## EVENING SITTING

## SPECIAL ORDER

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

## MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that the Assembly resolve itself into the Committee of Finance, the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Gantefoer, and the proposed subamendment thereto moved by Mr. Boyd.

**Mr. Hillson**: — Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the hon. member for Lloydminster told us that she had lost her place so she would just start again at the beginning, and I'm tempted to do that just in case hon. members opposite may possibly may have missed any of the points. However, I believe I was in the midst of developing my theory that modern New Democrats are slow Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached the stage of talking about roads. Now we're very grateful that this government has finally taken some interest in the crumbling road structure system of this province. Unfortunately what we weren't told in the budget is that this new money for roads still doesn't bring us up even to where we were in 1991. So much more is going to be needed if we are to be guaranteed the sort of road system this province needs to enter the 21st century.

I would like to mention just one small road project which was of considerable concern to the people of my constituency and we have raised on a number of occasions. The entrance to North Battleford has several converging highways, unfortunately at various angles. This convergence is confusing to those of us even who live there and to visitors it is dangerous. Just last fall we had another fatality at that intersection which makes it very, very serious.

There is a small proposal that we have been pushing for some time, namely to have Highway 40, the Prince Albert highway, and our Highway 16, the Yellowhead, at a point outside of North Battleford so that first of all it could enter on a 90-degree angle as it should, rather than at an angle. And secondly, to get it away from where all of the converging roads come.

This can be done at modest cost, Mr. Speaker, and indeed the city of North Battleford is so anxious to see this project proceed that they are willing to provide the land to the province at no cost to the province. I ask for the Minister of Highways to give this small project his urgent attention as it is a matter of public safety.

The other project which is of considerable concern to my constituents in North Battleford is the North West Regional College and the work on the North Battleford Comprehensive in order to accommodate the regional college. That has been a matter of ongoing discussions and it was approved a couple of years ago. To date it has not occurred and we are very anxious for that project to be completed.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard talk about $22 million from this government for infrastructure. Certainly the infrastructure of this province needs some serious upgrading; however, this is another example of my theory of our government being slow Liberals. When we check into the details we find out that this spending was spurred on through the infrastructure program of our federal government. It was a program of the federal government initiated by Ottawa. Thank heavens for Jean Chrétien, who has finally gotten this province moving again and finally made this government face up to its responsibilities.

And I know the Minister of Highways is a gentleman and a decent man and I assume that he will be sending the Prime Minister a thank-you note for his commitment to Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — Our roads need the prodding of an energetic and caring federal government and Liberal opposition in order to force this government to re-examine its priorities.

I'd now like to talk for a few moments about interest rates and what members opposite refer to as the stabilization fund. Now just exactly what is this stabilization fund, as the NDP (New Democratic Party) euphemistically describe it, Mr. Speaker? Well we are told it is the money they have squirreled away from liquor and gambling. This is the money which in so many cases has come from poor families out of meagre budgets required to feed and clothe children. Now the government says we have a problem in this province with hungry children; so new measures are required in order to feed those children and new school-feeding projects are required.

Is it just possible, Mr. Speaker, that if some of the money given to feed our children was used for that purpose instead of going into the VLTs (video lottery terminal), that maybe the problem of hungry children would not be as serious? Would school-feeding programs really be required if the money that parents have to feed their children had not been confiscated by our government through the VLTs? Mr. Speaker, it is the money raised through liquor and gambling which the provincial government now refers to as its stabilization fund.

What an example of the bafflegab of Newspeak. George Orwell's *1984* has arrived a little bit late in Saskatchewan. First the NDP create social problems. Then when the federal Liberals step in to try and fix them by coming up with their child initiative program, the NDP steps forward to take the credit. Then they take liquor and gambling revenues and call it a stabilization fund, almost as if they think VLT revenues are some sort of form of economic development instead of a way for this government to confiscate welfare cheques.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main reasons we can now look forward to more funds and programs is the substantially less money we are paying on the provincial debt. Why are we paying less money on the provincial debt? Surely this is a direct result of the lower interest rates which are a direct result of the fiscal policies of the Hon. Paul Martin.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest interest rates in 30 years. These lower interest rates are the real reason we can now lower the PST (provincial sales tax). The only decent thing for our Minister of Finance to do is to send a thank-you note to Paul Martin, and I'm assuming she will get right on to that. She will want to tell Mr. Martin what lower interest rates mean for the province and the people of Saskatchewan. And I know being the honourable person she is she will want to express that gratitude in making better days possible for us.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are still some problems with financial disclosure. Our budget, this budget, does not tell us how much money was generated by liquor and gambling and other Crown corporation activity. The Provincial Auditor has pointed out on numerous occasions that in order to have a true picture of the province's finances, we require a provincial budget that sets out the whole of the financial activity of the public sector.

