines are written. Early skills development program in health; I really think that that's important, as a teacher. The fetal alcohol syndrome strategy; again health and social services. Many of these babies ... I have taught some of the children of fetal alcohol syndrome.

They really do need extra help, and if they were helped when they were younger, that would assist them as they grew up.

Another program that I'm really proud of is the teen and young parent program. I remember going to a school in Saskatoon in the Minister of Education's constituency and talking to some of the these teen mothers. And they had the babies there. They were taking their grade 11 and 12. And what the teacher said, she said to the girls, these people are legislators. They are here to listen to you and what you have to say about the program, and all of us are leaving so that you can tell them what you really think.

Well it was heartening to hear these young mothers say that they would have not been able to continue and finish their education and care for their children if this program wasn't in place. I'm glad to see, Mr. Speaker, that we're extending it.

The street youth and youth prostitution initiative is another one that I'm proud of and hope to see this fleshed out in the next few days. One-time initiative transition to the child benefit package, another 6 million.

Now is this enough? No it is not enough, but it is a start. It is a budget finally that I can stand up and feel good about. Our other budgets were geared towards getting our house in order so that we can do some of the programs that we really believe in. And this is why I say that we shouldn't overlook some of the smaller items in the budget which everybody seems to have.

For instance the increase to RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) policing in rural areas. This is one thing that I have said time and time again to my colleagues and to the Minister of Justice, and to people. I have said, rather than putting a gun control law in like the federal Liberals are saying, I said it would do more to prevent crime and violence against women in rural Saskatchewan if we had special trained police officers that would be able to answer immediately to some of the domestic problems that were . . . that are in our communities. Far more effective to have RCMP police officers specially trained. I have talked to some of them in Lloydminster; they're actually amazing people.

And I was so happy when the Minister of Justice told me that they would be . . . there would be more money for RCMP policing in rural areas. That is taking a decent step. Gun control to license guns — I've tried to tell some of our urban counterparts — is not going to do a thing to prevent violence towards women in rural Saskatchewan.

And of course we're narrowing the things that are taxed under the E&H (education and health). A tax exemption again for medical devices is a good thing. We have the narrowest tax base of all the provinces that have a sales tax. This is one of the reasons why our Minister of Finance was so against harmonization. Because harmonization increases the taxes, the sales tax, almost by double.

If you look at the Atlantic provinces and you look at what they . . . an individual's going to pay in sales tax with a harmonized tax. And not only are they going to pay 15 per cent for everything, but their base is so broad. I mean hair cuts, you

know, service to your vehicle, lawyers' fees, all of those are included.

We have the narrowest sales tax and I'm proud of that. And that's one of the reasons why we didn't harmonize in 1991 and why we have decided not to harmonize now. It's because the poor people of the Atlantic provinces, which are Liberal provinces, cannot afford to pay this expanded, harmonized tax.

Everyone in Saskatchewan has a good reason to feel good about this budget. It shows our commitment for the many social programs that have provided services to everyone. In our mind, people come first and that is what a good budget is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1500)

Ms. Stanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just compare, as I said before — not to run down — other governments. But governments are different, and I have said to my constituents, yes we're all politicians but we do make different choices. Just like individuals make different choices in the way they spend their money, governments are the same. We're a group of individuals.

And I want to compare the Saskatchewan NDP government's choices in this budget, as opposed to the federal Ottawa Liberal government's choices.

Okay, our provincial debt after this budget and our former budgets is decreasing to the gross domestic . . . GDP (gross domestic product).

An Hon. Member: — Product.

Ms. Stanger: — Product, thank you.

In fact it's decreased from 70 per cent, and by the year 1999 it'll be 35 per cent of our GDP. That is an amazing feat when you think about it.

Now, what's does the federal . . . what's happening with the federal budget? Federal debt is increasing relative to the GDP. Ours is decreasing; theirs is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's one choice.

We've back-filled a hundred per cent of federal cuts to health and increased health spending over \$56.6 million in 1996. What has the federal government done, the federal Liberal government? They've continued to cut social programs, and they have some bulk investment in pilot projects over the next three years. But like I have said in my constituency: no long-term planning, just short-term election promise.

An Hon. Member: — Get them through the election.

Ms. Stanger: — Get them through the election.

Okay, we have put in \$6 million in transitional funding until the national child benefit program begins, in this budget.

What have they done? They haven't even started. They are not

even going to start until July, 1998. There is the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order, order. Now all hon. members know that it's not appropriate debate to be shouting comments across the floor at one another and that all hon. members will have the opportunity to put their remarks on the record. And I would encourage them to make the remarks in that way.

Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Lorje: — With permission, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At noon today, I was very privileged to be invited to attend the Regina United Way's annual general meeting and I would like to introduce to you and through you to this House two people who were at the AGM (annual general meeting).

First of all, Karen Rowan, representing the Regina United Way — if she would stand, please. And also Chuck Shannon from Denver, who was here to do a workshop for the United Way on practical ways to build healthy communities.

The Regina United Way, as members are likely aware, is moving beyond its basic mandate of being a community fund-raiser and fund distributor, to a new role as a community facilitator and builder. And in that, they are greatly helped by the advice and guidance and wisdom of Chuck Shannon, who gave an extremely poignant and moving talk at noon today about how to build civic society and healthy communities. And he gave some very practical examples of exciting ways of keeping people involved in a long-term, dedicated way in their local communities.

I learned a tremendous amount from attending the AGM today, and I'm sure that all members of the House will join me in welcoming Karen Rowan and Chuck Shannon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE) (continued)

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'll just start at the top because this sort of broke up my thinking.

Okay, the comparison between choices that governments make. We are decreasing our debt in proportion to our GDP; they are increasing their debt in proportion to the GDP. We have back-filled 100 per cent of the cuts, 5.6 million this year; they have cut 6 billion. They have continued cutting. Minimal investment over the next three years in pilot projects, but no

long-term planning. I call it, I just call it election planning.

We put in 6 million in transition funding in the child benefit because the national government is only starting in 1998. What children are supposed to do until 1998? I guess hang on; that's the only thing they can do.

Now back-filled 100 per cent of the federal cuts in university, allowing them to reconsider tuition fees. What has the federal government chosen to do? Cut post-secondary education. They have made some small benefits that favour mostly higher income families.

Now I just want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan the way we have been different since the '40s is that somebody like myself could aspire to go to university, to graduate, and to do better than my parents did. And this has been because I remember as far back as the '50s when other provinces weren't even thinking about it, I was able to get a student loan to go to university.

In this province we have always supported people going to university. I remember . . . and I have to quote Tommy Douglas. He always used to say, it doesn't matter what you have here, it's what you got up here. Not what you have in your back pocket, but what you have in your head that counts. And always we have taken that.

It would make me very sad . . . Both of my children have been to university and graduated. It would make me very sad if people from low income families could not aspire to that. More than other places in North America, people in Saskatchewan have been able to do better than their parents did. And I'd like to see this continue.

Now we have expansion of the E&H tax exemptions to include medical devices and materials and a very narrow base. That's our choice. What does the federal government do? No new GST (goods and services tax) exemptions. And the GST, Mr. Speaker — I travel all over my constituency — it is the most hated tax by Canadians, of any tax. And this is the difference. We have narrowed our tax base again. They have done nothing. And by the way, I hate to point this out, but they did promise that they would do something about it.

Okay, we cut our E&H tax from 9 per cent to 7 per cent. Now what did the federal government choose to do? No cuts in GST or other taxes. We have a \$24 million surplus forecast for 1997-98 and they have a \$17 billion deficit forecast. After all the pain and all those cuts, they have a deficit. That's what really startled me last year. I thought, they have to come to grips with their financial situation. I realize that. They cut the social safety nets when they have many more areas to cut from than us. They cut their social safety nets, cut their government less. We did the opposite. We cut the government more and our social safety nets by far less. So they've done exactly the opposite. Again they made the choices. Fine. They should live up to those choices and face the choices. Don't cry to us because this is the kind of choices that Liberals make.

No. 9, this is the ninth comparison — increased funding for training by 26 million. And what did the feds do? No new money for training spaces, and they withdrew from the labour

marketing training. And here we have increased funding for K to 12 by 8 million; further increase in capital funding for both K to 12 and post-secondary education of 5.8 million. Is it enough? No, it's not enough. But what have the federal people done in their budget? More cuts to education. And they continue.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents are very progressive people. They are facing the 21st century. And I want to compliment a few of my small-business people in our area — the oil workers and the service industry which welcome the tax breaks we have given them. We have more oil drilling, high land sales. This has given us revenue to all the people of Saskatchewan. Areas like mine have contributed a great deal. These people are working with us.