Instead we get a budget which discloses only 60 per cent of provincial government activity. In other words, we get a 60 per cent view of the total picture. For example, we know this year how much was transferred from liquor and gambling into the General Revenue Fund and we know that figure is four times last year's. But we do not in fact know what the net revenues were. We do not know how much money was actually generated from liquor and gambling in the last year.

Is money being held back in the Crown corporations for use at some future time? Or, as in the case of the Conservatives, is money being transferred out of the Crowns that they don't have? Because we know that went on under the Tories — that the Crown corporations transferred money into the General Revenue Fund that the Crown corporations simply didn't have. They simply loaded up debt on the Crown corporations in order to provide dividends that didn't exist. It was all a shell game. The answer is, we simply don't know.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — And it's time we did know by having full financial disclosure in the provincial budget, a budget that shows 100 per cent of the picture, not 60 per cent.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — If even a Conservative government can do that in Alberta, surely that is possible for us in Saskatchewan. I say to hon. members opposite, Mr. Speaker, I say to hon. members opposite, they have got to quit cooking their food in aluminium pots. It's having a bad effect, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues have spoken about the puny 1,000 jobs created in Saskatchewan this past year compared to over 20,000 in Manitoba. However I am extremely pleased to see that the government is taking some initiative to try and improve the situation. To find out about creating new jobs, our provincial government has taken a truly novel initiative. They have found a country, a small country, Mr. Speaker, one with the same population as Saskatchewan which has managed to create 30,000 jobs in one year and they have gone to that country to see how it can be done and how it can be duplicated here. Mr. Speaker, that country is Guyana.

(1915)

When I first heard we had invested $30 million in Guyana, I thought this was maybe something in the nature of Third World aid, particularly when I read about Guyana having one of the world's highest debt ratios. And I said in the throne speech debate that I was worried that our money might disappear into the Amazonian rain forest. Now I find out that I was wrong, that the real reason for this investment is so our government can find the secret of how to create jobs by looking at one of the poorest countries, which last year managed to create 30 times the number of new jobs that Saskatchewan did.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk for a few minutes about the North. The hon. member for Cumberland says that he would like to hear me discuss the North and I am pleased to accommodate him. First let me . . . first I want to pay tribute to my colleague, the hon. member from Athabasca. He continually gives our caucus and this House valuable insight into the perspectives of the North and of aboriginal peoples.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — I am proud to work closely with him on all matters related to northern issues and I am proud to call him a friend and colleague.

Now the Hon. Minister for Northern Affairs says he finds it strange that I would be interested in the North. He wants to know what I've done in the North besides working and being married in the Territories, besides spending my summers canoeing the rivers in the Churchill, the Clearwater, and the Nahannie. He wants to know what I've done, besides in my professional life often flying through the North, and I have to say, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker**: — Order. Order. Order, order. All hon. members will recognize that the appropriate place to make comments is on the record when you're on your feet, and not shouting across the floor. And I'll ask all hon. members to restrain themselves and to look for opportunities to express their enthusiasm for the debate in more acceptable ways within the rules of the House.

**An Hon. Member**: — Well what do you suggest?

**The Speaker**: — Order. I think all hon. members are quite capable of arriving at their own conclusions.

**Mr. Hillson**: — Mr. Speaker . . . Okay, back to phase 1, okay. I find it no more odd that I would have an interest in the North than that the hon. member for Regina Centre should be Minister of Indian and Metis Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, in the many times that I have been, in the many times that I have been in La Loche, Mr. Speaker, I have never ceased to be disgusted with the state of St. Martin's Hospital in La Loche.

Mr. Speaker, in La Loche, this government has built a brand-new, spanking, large liquor board store — quite a luxurious facility. No doubt this was contributed to the people of La Loche to make sure that they would be . . . no doubt the provincial government wanted to make sure that La Loche . . . I don't know, Mr. Speaker. I have this strange feeling that I may have struck a sensitive chord.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why was this beautiful new liquor board store built in La Loche? Was it to make sure that the people of La Loche would be generous contributors to the stabilization fund?

But while the people of La Loche, while the people of La Loche are deemed worthy for a beautiful, big liquor board store, the hospital the government gives them is a collection of dilapidated old ATCO trailers pulled together. Surely they deserve better.

Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that we subsidize the transportation of alcohol into the North but not milk? Is it because, is it because milk sales revenues do not go into the provincial stabilization fund?

Mr. Speaker, I was sorry not to see any new initiatives in the budget for youth in conflict with the law. However I was extremely pleased to see that the Minister of Justice is now moving on another Liberal suggestion, to create a justice committee under the Young Offenders Act.

These committees were supposed to be a part of the Young Offenders Act and were included in the initial Young Offenders Act passed something like, I believe 15 years ago, but nothing was done about them in this province. Only now, only now our government appears to be moving in setting up a justice committee to bring together all of these services and players to take an in-depth look at all of the factors which are important if we are going to deal with the issues of youth crime and problem youth, and try and do something positive about it.

And I want to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member from Melville, who spearheaded the petitions that have been coming into this House on a daily basis, these petitions saying we need a youth task force. The Minister of Justice has not responded to them in any way, shape, or form. The Premier ridiculed them. The Premier was derisive about them, and now we see his government adopting this Liberal proposal.

Mr. Speaker, it is another example of the government being slow Liberals. But I do not criticize them for it, I congratulate them. I congratulate them on adopting our initiatives and our policies and I just wish they would adopt more.

**The Speaker**: — Order. Order, order. Order, order. Now I've requested all hon. members to resist the temptation to shout across the floor, and there's still one hon. member persisting. And I would ask all hon. members to refrain from shouting across the floor, to provide for the hon. member from North Battleford the opportunity to make his remarks with the amount of attention that is befitting debate in the House.

**Mr. Hillson**: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is sad that it has taken this government so long to respond. However we should all still be grateful that the minister has now responded to the Liberal suggestion to establish youth justice committees.

I'd like to speak on SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) for a moment if I may, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago when this government introduced no-fault insurance, we were told that the measure was required in order to avoid rate hikes. We were told there would be rate hikes if we didn't get no-fault. We were also told . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, yes, okay, I'm a lawyer. But we were told that the only people who would suffer from the introduction of no-fault was greedy, overstuffed lawyers. They were going to be the only victims of no-fault.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, we have heard stories on an almost weekly basis of one accident victim after another who has fallen through the crack of no-fault. The serious pain and suffering of people who are not working basically goes uncompensated. And now, to add insult to injury, we are told that there is going to be rate hikes for SGI after all.

Municipalities, Mr. Speaker. Many groups last week were relieved when the budget was read. They were happy to know that the bleeding has stopped or at least slowed a bit. Our municipalities have no such comfort. The municipal cuts continue to the point where most municipalities are receiving less than half the grants they received when this government took office.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces which does not make grants in lieu to municipalities for provincial properties and buildings within urban municipalities. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, the federal government does make grants in lieu for property taxes. The province of Saskatchewan does not. Every province but one other and Saskatchewan pays grants in lieu. The federal government pays grants in lieu. This has become a serious problem for all of our municipalities, but of course especially for the city of Regina which has such a high percentage of government buildings.

Now where are the Regina members in pointing out the burden, the pressure, on Regina assessment and Regina property owners as a result of our province being one of only two that does not make grants in lieu for provincial buildings. It's another example, Mr. Speaker, where the federal government makes these grants. The city of Regina gets grants from the federal government for federal buildings in this city. It does not get grants for provincial buildings — another example where the slow Liberals on that side of the House would be well advised to adopt federal Liberal policy and start making these grants to ease some of the pressure they have put on the cities and towns of this province.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — Mr. Speaker, our municipal governments have been the most responsible level of government in Canada. They did not bring up large deficits in the 1980s like some, some unmentioned parties did. Our municipalities did not go 15 billion in the glue. They have been responsible, Mr. Speaker. They have stuck within our budgets.

But now I fear that because of the dramatic cut in municipal grants, they will be forced to raise property taxes in order to protect basic services. Mr. Speaker, the property tax is now being forced to finance a higher percentage of education costs than ever before in our history. The government says we should be moving in the other direction. We should try and lower the per cent of the education bill covered by property tax, but instead their policies have forced it higher and higher until, as my colleague points out, it is now 60 per cent.

My serious concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the money being saved by our taxpayers through the reduction of the sales tax will be lost through higher property taxes that our municipalities and school boards will be forced to levy as a result of this budget.

My concern also, Mr. Speaker, is that with so many of our health districts running huge deficits, that the increased funding to health — for which we are grateful — will simply be required to cover these deficits and will not result in improved service.