I can remember in the '80s when oil people wouldn't even speak to us because they were told by the former government that we were anti-business. Well you know what? Now they come and speak to us because they see that we realize that there are three engines that make an economy work. And that is, private investment . . . we are not against private investment. For heaven's sakes, every one of us is a private investor in some way or another.

Public — well we do believe some things should be public, should never be private. I'll give you an example. Some of the roads were taken over in the United States by private companies. They've turned them all back to the states. I mean those are the kind of things that shouldn't be done privately — some of the toll bridges and some of the toll highways. There are things that should be done publicly.

And there is the cooperative sector, a sector that works in cooperation with public and private to make the economy work.

So I would say our Premier, our caucus, takes a pragmatic approach to government, and this is going to stand us in good stead going into the 21st century.

I have a group of game farmers that are absolutely amazing people. And they are just coming into their own. This industry is going to bring us a great deal of business and it's going to help the economy also, a diversification of rural Saskatchewan. Our cattle producers are doing well. You heard about the bull sale today, the bull sales. We had the first elk sale ever in Saskatchewan in 1995 — very successful one in 1996. And our small retail business people are the most tenuous and tenacious anywhere.

And I'll tell you, this is the things that we have done to help small-business people.

We've reduced the income tax rate for small business by 20 per cent since we've been elected. We removed the sales tax on 1-800 numbers, 1-888 numbers. We've improved the tax treatment for Saskatchewan-based truckers so that they can do their job — hard-working people who work long hours for not that great a pay. I know because my husband, years ago, was a trucker.

Reducing the manufacturing and processing income tax from 17 per cent to as low as 10 per cent. We've done that. Reduced the

fuel tax on aviation fuel from 7 cents to 3.5 cents. We've done that. We eliminated the sales tax on direct agents used in manufacturing and processing.

And we've provided a sales tax rebate on building materials used for livestock and horticultural facilities. And this of course will really help the cattle, the pork industry, the game farming industry, greenhouses. It's a great asset to the farm folks.

And a 9 per cent investment tax credit on new and taxable used equipment for manufacturing and processing. And people might think, well how does that help small business? Well it does. I just had a small-business person last year who wanted to buy used equipment to set up a dry-cleaning plant and they had to pay the tax on it. It was a hardship. Now those kind of things won't happen again.

And we did listen to them and we did these things.

And just before I close, because I could . . . actually now that I'm up here, Mr. Speaker, I could go on for another hour or so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Stanger: — But I do know that other people want to get into the budget debate. But I will say that I want to highlight some of our economic highlights, and I want to read this into the record. Because while it isn't enough — no, it can be more — I can tell you that I am proud of the things that we have been able to accomplish.

In 1996 investors and business people were active in every sector and corner of the province. And you know, this isn't just a statement. You cannot get a house to rent, an apartment to rent in Lloydminster or Maidstone, or to sell. It is just amazing what is going on.

(1515)

And here are some of the things that have happened. Retail sales were up 8 per cent, triple the Canadian average. New vehicle sales increased by 16 per cent this year . . . in 1996. Housing starts rose by more than 40 per cent. Business investment rose by 18 per cent. Crop production was up 23 per cent over 1995, 29 per cent above the 10-year average.

And God only knows, Mr. Speaker, that the farmers would like to deliver this crop. That is one thing that is very frustrating for the farmers in my area, that they have this crop and they can't deliver it. And I'd say that if the federal government and the railways can't come up with some system to deliver things a little more efficiently, I'd say just give up the job and let somebody else take over federally.

Manufacturing shipments increased by 10 per cent, the highest in Canada. Manufacturing, the highest increase in Canada. The number of oil wells drilled rose by 35 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The real gross domestic product was up 3.3, twice the national average. And that just makes me laugh when I think of the Liberals who said they would have 8 per cent growth. There isn't any place in North America that has 8 per cent growth.

Saskatchewan unemployment was 6.6 per cent and remained the lowest in Canada. Our population is growing, Mr. Speaker, rising to the highest levels in eight years.

Best of all, Saskatchewan families are showing renewed confidence, hope, and optimism. And as I have said before, people in my constituency are particularly happy with the budget. And let's just say this is a first step. There are many things that need to be done. The one thing that has to be done is a lot of our infrastructure has to be strengthened and improved on.

But you know, as I tell the folks, just remember — just remember, in Saskatchewan we are a million people spread over 750 miles long, 350 miles across. We are not Alberta with the population two and half times the population in two major cities. We are not Manitoba where only a third of the province is densely populated.

We are Saskatchewan, and governments of all political stripes have supported the notion, whether they were Liberal, PC, or NDP, or CCF, that if you lived in Shaunavon you got the same type of service as if you lived in Lac La Ronge. We have tried to . . . all the people have tried to do this.

We have huge infrastructure in health, in education, in highways. Highways, we have 25 per cent of the highways and roads in Canada and 4 per cent of the population.

SaskPower, SaskTel — wherever the people of this province embarked on, it took a huge infrastructure to accommodate it. Let me say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There isn't any government with the debt that we had in 1991 that could have renewed all this infrastructure, balanced the budget, and paid down the debt. The numbers just wouldn't have added up.

Now we have. This is the fourth successive balanced budget. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can begin to do the things to rebuild our infrastructure. Remember this isn't going to happen overnight; this is going to take more than one budget. But I want to say to the opposition and to the people of Saskatchewan, stay tuned, keep us in power, and we're going to do the best that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the address, the budget speech. Thank you also to the members opposite for allowing me to take this time to do that so that I can get on with some other obligations.

I want to say that it is indeed a pleasure to be in this House and to pay tribute to the role of Mr. Speaker that he has taken on for himself in getting out to the communities, meeting with the students across Saskatchewan, launching the new cable television networks into rural Saskatchewan. It is indeed a time when we are striving to improve the communications and the relationships across Saskatchewan, and these new services of rural Saskatchewan are of paramount importance. And the strength of Mr. Speaker in taking the message of the importance of our democratic structures to the schools across our province is indeed a tribute to him. And I wish him well as he continues on that path.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it is indeed an honour to have the opportunity to respond to the budget speech given by my colleague the Minister of Finance. It is an honour because it responds to the spirit that Saskatchewan people have shown us in how to face tough challenges responsibly. It's an honour because the strength of Saskatchewan has been reflected in the last five years as we've come through difficult times, whether they were in agriculture or other parts of the economy.

And Saskatchewan people have shown us . . . have given us the faith to continue on the road of responsible management; they've encouraged us on the way. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to give tribute to the people of Saskatchewan who have allowed us to today table the budget that my colleague the Minister of Finance tabled several days ago.

I want to say that it responds to the spirit of caring that reflects itself across Saskatchewan, but I want to pay special tribute to the way in which that is reflected to us from the constituency of Rosetown-Biggar which I'm honoured to represent.

In the last year the people in the Rosetown-Biggar constituency in four communities — and I'm speaking of four but I'm guessing there may even be more before I'm familiar with our . . . Biggar and Rosetown and Herschel and Harris; there may be others in the southern part of the constituency yet — who have taken the responsibility of giving opportunity to Bosnian refugees as they face the struggles that many immigrants to Canada have faced in other times.

It is indeed the spirit of caring that is Saskatchewan that says we remember the times when our families were facing disruptions of war and hunger and brutality in parts of the world where many of our ancestors came from. And that caring is reflected back now through the community ventures that have opened up their communities and been enriched by the coming to our communities of these people from another part of the world where life has not been pleasant recently.

So I want to say that it gives us hope and courage to continue on with sound government when we see the community . . . people at the community level working to build their communities.

I want to also say that in the community of Milden there has been another demonstration of caring — the bridge point centre for eating disorders. There's a group in the community of Milden who has been working for three years simply out of the commitment to do something about this devastating condition that afflicts mostly young women but afflicts many people in our province.

These people have challenged the present system to do better than it is in helping people with eating disorders. They have made a partnership with an individual whose name is Denise Hinds, who herself has had experience with eating disorders, who has come to be a friend of people with eating disorders. And I can tell you it is a matter of pride and touching compassion when one sees the community holding out its heart and its hand and its dollars and its efforts to try to create a new approach to eating disorders.

And I can say that those efforts, I'm convinced, will soon be rewarded with the launching of a new program that is a joint venture between Mildren and the people of the bridge point eating disorder centre and the health district and others across Saskatchewan.