Mr. Speaker, will we be able to have improved services and nurses hired back into the systems, some of the 2,000 nurses we have lost, instead of going to cover health district deficits?

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a minute about the Wheat Board. Mr. Speaker, hon. members opposite said they were unclear of the Liberal position on the Wheat Board. I find this startling. It seems to me if there is one party's position that is crystal clear, it is surely that of the Liberal Party. I would think it's far clearer than anyone else.

It was the Liberals, it was the Liberals who said, the producers have grown the wheat; the producers must decide the appropriate method of marketing; we will allow the producers to decide. It was the Liberals who said, we believe the Wheat Board has served the interests of western farmers well.

But ultimately it is not for the politicians or the bureaucrats to decide whether the Wheat Board has made a valuable contribution to western agriculture. Ultimately it is our producers, and our producers alone, who must make that judgement. The Liberal Party allowed them to make that judgement.

(1930)

It was the Liberal Party who allowed a vote of our producers to find out what the wishes of our farmers was. Now we had on one side, we had people who were prepared to shout obscenities at anyone who suggested there should be a free vote. On the other side we had people who suggested that it was tyranny for a majority to decide on a closed marketing system. And then we had a Liberal Party who said, we respect the intelligence of the producers; we respect their right to make a decision; the decision is theirs.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson**: — So don't tell me that the Liberal position is unclear. It is clearer than that of any party, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that pretty well concludes my introductory remarks and I'm now prepared to embark on the main body of my speech.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about the hidden taxes this government collects, the taxes this government prefers to call fees. Mr. Speaker, we all understand that a government provides many services. Some are provided to all citizens out of general revenues — health care, education, and roads are examples of these. Others are provided by a mix of general revenue and user-pay. An example of this would be our provincial park system. Our provincial park system is paid roughly 50/50 — half out of general revenue, out of general tax revenue, and one-half by the fees charged to park users.

Then there are the fees which have been levied for a specific purpose. These fees are not intended to be used in general revenue, but to cover the costs of certain specific services offered to certain special target groups. These fees are charged when there is agreement that the public should not have to subsidize a service to a specific group. It is also agreed then, Mr. Speaker, that when that specific group is charged for a service, that that charge should not become a way of subsidizing the general operations of government.

But what is happening in practice, Mr. Speaker? When I initially inquired about the environmental handling charge, I was told that the money was required for recycling in order to recycle disposable containers and to finance the operations of our SARCAN depots — the SARCAN depots and the sheltered workshops, which are such a worthy cause, and which are certainly supported by all Liberal members.

But then I dug a bit deeper, Mr. Speaker, and I found that this wasn't quite the whole story. It turns out that much of the revenue from the environmental handling charge is taken into the General Revenue Fund and is not given to SARCAN and the sheltered workshops. To make the deception even worse, Mr. Speaker, the government charges the EHC (environmental handling charge) on a variety of containers which aren't even recycled.

Mr. Speaker, in this age of cynicism about politics, what can one say of a government which charges a recycling charge on containers it refuses to recycle. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's not that these containers can't be recycled. In fact they can be, and in fact SARCAN wants to recycle them and is convinced that if it is given that money, the EHC, it can in fact recycle them at a profit to SARCAN and the sheltered workshops. But the government refuses to give them the environmental handling charge revenues. It prefers to pocket them for its own purposes.

Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the environmental handling charge is not used for recycling, it can only be described as a hidden tax. It can only be described as money taken away from the sheltered workshop clients, some of the most disadvantaged people in our province.

Now we hear that the government is considering extending the environmental handling charge to milk containers. Will they recycle milk containers or will they pocket that money? In either event, Mr. Speaker, let the Minister of the Environment

be well warned: we in the Liberal caucus will vigorously oppose any tax hike for children's milk.

Another example of a hidden tax is the province's land registry and personal property registry systems. Mr. Speaker, we all understand the need for a public land titles system and we all understand that that system should be paid for by those persons registering transfers, caveats, and mortgages. But while I agree that people using the Land Titles Office and registering documents in the Land Titles Office should pay for the service, it is fundamentally unfair for land titles fees to be used to finance other government activities. If the land titles fees are at a high profit, funnelled into the General Revenue Fund, then it becomes a tax on young people — a tax on young people buying their first home. It becomes a tax on someone trying to get into farming. It becomes a tax on someone trying to set up a new business. The same principle applies to the personal property registry.

And, Mr. Speaker, I hear some chirping from members opposite that this is money that goes through lawyers' hands; it is true. But it does not get paid by lawyers. Lawyers do not pay land titles fees, their clients do. And let no one be deceived on that point.