Also in the community of Rosetown is the Wheatland Regional Centre which is the workshop where people with special needs do special things. This is a centre that is an example to centres across Saskatchewan in the innovation they have demonstrated in the work they do. Not only do they provide the regular recycling work, which helps so much in keeping our environment clean here in Saskatchewan, but they have taken the initiative to set up a driving range which becomes a recreational asset to the community that was not there before.

They have taken over the management of the campground. They have taken over the management of a local mobile home park. They have done some gardening and some other horticultural work around their centre. And it is indeed a pleasure and an honour to have the opportunity to visit with these people who are so engaged in building the community from this community centre called the Wheatland Regional Centre.

Some communities in my constituency are also reaching out beyond Saskatchewan. In the vicinity of the community of Lucky Lake is an aggressive group of outfitters who have gathered together with other outfitters in Saskatchewan to form the professional outfitters and tourism association. This group, aside from promoting tourism within their own region and building that part of the economy, have made an arrangement with the forestry and conservation branch of the People's Republic of China, and have on their own brought representatives from there to here to establish a partnership to help the people in the People's Republic of China engage their tourism, but also to build their clientele here from the People's Republic of China. And I can only say with that kind of vision, how can we go wrong in Saskatchewan?

In another corner of my constituency is a new guest ranch called the La Reata guest ranch. This is a brand-new venture where a Saskatchewan farmer-rancher is bringing people from Germany and other parts of Europe to his ranch, not to do anything very unusual — for us — to have them be around his ranch. Not to do anything very unusual for us — to have them be around his ranch, to have them experience the Saskatchewan experience, and this is an excitement to people from other parts of the world, to see our open prairies, to see our unspoiled environment. And it is a tribute to the creative minds of people of Saskatchewan that they see the opportunities that we have here to share with people in other parts of the world.

In the village of Herschel from which I come, we had a school closure a couple of years ago. In fact I was on the local board when it happened. And the mayor of Herschel, who was honoured as a nominee in the Saskatchewan Tourism Awards banquet that was held on Friday night here in Regina, was nominated for his efforts in building on the base of that school, which no longer was useful for that purpose, in building a tea room, an interpretive centre for people to come and experience the natural history of the Bear Hills and the hills of the ...

around the Eagle Creek, to see the history of our aboriginal people that is reflected in the stone carvings and in the number of rock effigies and many other ... medicine wheels and other features around those hills; in addition to seeing some of the very, very old history where we have in those same hills uncovered in recent years the skeleton of a Plesiosaur, which is resident in Regina now. So from this story of a community which was changing, these people in the village of Herschel have created a new growth environment.

And then there are the ongoing ventures that happen. I mentioned, I mentioned the outfitters in the Lucky Lake region. Well only yesterday the *Star-Phoenix* featured the Lucky Lake region for all of the things that are going on there. In the Lucky Lake area, they have invested in the tourism around ... ecotourism in the wetlands that are there, that have been created as a result of irrigation projects. They have invested in new hog ventures. They've invested in producing potatoes with partnerships with American partners. They've invested in growing new ... dry beans and peas and a variety of agricultural products in the area.

And to crown all of that, they've now announced the construction of the largest potato, table potato, processing plant in western Canada. This is in a little community of 400 people from which this kind of energy emerges. And I want to say that this is the kind of spirit that makes us all sit up and take notice and take direction.

(1530)

In the town of Biggar of course, there are some huge successes. If one wants to start on the natural environment, there is the history of the Hanson buck, which is the world-record white-tailed buck and will probably be it for some time to come. In the area also is the Prairie Malt plant, which is a very, very successful venture in international trade. And to name another, Advanced Ag, producing environmental tanks in the community of Biggar. One can go down the list of major enterprises and one can only say that we are indeed blessed by a wealth of entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to build this province.

Over Christmas there was a group of Junior Achievers in the village ... in the town of Biggar which took on the project of building cribbage boards. They won an award for their cribbage board, the design; they received recognition for it. And again it's ... from young to mature people in our constituency, there is leadership.

And I want to pay special tribute to the community of Beechy, the community of the member from ... where the member from Regina South was born, that my colleague from the constituency of Lloydminster was speaking about earlier.

This is a community that a number of years ago was the home of — post-war — of two examples in cooperation, with the Beechy co-op farm and the Matador co-op farm, the Beechy co-op farm being the home of the member from Regina South. But this is a community that has struggled with the stresses and strains and the joys and the pleasures of Saskatchewan life all its life.

And you will remember that early in 1992 when we initiated health reform, Beechy was one of the communities that lost its hospital. And that is, I can tell you, always a blow to a community. In the community of Beechy I think there was something like 30 families who had relied on that hospital for employment.

Now one could sort of roll over and give up, but that was not the spirit of the people of Beechy. The people of Beechy stood up and took notice of the world that was going around them. They stood up and they noticed the changes that were going on in agriculture and they set about to be part of that. So they are partners in much of what happens in that region. And one of the projects I didn't mention was the fish farm on Lake Diefenbaker.

They are into hog production. They've become aware of the opportunities in tourism and they've taken on a new community-owned motel in the town. They've built a new rink. They've recently renovated their school. It is indeed a very, very sound spirit that they have brought to their economy.

But not only to their economy. They have decided that since health care was changing they were going to lead it, and not be swallowed up by the change. So in the community of Beechy they have now piloted, in the Midwest Health District, the idea of the advanced clinical nurse. And they have, I understand a few weeks ago, run a pilot project on Telemedicine, on communicating from the clinic to the place where the specialists are by television and computer technologies.

And I can say that the community took some of the resources that it had and they built a new personal care home. This community has become in itself the model for future care for health. And I want to take my hat off today to Beechy for taking this spirit, to lead Saskatchewan when they found themselves faced by challenges.

And this is the spirit of Saskatchewan. This is the spirit that helped us, when we came to government, move from the dark days of 1991 to the positive announcements which were able to flow from this budget speech only a few days ago.

This is a spirit that helped us overcome our dark days when we watched the people of Saskatchewan putting their shoulder to the wheel, people across my constituency putting their shoulder to the wheel to engage themselves in the process of change. And we have achieved much as a result of this spirit that comes from our people across the province.

I was glancing over in the post-budget tour, some of the highlights of our economy at this moment. I just want to reflect back to a few of them.

Our retail sales last year were up 8 per cent, triple the Canadian average. Our new vehicle sales were up 16 per cent. Our housing starts were up 40 per cent. Our business investment rose by 18 per cent.

Crop production was up by over 29 per cent over the 10-year average; manufacturing shipments, the highest increase in

Canada, up 10 per cent; the number of oil wells drilled, up 35 per cent; the gross domestic product up 3.3 per cent, twice the national average; all the time, our unemployment rate being the lowest in Canada.

Indeed a tribute to the people from the constituency of Rosetown-Biggar and the people from every community across Saskatchewan.

These success stories, these attributes of our new and growing economy are what now allow us to engage in what we have called in this budget speech, the speech that the Minister of Finance has just introduced, to invest in Saskatchewan, to invest in jobs — the idea of investing in jobs across Saskatchewan but with special emphasis on rural Saskatchewan. The E&H tax reduction of 2 per cent puts \$180 million back in the pockets of Saskatchewan people, so they can begin to reinvest in their community as they choose.

But in addition to that, the special emphasis on the hog industry . . . Saskatchewan is the natural home for the hog industry in Canada. We have the agricultural land. We have the progressive producers. We have the technologies. And we have encouraged the hog industry, which is already strong and growing, by removing the sales tax for materials for livestock facilities and horticultural facilities.

I want to say that I expect — because everywhere I go in Saskatchewan people are asking me, how do I get in touch with somebody who can help me into a new hog barn in my community — I expect that this is going to become one of the really large growth sectors in our economy, in our rural economy, which will not only build jobs there, but in all the service sectors around it and will strengthen our market intervention into the Asia Pacific area.

Only today I read in a news clip that Intercontinental Packers has signed a supply agreement with a Taiwanese company. This is the beginning of the kind of outreach and the kind of jobs that result when a community puts its shoulder to the wheel and decides to build. And we're going to be there to help them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, we also committed to invest in education. We are adding money to the K to 12 system. We are restoring funding to the post-secondary system. But I think the jewel in this budget on the education side is a piece that has not been that visible, and I expect the minister will be highlighting it in the days to come.

But there is a jewel contained in this budget which is the labour training strategy for Saskatchewan. It is the labour training strategy which is the consequence of some creative planning by the Department of Post-Secondary Education with the business communities of Saskatchewan, with our regional colleges, with our technical institutes, in order to provide in rural communities across this province the opportunity, larger opportunities, in spite of the cut-backs which would have resulted in 40 per cent reduction in the provision of service in most of our regional colleges — larger opportunities for people in the communities to be trained for the jobs that are developing in every corner of this province.

And I want to say how important that is, because there are communities across Saskatchewan who at this point cannot get the trained people they need to fill the spots resulting from the profound economic growth which is happening across the province. By the way, as a sidelight, neither can they find housing.

So the opportunities in Saskatchewan to build housing, to train for jobs, are appearing across the board, giving our economy breadth and strength. And they are rooted in the sound education of our young people who can provide the necessary skills to make this economy tick in the future.

We are reinvesting in social programs. And without spending a great deal of time on that, I just think that Saskatchewan people should be proud that we received national recognition for our involvement with the child action plan, for the community partnership which puts everybody's efforts together in making children the centre of attention at a time when like never before, they need our help.

In health, others have spoken about the transition in health, and I've spoken about the community of Beechy. And I think that's almost enough said, except to say that the strength of Saskatchewan people's work has allowed us to put almost \$57 million additional into this year's budget so health districts across Saskatchewan can provide better service, so they can continue in their visionary leadership of changing the health care system to meet the needs of the 21st century. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I wish them well and wish them continued blessing as they continue to work with their communities to be the world leaders in health care delivery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Now we are also allowed by the circumstances to invest in transportation. And I want to say that there is a large area of policy that we are quickly finding ourselves alone on in western Canada with the withdrawal of the federal government from the strong, strong support that in the past we have expected. We have seen the erosion of federal support for the transportation system. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that is shameful.

I think when you look at the importance of Saskatchewan's resources to Canada and to the world, that we do not have a transportation policy nationally which would guarantee that these resources can get to the rest of the world without farmers getting their product basically valueless by the time they get to the market, is a shame on the national Government of Canada.

It is the only country in the western world where there isn't a national transportation policy. And I think we need to continue to pressure the federal government to reverse its short-sighted policies with respect to the removal of the supports that are there for a national transportation policy.

Mr. Speaker, we will do the best we can with our partners in Saskatchewan, with our municipalities, with the companies that are doing business. But that will be an effort which is hindered by the absence of federal support if the federal government does

not come to the table.

While I'm talking about transportation and the importance of the agricultural sector, of the transportation and agricultural sector, I want to just put on record my disappointment that nowhere in this House, other than on the government side of the House, is there support for the Canadian Wheat Board.

We should be delighted that today two out of three farmers in western Canada, which includes Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba, all three provinces, have said the Canadian Wheat Board is an important business tool to the people of Saskatchewan and to the people of Alberta and to the people of Manitoba. We should be delighted.

What do we see from the members opposite? Now maybe the Liberals, being relatively new in opposition, are still contemplating their position. I hope not. I hope that they . . . This ought to be as automatic as the sun coming up in Saskatchewan. The Wheat Board, as an agency that provides financial benefit and orderly marketing for our products into the international market, is a proven fact. And I encourage the provincial Liberals to take the stand which is solidly behind the Wheat Board, solidly in support of the farmers who know that's true.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — And I am appalled that members from rural Saskatchewan who sit in the Conservative benches here in the House would dare to oppose the Canadian Wheat Board. It is shameful. I can say it's shameful that members of the Conservative caucus here don't know enough in 1997 to know that good business means orderly marketing, pooling your strengths in a market-place where others already have pooled their strengths. That is a business principle that is as old as time. And it's not surprising that this caucus, coming from a caucus that had no business principles, should also understand no business principles. But it still appals me that that should be the case.

An Hon. Member: — Don't call them any names, Berny.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I won't call them any names.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me again say that we are privileged to live in a province where our people, with their community spirit, with their knowledge of how things really work — Canadian Wheat Board, common transportation policies, cooperation that we have here — and I speak now again about my constituency.

In my constituency an organization called the west central local government association, while everybody's been talking about reorganization of government, the people in the west central Saskatchewan have been doing something about it. And they have formed alliances between the urban and rural municipalities to make plans for the future.

This is an area that goes from Lloydminster to Davidson to Leader. It's a huge area of the province. And these people sit down and they plan and they challenge government; and they

plan some more, and they work in cooperation with us.

(1545)

Recently they released a study called the west central local government association's transportation plan for that region. They identify the traffic patterns resulting from all these new things going on in the economy. They identify where those road impacts will be. And they've committed themselves to working in partnership with our Department of Highways, using their resources and our resources to meet the transportation challenges of the future in the absence of federal support.

I can say that this is the spirit that will see Saskatchewan through some of these challenges we've not yet completely faced. And I want to say that we commit ourselves to those local governments to work with them in achieving these things for the future.

I want to say that one of the other aspects of Saskatchewan life which reflects on the spirit of cooperation is an area that falls under my responsibility, which is the Crown corporations.

The Crown corporations have a history in Saskatchewan of which we should all be proud. We have presently today in Saskatchewan a \$7.7 billion asset, which is the collection of Crown corporations and public assets, that is the result of the forward-thinking of people from many years in the past. The forward-thinking of people who knew that the private sector in this province, over the years, would not provide the services required to the communities in order to make this economy work and thrive as it has.

So they committed themselves together to doing the things that they could not do alone, and through the Crown corporations they provided telephone and power and natural service from one corner of the province to the other.

They provided government-owned insurance for automobiles and for general insurance. They provided a transportation company where others would not. I want to say that that's our history — that's the strength.

And in the '70s, Crown corporations in the resource sector were created, and in the '80s those Crown corporations disappeared with a lot of Saskatchewan people's money disappearing along with them. But that's the fate of history and politics and we won't address that at length here today.

But I can say that Saskatchewan people have continuously committed themselves to doing things together because we do it better that way than when we do it apart. And the Crown corporations are a reflection of that.

Our Crown corporations today are facing a new era. They're facing a new era where we have free trade between nations. We have lifted the restrictions on internal trade within Canada. We see deregulation and global marketing. And our Crown corporations, I can tell you, are — and this is vouched for by studies by consultants from all of the areas of expertise that are needed in order to make this analysis — our Crown corporations are well fit to face that future challenge.

But they will have to be prepared to change in order to continue to respond to the needs of Saskatchewan people. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our Crown corporations are prepared to do that in partnership with the Crown Investments Corporation and the people of Saskatchewan to address the needs of our community in the '90s and into the next century.

And I want to say to the public that I encourage them to continue to work with us and advise us, to help us respond with their assets to their needs so that we, the province of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan, with the assets owned by the people of Saskatchewan, can build this future to be as positive a future as the experience that we have had as people of this province who've had the opportunity to live and grow up here in this province.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that because I believe in that spirit of cooperation, because I know that the people of Saskatchewan believe in that spirit of cooperation, and because this budget, Mr. Speaker, reflects that new approach to partnership and some financial freedom — not infinite, but some financial freedom — that we are on the verge of exciting times in Saskatchewan, where the Saskatchewan community will continue to be shaped by compassion and cooperation and working together in partnership to build the communities that we all value. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I support this budget.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm glad to get the opportunity to be able to address the budget. But just before I do, I would like to apologize and thank the member for Lloydminster for straightening me out a little bit here today on my impression of what a back-bencher really represents and what they really do. Someone, when I first got elected about a year and a half, told me that the best job in the great halls here is to be a back-bencher on the government side. And I've seen nothing to change my mind on that to this point, because I didn't realize all the work they really do.

So I just want to take a minute to apologize to the member, and I want to thank her for straightening me out because I would have gone to my grave thinking that, had she not straightened me out. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to commend the Minister of Finance for the 2 per cent PST reduction. To me that is the first step in the right direction. Finally I think that she has realized that high taxes in this province are slowing business, they're stopping job creation, and they're one of the big cruxes holding this province back.

Now having said that, I think we must remember though, of course, that we are still paying \$790 million more in taxes than when that government came to power in '91. All our utility rates have had increases. And really all we're using our Crowns for — that the previous speaker spoke on — is another form of taxation.

Our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, if used properly, have a very good benefit to be Crowns. But they do have a benefit if all they are used for is a tax tool and we lose the benefit that we had at one point for having these Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, health care, we were told, received \$51 million in this budget, and I take exception to that because I believe earlier this year 40 million of that 51 was put in to counteract all the mistakes in the system that had built up to this point with reform. So really all the new money we see here is \$11 million. That will not even address the deficits that the health boards are carrying.

Mr. Speaker, there are many problems within the health care reform and the health care system yet. There are long waiting-lists for acute care. And I'd like to touch on a problem that I had brought to the attention of the minister this last week, and that's dialysis. And the \$11 million I would hope somehow a little bit would get to address that problem that we spoke on. Because in a situation like the East Central Health District has and the hospital in Yorkton, that if a machine is there or in Saskatoon with their name on, it really doesn't matter. There is no capital outlay to have this dialysis machine put in place. All we are lacking is funding for someone to operate it.

And when I have, and many others within here, both on the government side and on the opposition side, have people driving, in some cases in my area, 600 kilometres three times a week, either that's into Regina or into Saskatoon for dialysis treatment, is very, very expensive and time-consuming for these people.

The one lady that I talked to last week said their whole life revolves around her husband's treatments. And you can see why, because if three times a week you're driving from Churchbridge to Regina, Kamsack to Regina, there is no time left to live. And these in many cases are seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — This is completely a ridiculous situation and one that has to be addressed. It cannot be overlooked, and I would hope that the minister would give that serious consideration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, another problem within our health care systems — and many of us have seen it in rural Saskatchewan — is that if you go to an emergency room at night for any problem you may have, it's nothing to sit there three or four hours. I am totally amazed when I come into Regina here in the wintertime and if you have a reason to go to a doctor in one of the medi clinics here, quite often within 10, 15 minutes you can talk to the doctor, have a prescription, and be on your way.

That doesn't happen out in rural Saskatchewan and I can understand why the people in Regina and Saskatoon and the bigger centres sometimes feel that we are fear mongering by saying that health care in rural Saskatchewan is inadequate. But I can see why, by the service I had in here, it would be easier for

even them to have that understanding of it. It is not the same in here as it is out there. And it is far from perfect in here — don't get me wrong.

I have the case where a constituent, Mr. Speaker, had the misfortune of her husband passing away, had the funeral, got home, and received a tremendous bill for medication when she got home.

So I don't think the members opposite have to look at us and holler about a two-tier health system because with things like this happening, everything is not rosy in the health care system as they let on.

An Hon. Member: — That's a no tier system.

Mr. Bjornerud: — That's right.

I'd like to touch on education for a minute, Mr. Speaker, and the \$7 million that we are being told that is being put in education. And we all know that that doesn't anymore than address the increase that teachers had last year that the government stepped in and negotiated with teachers. And I'm not saying that teachers shouldn't have had a raise, but this increase does no more than fund that . . . And it goes back to last year — that this was created for school divisions to handle.

We must go back to '91 since the cutting started in education. And I believe to this point, this government has cut \$60 million from education. So \$7 million is actually a drop in the bucket. It is a start in the right direction, but we have a long, long way to go — \$7 million will not address the five school closures I have in my constituency; \$7 million will not address the four school closures my counterpart from Kelvington-Wadena has. These schools are still going to close and there's many more in rural Saskatchewan slated for the same future.

Our teachers are becoming overloaded with a larger number of pupils in the classrooms. The students are rising . . . riding farther and farther everyday on buses due to the school closures. And with inflation, school divisions are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet with the downloading that has happened from this government.

I would like to talk on one of the subjects that's near and dear to my heart, Mr. Speaker, and it's municipal government of all kinds — urban, rural . . .

An Hon. Member: — Who would have thought?

Mr. Bjornerud: — And that's right, who would have thought? Because who in this province has been dumped on as bad as municipal governments? The same people that have kept their houses in order out there, have not deficit financed, and now those same people are being punished by the government opposite for keeping their house in order because they are easy targets.

The perception over there is let's dump on these people because they've kept their house in order; they can pass it on. And pass it on they are going to do because their mill rates are going to have to start to jump, Mr. Speaker.

The reassessment issue, Mr. Speaker — although it had to be done and was 30 years since the last main reassessment — has created many problems for municipal governments and for the local taxpayer.

The problem I see, Mr. Speaker, was the same as actually with health reform. Let's jump in, create health reform, and find out what mistakes we made later and look at the mistakes. We see many and far afield and now we're trying to address them. And we have made the same mistake all over again with reassessment because we have brought it in without knowing how the rules were going to be applied — what rules were good, what rules were bad. And municipalities don't even know all the rules yet.

If we'd a took our time, give the municipalities a year to look at the tools they had, they could have told the government and SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency), let's change this, let's add this, let's delete that, and we could have done away with much, much of the confusion that's out there and the distortion in the shifts in taxes that's happening out there.

We have caused frustration in every end of the province. This isn't a rural issue. It's not an urban issue. It's a Saskatchewan issue.

The education shift is just another part of this, Mr. Speaker. To start with when the 70 per cent was put on to use, it left a shift in education tax that went to the rural taxpayer. It should have been 60 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and it would have been much closer. And this goes back to what I said if we'd a took our time we would have realized this.

So to address the problem, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Municipal Government have come up with this concoction of .84 factor. So what have we got now? We've not only got mad farmers out there, we've got mad urbanites because we took part of that education shift, dumped it back on the urban so that anybody with a new house whose taxes have already skyrocketed, we're saying to them, whoops, we're not finished, here; here's a little more education tax.

By hurrying into this, we have created a monster once again. We've got it in health care; now we've got it with reassessment.

We have to remember too that this is the same government that in the last session backed off on the service district Act from a lot of pressure from a lot of places. But what that was to do was to force municipalities to amalgamate. Well now what we have, Mr. Speaker, is urban governments and rural governments in many areas barely speaking, let alone sharing services.

(1600)

So we've gone from trying to force them to share services to saying to them through the memorandum of understanding, let's talk and start to share services. And they thought that was a good idea.

But now we've created another monster that has said this isn't

going to happen in the near future because we're mad as hell about what you're doing and they're mad about what we're doing. The worst thing we could have done is cause dissension between the different levels of government out there when we need them to share. I agree — it's a great idea. If there's money to be saved, we should be doing it.

I'd like to touch on, too, another problem created by the government and that's part of the downloading that we've had since '91. In many cases, municipalities have been cut up to 50 per cent of the revenue sharing to this point. Now we're going to cut another 25 . . . Oh, no, no; it's up now again. It's not 20 million — it's 29. So now it's another 30 per cent we're going to cut municipalities out there.

We took the \$17.6 million health levy and instead of picking that up when the province is doing better, we said, well no, what we're going to do with that is we'll take it off but we'll deduct it from the revenue-sharing pool. So municipalities really gained out of something that was really supposed to be temporary.

Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure money that the minister announced today jointly with the federal government — they're great programs. We're need more of this. We need more money from the federal government so that the province can back up their talk and put in their share. The problem being with the infrastructure program is the downloading from this government on municipalities. Many municipalities that are in need the most cannot afford to put in their share so cannot afford to take advantage of this program.

I've noticed in the *Estimates* for the budget too — and I find this a little bit actually hilarious because this is the government across that continuously bashes the feds — and in the *Estimates* it says that this government is going to spend \$23 million plus for the infrastructure program. But when you get looking into that, part of that money is \$11 million of federal money.

So when the benefit comes along from the federal government, we are right there to slip it into our numbers and say, well look at us — \$23 million. But no, no, no, no. It's actually 11 million from the feds and 11 million from the province. So let's get our numbers straight.

I think what that shows, Mr. Speaker, is that the government across are masters of deception. We see it more and more every day. Distort the numbers, don't tell the whole truth, and let the public be deceived into believing what a good government we have here.

I'd like to touch on the member for Regina Victoria in his beautiful oratory yesterday that seemed . . . well it seemed, Mr. Speaker, like it would go on for ever, but it didn't. But I find it a little bit hypocritical on his part to be condoning what the government is doing, being that he's a past alderman from the city of Regina. I would wonder if his counterparts on council here are quite as happy here as he is with the budget and reassessment and all the other things that are probably going to keep about three-quarters of these people from being re-elected again. I don't think they share in his enthusiasm.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to touch on highways where the Finance minister said we're going to put \$30 million in, and I appreciate that because highways are one of the main areas in this province that definitely need an injection of money. I might add that now I know where the \$29 million that we cut from municipal government is going. We're putting it into highways, plus the extra million dollars.

One thing we should note with the highways: that we still are not putting up to 40 per cent of the gas tax back into our highways. And I find that shameful, Mr. Speaker.

In my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I have a number of highways that I could spend — out in my area — the \$30 million in one constituency. I've got No. 80, No. 8, 15, 9, 22; the list goes on and on and on.

Should you try on any day — and worse in the spring — drive from Kamsack to Churchbridge to Spy Hill, or a short piece of road from Atwater to 22 — I could just keep listing them, Mr. Speaker — you take your life in your hands and you could wreck your vehicle on any given day.

Now with spring thaw coming, we're going to be back to where we were last year. And the potholes are just about . . . Well I can't even count how many per mile there is out there, but our pothole patrol are phoning us and telling us every day about the bad situation. And it's only going to get worse. So the 30 million is appreciated; 300 would have probably been much closer to what we needed.

Jobs, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to touch on for a minute because of this government's dismal, dismal record. We have heard before and I would like to compare again, the province of Alberta in 1996, 31,000 jobs created; Manitoba, 24,000 jobs; Saskatchewan, a puny 1,000 jobs.

The overall interest rate is down — that probably created some jobs in itself. The oil and gas industry is booming — that created some jobs. So the government's good planning on that side actually probably lost jobs. It couldn't have created any because we only had a thousand. Now since the end of '96, Manitoba has created another 20,800 jobs, and we're at 7,000.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that we are falling behind consistently in job creation. So I think someone on that side, whether it's the Minister of Economic Development, should go out and take another look at the plans he's got for job creation, because they're not only dismal but they're failing.

I'd like to just touch on, Mr. Speaker, the thing on Statistics Canada that shows that industry money that was invested from 1996 shows Manitoba had an investment increase of 75 per cent; Alberta had an investment increase in manufacturing money from the private and public sector of 6 per cent; and from '91 to '96, Saskatchewan lost 82 per cent of what we had at that point.

So once again it shows the dismal record of this government on job creation and bringing investment into this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have been slammed on this side for our federal

cousins and the Crow money and the money we lost, and I agree with them. As a farmer, the Crow money loss hurt me deeply, and it's still hurting me. Every time I pick a grain cheque up and I see what my handling charges are and my freight charges, it makes me furious, along with every other farmer out there.

But the Crow money, the Crow is gone and I can't help it and the other farmers can't help it. But maybe it's time we quit using our blinders here and turned that into an advantage and an opportunity. Because it is an opportunity. It is the greatest opportunity this province has ever seen. Let's create jobs in this province to do with agriculture and bring our kids back from Alberta, B.C. (British Columbia), Ontario, to work in our province, instead of sitting here and blaming the federal government

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have said before that the government across has forgot about agriculture in this province, and I think the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) fiasco was the first indication of that, and there's been many since then.

I have noticed in this budget that that hasn't quit, because through the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) money, farm income stability, we have cut another \$55 million from our agriculture budget in this province for 1997. It's very close to the point that we will be putting no money into agriculture in this province.

So priority for agriculture, I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. And I have heard on that side many times that agriculture is the backbone of this province. I agree with that statement. Well let's start putting our money where our mouth is and put something into the programs, to find a stabilization and help the federal government, in this case — in case of a rainy day — find some kind of a stabilization program that's going to help and not all the money be ate up by administration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — One other area I'd like to touch on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it was regional parks. And I happen to have one at the town of Saltcoats, and have sat for three years now waiting for an agreement with the regional park authority, and they kept being told, well we're coming up with something new, we're coming up with something new. Well they did. Funding dropped for regional parks from \$219,000 to \$75,000. So there's the something new for all the people in the province of Saskatchewan that were waiting for new contracts. You just got used to no funding for three years so it's a good thing because now you're going to get nothing.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the reasons I give, I cannot support this budget. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Good afternoon. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to . . . or Mr. Deputy Speaker, to take this opportunity to enter into the budget speech debate.

I want to take a moment first, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to first of all recognize a number of people who are in around the Legislative Assembly this year back at the session.

I first want to take this moment to recognize the pages that are back, Mr. Speaker —this is my first opportunity to speak and want to welcome them here.

I also want to take this occasion to welcome the member here from North Battleford. I know that in the last couple of weeks I've watched him in his performance here in the House, and certainly as a very credible member, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, to this Assembly, and know that he has added a tremendous amount of stability, I would suggest, to the Liberal caucus upon his arrival. I would wish him well over the next couple of years and expect that we'll have somebody on this side of the House representing that constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after the next election.

I also want, at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to recognize the work of the new deputy . . . or the new Leader of the Opposition, who hails from our part of the world, and to recognize the fact that he's in a tough position being second to the person who calls the shots in this province.

And I'm reminded a little bit, Mr. Speaker . . . or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of a comment that he made about health boards and called them puppets. And I think, Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded that puppets are really stuffed sort of animals that are at the end of a string, and I would view the new Leader of the Opposition now as being the person who dangles at the end of the string of the new leader, who is now Mr. Melenchuk from Saskatoon.

I want to also at this time, also extend my appreciation to the work that Mr. Speaker is doing around the province, as I know that he's been out to many of the schools around Saskatchewan talking about the democratic process, talking and speaking about the value of this Assembly, the work of this Assembly, enhancing the role of political leaders across this province and their work. And I want to take this occasion to recognize the work of the Speaker in his new role across the province.

I want to also thank the constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of Yorkton. Any occasion that I get to speak about our constituency, I always talk about it as being the third largest trading centre in Saskatchewan and want to remind members of this Assembly and across the province that Yorkton still is the third largest trading centre in the province, followed only by those two other larger cities in the province. I forget — memory escapes me, Mr. Speaker — which they really are . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They may be Estevan, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to indicate that in the last couple of years we have seen significant growth in our part of east-central Saskatchewan, continue to see the farm machinery manufacturing prospering there in that of the Morris rod weeder company and the Leon's manufacturing. I want to pay a special tribute this afternoon to the work of Mr. Propp and his meat processing, Propp's meat processing out of Yorkton, which are now serving parts of the United States based on the tremendous marketing abilities and skills and value added that he's

providing on behalf of our province.

Also want to recognize the work of people within our health centres, our regional offices, because we have all of the provincial regional offices in our community, and without a doubt the tremendous work that's being done by a retail sale community, which currently are prospering under the conditions in Saskatchewan.

Recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've had the opening of the business resource centre in our community, which is a compilation of a number of municipalities that have come together and developed a REDA (regional economic development authority). This new business enterprise centre is creating an environment for many, many small businesses, which are in the process of course of educating, training, developing entrepreneurial skills for new business leaders in Saskatchewan and will find them setting up their establishments not only in our constituency but in various parts of the province in the near future.

(1615)

Recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a new tourism chamber office in our community. And to demonstrate the kinds of confidence that investment and business have in this province, we've just seen the announcement and recent growth in development of the ConAgra, who have just spent \$10 million in our community putting up a new inland grain high through-put facility. This will create somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 80 jobs over the next year, and at the same time will provide new opportunities for long-term value added in our area.

I also want to recognize the work of a new company, that of the Image wireless cable, which I talked about just a couple of days ago. They have just established a new wireless cable facility in our city. They will employ somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30 to 35 jobs, will be providing a new technology throughout this province, which is another example, Mr. Speaker, of the kind of confidence that Saskatchewan business has in our province.

What's significantly important for me today, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm pleased to see the kind of development and growth that we have in Saskatchewan and the distance that we've come in just five short years in this province. And my colleagues who have spoken before me, and I know that my Liberal friends across the way, have alluded to this from time to time, that we have now in the province some of the most prosperous retailers. Retail sales are up here in Saskatchewan significantly.

We have a number of new vehicle dealerships in our province, in our city. They tell me in a recent discussion that I've had with them that their sales are up by over 16 per cent, are busy looking at providing new vehicles in the future for those of us who may need them in our business and certainly within our operations. Housing starts are up in this province. And certainly I can go on talking about all of the good, positive things that are happening in Saskatchewan.

But more important than that, Mr. Speaker, is today I have the

opportunity to participate in a budget debate that demonstrates what happens in a province, what happens in a community like Saskatchewan, when people make a decision that they're going to work together in partnership, in cooperation, they're going to make some sacrifices. And through the efforts of a great deal of compassion and energy we have today, Mr. Speaker, a budget that I am extremely proud to be a part of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I can remember, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 when we first took government and as a private member who sat in the back benches, as was described earlier by the member from Saltcoats . . . what a definition of a back-bencher might be. And as he was speaking I jotted down just a short note of what I think a Liberal back-bencher might be, like the member from Saltcoats. It seems to me that a back-bencher like the member from Saltcoats would be a member who begins his political career behind the leader but never moves, while his colleague moves in front of him.

And there's I guess the previous House Leader, who's moved so far to the right I think he's sitting back in his constituency in Wood River.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay a special tribute to our Premier who had a vision about Saskatchewan in 1991; who said that we could reconstruct this province with the kinds of commitment and effort of Saskatchewan people. And around him in 1991 he assembled a group of cabinet ministers and a team of caucus colleagues who said that we could reach a level in Saskatchewan that would again make this province leaders.

And with the help of able people like the member from Regina Dewdney, and certainly our current member the Finance minister from Saskatoon Idylwyld, and the efforts of all Saskatchewan people, we've been able to construct a budget that provides tremendous initiatives and incentives for us as we move into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And recently, Mr. Speaker, I was at a meeting at my constituency as late as yesterday, which the Deputy Premier attended with me. We had somewhere in the neighbourhood of 125 people who were there — who were all chamber of commerce types — who said to us that we have finally provided a budget for Saskatchewan people that is strong, that continues to enhance the future direction of this province, and that people are proud of.

Recently I attended the brokers' convention in Saskatoon where there were over a thousand people, Mr. Speaker, and they said to me that they were in disbelief that the government of the day would bring in again another balanced budget, and would also reduce the taxes at a time when we were mid-term within our budgets.

This speaks, Mr. Speaker, to the kinds of conviction that this government has had to the people of Saskatchewan, the kind of a trust that we have demonstrated throughout the course of the last five years.

I was interested, Mr. Speaker, in a few of the comments that were made earlier today, and I want to reiterate the themes that are important, I think, in this budget.

We've talked about making sure that we provide opportunities for young people in this province through the job initiatives that we have, and I've demonstrated and indicated just a couple of things that are happening in my constituency that provide opportunities for young people in Saskatchewan into the future. But what's most important and gratifying for those of us who sit on this side of the House, and those of us who are New Democrats across this province, recognize the fact that we're again giving something back to Saskatchewan people, building on the social programs, education, and health, and highways. And certainly making sure that into the future, Mr. Speaker, we don't see any of the financial difficulties that this province had endured throughout the reign of the Tory years.

In respect to the health care budget that we have in this province, certainly on many times over we've heard the members opposite talk about the fact that health care in this province has seen reduced levels of funding, which couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the course of the last five years, this government hasn't reduced one penny in the health budget in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've back-filled the entire \$112 million that we lost from the federal government over the last year. Every penny of that, Mr. Speaker, we put back, back-filled it all.

The other, Mr. Speaker, is that we talked about and I heard earlier today, the member from Saltcoats talking about the fact that a number of the hospitals in Saskatchewan were converted and that people were not happy with that process. I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that I've ever heard people say in this province that they don't understand the fact that we needed to convert hospitals in this province, the fact that we had too many of those facilities that were underutilized.

We all know that, and people in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan know that. What's happened, Mr. Speaker, is that we see today a Liberal Party that talks about redoing or reconstructing the health delivery system in this province. I heard the member from Canora talk about, as I mentioned earlier, the fact that we have puppets who sit as board members on district health boards around the province.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have on my health board in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, East Central Health District, the mayor of the city. The mayor of our city sits on our district health board. He was elected by a huge majority at the last municipal election, and I expect if he runs again, Mr. Speaker, will get re-elected again. And he serves on our district health board as a major participant and decision maker and policy maker on the direction of health care. This individual, Mr. Speaker, would be offended, would be offended to learn that he is recognized by the party opposite of the Liberals as being a puppet.

I have sitting on my district health board, Mr. Speaker, an individual who sits on the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. She's been elected now for the second time to the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association board of directors

and also serves in various capacities around the community. She's also the chairperson of the district health board. Mr. Speaker, this person would also be offended gravely to learn that she would be viewed as a puppet by the Liberal Party.

I'm pleased this year again, Mr. Speaker, that we're able to provide some additional revenues to the district health boards, and the \$51 million that goes into the district health boards across the province will be a tremendous injection to help them with the work that they're doing in facilitating quality health care around the province.

The importance of the MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), Mr. Speaker. I know that on the east side of the province and certainly the south-east side of the province, making your way to Saskatoon for an MRI is a long trip on many occasions.

The announcement in the budget to have a new MRI in Regina will certainly facilitate and more expedite the kinds of services that are required for our people on east-central, south side of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'm very excited, Mr. Speaker, about the announcement that we made in October . . . or November of last year when we introduced to the province a brand-new air ambulance. The air ambulance service, Mr. Speaker, falls within the responsibilities that I hold as the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — This new aircraft, Mr. Speaker, will provide tremendous enhanced services to those of us in rural Saskatchewan, will be able to provide quick access emergency services. This aircraft will be able to land on any airstrip that we have in this province, will be able to take those people to the major centres, base centres in Regina and Saskatoon and provide excellent transportation service for them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I was interested in the member from Saltcoats comment a couple of days ago where he talked about strength . . . the role of the regional health care . . . regional hospitals in Saskatchewan. And I was pleased to hear him state that, Mr. Speaker. And he was talking about the need for a dialysis machine in the regional hospital of Yorkton. And it's that kind of support that is important for those of us who are in regional centres to ensure that that happens.

Unlike, which surprised me a little bit, Mr. Speaker, of the work that was done by the member from Canora about a year ago, or last fall, where you had a buzz of activity in the communities that he represents where they talked about the concern about the growth of regional hospitals and the value of regional hospitals, and the fact that regional hospitals were taking away from the services that they provide at the local level.

And I think that the member from Saltcoats and the member from Canora need to get together and work at ensuring that

regional hospitals in this province are sustained and built, and we ensure quality care services as opposed to taking them apart. And I was interested of course in the comments of the new Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Melenchuk, who talked about the need to consolidate even further the health care services in this province. And if that were to be the case, as he puts it, Mr. Speaker, which is the Australian model, we'll find little value or need for regional hospitals in this province. And I would suggest that we need to work closer to ensure that we have strong regional health care centres.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'm disappointed as I review some of the relationships that exist between the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals, Mr. Speaker. The \$112 million of revenue sharing in this province that disappeared last year.

And what do we hear from the Liberal members opposite? That really it didn't happen; that this is some sort of mirage; that it isn't real. And they don't support the provincial government in their efforts to try to secure and back-fill the entire \$112 million, as we did for health and social services and education.

Well we talked about the Crow loss here, the Crow rate, the Crow loss in Saskatchewan. And I was pleased to hear the member from Saltcoats today say that he didn't support that, as an individual farmer, producer, didn't support that. And neither do I as an individual farmer, producer in that part of the world, because it's included, it's included tremendous freight rate costs on my commodities that I ship from my farm today.

But what does the Liberal Party say about the Crow rate? Mr. Speaker, they were silent on the Crow rate. They were silent on the Crow rate. And what about the national highways program that we talked about before and the need for a national highways program in this province? Not much support from the Liberal Party across on ensuring that we have a national highway program.

And most disappointing, Mr. Speaker, of course, is the child benefit program. What's happened here is that the federal Liberals have adopted the Saskatchewan package in principle but they haven't put any money into it. And what's happened of course, Mr. Speaker, is that for the last couple of years the member from Eastview I believe, who was the previous minister of Social Services, began some of this work and now being piloted by the member from Wakamow. And we'll have soon in this province, with the new budget that we've just delivered, an additional child benefit program that will assist us to deal with poverty and poor kids, and have the action plan here in Saskatchewan.

(1630)

And today, Mr. Speaker, we witnessed again the Liberal Party, when it came to the barley vote, no support from the Liberal Party as it relates to the Canadian Wheat Board. And certainly no comment today, no comment today on the barley vote.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party opposite, in my opinion, is so far under the covers with the federal Liberals that

all that's visible here, in my opinion, is a group of lumps. Just a group of lumps, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that in the last couple of months we've been approached, we've been approached by the federal Liberal government who said to us that, we're abandoning Saskatchewan by and large; we're moving out of Saskatchewan. And you see it in a number of areas, as I've outlined.

They've also reduced a number of the human service centres around the province. Unemployment insurance offices have been reduced in staff. They've cut post offices in this province, Mr. Speaker. But then they come to the provincial government and they say, we want to partner up with you so that you might be able to manage our property management . . . our properties that we own here in Saskatchewan.

And so they've come to us as the sole source, Mr. Speaker. And we've taken on the responsibility of managing the properties for the federal government in this province because they had confidence in the work that we do at Saskatchewan Property Management. And as a result of that, through our intervention we've been able to save jobs in this province and we've been able to generate a greater degree of supply for the federal government — partnership, Mr. Speaker.

Now I was interested yesterday in listening or reading to a comment that was made, I believe by my member . . . by the member from Melville, who talked a little bit about the role of Mr. Goodale in 1996. And I'm not sure where the member from Melville had received this information from or whether it had just been whispered to him by one of his other colleagues. But he talks here about the only person recognizing in 1986 the fact that we had a deficit problem alerting here in Saskatchewan . . . emerging, was Mr. Goodale. Well I know that throughout the course of . . . throughout the course from 1996 to '91, NDP members of the opposition strongly criticized the Devine government of the kinds of expenditures that they were making in this province.

And of course what's happened, Mr. Speaker, today, after the kinds of perseverance and the commitment and the sacrifice and the cooperation and the partnership that Saskatchewan people have taken on, we've accomplished three major tasks, Mr. Speaker. And it's been led by our Premier and our Finance ministers.

And we are, Mr. Speaker, the first province ever to bring a balanced budget to this country — the first province ever to bring a balanced budget. We're the first province to reduce the debt in Canada, the very first province. And we're also, Mr. Speaker, the first government to reduce taxes anywhere in Canada.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of governance that you've seen in Saskatchewan under the leadership of Premier Romanow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to further reiterate, Mr. Speaker,

that . . . and I would be remiss if I were to proceed or to eliminate or to stop before I made a short comment about the VLT program, because I hear lots about what's happened to the revenues of the VLT program in this province. And I want to reiterate again for the members opposite that every penny, the entire \$112 million that we took in last year from the VLT program, all went back to Saskatchewan communities — into health, social services, education. Every penny of it went back into the coffers of the . . . into the communities, into Saskatchewan communities.

Now you might want to draw the parallel, Mr. Speaker. We lost \$112 million last year from the federal government. If the provincial Liberals are looking for a place to learn where the \$112 million went from last year's VLT program, we could say to them that what it did is it went to back-fill all of the federal program losses to Saskatchewan people last year.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about investing in people, investing \$117 million to build a made-in-Saskatchewan training system. This budget is about directing \$23 million to new municipal infrastructure programs. And the member from Saltcoats talked about the fact that municipal governments have been at the brunt of some of the reductions in the province.

And he also talked about the fact that reassessment wasn't necessary in Saskatchewan. I can't believe that after 35 years . . . And the municipal governments, both urban and rural, have come together and said to the member opposite that we need to reassess . . . we need a new reassessment process in Saskatchewan. And what does the member from Saltcoats want to do? He wants to wait for another 35 years, is what he said, in order to implement this program.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also talks about reducing the provincial sales tax from 9 to 7 per cent. And I want to tell you that on the east-central side of Saskatchewan, this is a welcome announcement. Yesterday people told us about the importance of this, the kinds of importance this will generate to the retail trade in east-central Saskatchewan.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, provides an additional \$57 million to building our stable, secure health systems; increasing school operating grants by 22 million over the next two years, and increasing capital funding in this province by over \$40 million, and doubling funding to 25 million for the award-winning, Mr. Speaker, as I've already talked about, the action plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by just making this comment about Saskatchewan people, and to say that Saskatchewan people have come a long way together. In five short years we've confronted a financial crisis. We've inherited . . . we inherited a large deficit and a growing debt, rising interest costs were devouring dollars that could have been invested, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

To overcome this crisis Saskatchewan people have turned to their traditions of cooperation, of compassion, and community. Everybody in Saskatchewan has pulled together, Mr. Speaker, and we now have a Saskatchewan community. Everybody has

pulled together and started paying down the debt so that the mortgage for our children will be paid off over the next several years.

Today, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that this government, in participation with the Saskatchewan people, are working to benefit each other for the future of all of our children. And I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I will be voting in favour of the budget later on in this week.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, times are changing. As I recall, many years ago the New Democrats used to be called Liberals-in-a-hurry. Now what I understand from that is, the point back then was that the feeling was that Liberals and New Democrats shared a similar commitment to using the power of government to advance social justice, especially on behalf of more disadvantaged members of society. But New Democrats were called Liberals-in-a-hurry because sometimes they seemed to react and respond more quickly than what the Liberal government did.

Well now what's happened? In 1995, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party in this province suggested a 2 point reduction in the provincial sales tax. At that time the NDP said this was irresponsible and would wreak devastation and havoc on the province.

Well now two years later, the New Democratic government fortunately has introduced some of the Liberal program, and I congratulate them for that. Therefore my theory is that now New Democrats are slow Liberals. They are people who have adopted some of the Liberal programs, not as fast as they should have, not as fully as they should have, but they're coming along in the right direction and I give them full marks for that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another example of the position of this government as slow Liberals, I think, is shown by their initiative in child poverty. Last week the Minister of Finance said Saskatchewan is leading the fight against child poverty. Well let's look at some of the facts, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not talking about "Fact Man" here — I'm talking about the real facts.

Mr. Speaker, this province has the second highest level of child poverty in Canada. We had the highest suicide rate among our young people; we have the highest rate of youth incarceration in North America, the highest rate of teen pregnancy, one of the highest levels of school drop-out.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't much of a record after nearly half a century, after nearly half a century of social democratic government in this province. Is this really the best we can do?

Far from leading the fight against child poverty, the truth is Saskatchewan has been bringing up the rear. But fortunately our federal government has launched a new initiative to deal with

the problems of child poverty. Now the provincial government can come along and try and take credit for it. I congratulate them though for joining with our federal government in trying to grapple with the issues of child poverty. I congratulate them for being slow Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, the same principle applies to employment and women's issues. While this government continues to trumpet itself as being in the vanguard of social and women's issues, the reality is somewhat less positive. Saskatchewan has the highest rate, the highest percentage of women locked in part-time and low income, minimum wage jobs of any part of Canada. Sure they create call centre jobs, fast food jobs, which so many go to women. But where are the real jobs, the meaningful jobs that allow for dignity and advancement? Not only is the number of jobs created in this province pitifully small, but in so many cases the quality of those jobs is not there.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see though that the government has addressed the issue of some of our disadvantaged workers in this budget and I'm referring to the men and women who work in our group homes, our sheltered workshops, and our safe shelters. They were poorly treated by this government, Mr. Speaker, typically with wages at or near the minimum wage level and with few or no benefits. And I'm delighted that these people have been considered in this budget.

In most cases the boards which supervise these people are sympathetic. They wanted to do more for them but were unable to. In many cases the board members of these organizations found their energies being zapped by trying to keep their agencies afloat while organizing bingos and raffles.

Mr. Speaker, while this government was in opposition they promised the staff of these organizations, of these NGOs (non-governmental organization), that they would be given parity with the public service. They would be treated like other civil servants. Today we find that the disparity in wages is as high as 60 per cent. Mr. Speaker, wages and benefits are so low that in some cases, the clients of sheltered workshops get a higher salary than the staff of the group homes and the workshops.

Mr. Speaker, working in shelter workshops, group homes, women's shelters, and other related fields is an honourable career and deserves to be treated with respect.

Mr. Speaker, I have a few more remarks on the budget. However, at this time and in honour of our women's curling team, I would ask that you call the clock.

The Speaker: — It now being near the hour of 5 o'clock, the House will stand recessed until this evening at 7 o'clock.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Osika	393
Heppner	393

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	393
-------------	-----

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hamilton	393
Crofford	393
Lingenfelter	393
Atkinson	403
Krawetz	403
Belanger	403
Lorje	408

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Kelran Microbiologicals Expansion	
Kowalsky	393
Legislative Building Repairs	
Hillson	394
Froehlich Floriculture	
Murrell	394
Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Expansion	
D'Autremont	394
Tourism Saskatchewan Awards	
Hamilton	395
Museum Volunteer Honoured	
Julé	395
Two Traditional Events Held in Lloydminster	
Stanger	395

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Reform	
McLane	395
Cline	395
Health District Elections	
Hillson	396
Teichrob	396
Funding for Municipal Governments	
Bjornerud	396
Teichrob	397
Barley Marketing vote	
Boyd	397
Upshall	397
Crown Construction Tendering Agreement	
Goohsen	398
Serby	398
Mitchell	398
Gaming Addictions	
Osika	398
Cline	399
Farm Fuel Rebate	
Julé	399
MacKinnon	399
Child Prostitution	
Julé	399
Crofford	400

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Canadian Wheat Board Vote	
Upshall	400
Boyd	400
Thank you to Sask Water Employees	
Lautermilch	401

Draude	401
Goohsen	402
Infrastructure Works Program	
Teichrob	402
Bjornerud	402
Heppner	403
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS	
Bill No. 211 — The Gambling Addiction Accountability Act	
Osika	404
Bill No. 210 — The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement Revocation Act	
Goohsen	404
Bill No. 42 — The Wildlife Act, 1997	
Scott	404
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER	
Ruling on a Point of Order	
Speaker	404
Romanow	404
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Kowalsky	405
Speaker	405
SPECIAL ORDER	
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)	
Stanger	405
Wiens	410
Bjornerud	415
Serby	418
Hillson	422