Then there is the 1 per cent levy on all fire insurance contracts, Mr. Speaker. Now what is this for? Well this levy is ostensibly supposed to be used for fire-prevention education. But what happens, Mr. Speaker? Is it spent on fire-prevention education? Well in fact a bit of it is. Some of it is, but guess where most of it ends up? Again in the General Revenue Fund. It becomes a tax on people insuring their homes, again in the guise of a fee.

How many taxes are we in fact paying in the guise of fees? How many other charges paid by the people of Saskatchewan are hidden taxes? How many other fees and charges are not spent on the purposes for which they are raised, but go into general revenue?

Mr. Speaker, the budget that was introduced last week has adopted some of the Liberal program. Now in times past, when the NDP would accuse the federal Liberals of adopting some of their program, they would take great offence. They would call this robbery. Well I would like to say that we on this side of the House take no offence at the government adopting some of our ideas. In fact we are delighted to see it. Our only complaint is that they haven't adopted more.

Instead of being slow Liberals, be active, energetic, aggressive Liberals. Don't half do the job, do the job completely. We need fast Liberals, not slow Liberals — committed to the protection of basic services, Mr. Speaker; committed to the protection of basic services in health, education, and roads; committed to the creation of jobs and opportunities for our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say to the government that in some respects you're on the right track. In some respects some initiatives have been taken in this budget which we are pleased to see. But please, Mr. Speaker, just speed up the process, please.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I want to leave friends opposite with the benefit of some reading I've been doing by the eminent psychologist, Dr. Scott Peck. In it Dr. Peck describes the symptoms of serious personality disorder and I just throw out to my learned friends opposite if this might not have some relevance to this government.

He describes the symptoms of personality disorder as follows, if I may quote briefly, Mr. Speaker:

> (1) consistent, destructive scapegoating behaviour which might be quite subtle;

Is it possible that applies to friends opposite? We'd have to remove the "subtle" though.

> (2) excessive intolerance to criticism;

And I think we've seen examples of that tonight, Mr. Speaker.

> (3) pronounced concern with the public image and the denial of vengeful motives; and
>
> (4) intellectual deviousness.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if Dr. Scott Peck has familiarity with the Saskatchewan NDP or not, but it seemed to me a pretty good prognosis, and I would commit his writings to the attention of friends opposite.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**An Hon. Member**: — Both barrels now . . .

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — Mr. Speaker, the member for Kindersley says something about both barrels, but I want to say that having listened to the presentation by the member from North Battleford, I think I'd rather deal with items of substance.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — Mr. Speaker, I did listen with some care to what the member from North Battleford had to say. It was not easy because quite frankly it was very hard to follow, but after listening to him struggle through his speech it became obvious to me that a comment which some journalist said after the budget speech was very true. The member from the journalistic corps had written somewhere that the job of the opposition after this budget was going to be very difficult. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that even the journalist wasn't correct on that one, because listening to the argument that the member opposite made about everything but the budget, it's not difficult. It's clearly, for the opposition to respond to this budget, it's impossible.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — Now, Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech debate I was pretty kind to the member for North Battleford and I meant it because one should be to new members. And I said that I don't know long he'd be in this House because that's

really not my decision nor any one of us; it's a decision of his electorate. But I was a little disappointed to hear him busy trying to defeat himself in the last hour-and-some that he was addressing this Legislative Assembly. He said something about the NDP being slow Liberals. Well, Mr. Speaker, to be a slow Liberal one would have to go backwards.

And I don't think that when you look at the budget which we have presented before us here today — or last week — that the progressive nature of this budget and what this budget shows has been accomplished since 1992 and '91, that this is certainly not a slow budget. It is probably, Mr. Speaker . . . in fact it is not just probably. There is no doubt that it is the most progressive budget in all of Canada in this budget year from one end of this country to the other.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — Now I tell you, Mr. Speaker, if the member from North Battleford thinks that the federal government — the federal Liberal government — cutting $7 billion from health care, from post-secondary education, from social services, is progressive and it's something that we should follow, that is the last thing we would ever want to do. Here is a government in Ottawa, a Liberal government in Ottawa, that has betrayed the people of Canada more even than the man they have to apologize to — Brian Mulroney. So I say to the member from North Battleford, please don't make such suggestions, because you know that your colleagues in Ottawa, who tell you what to say in this House, have not done a great deal in the interests of this country.

(1945)

What have they done for Saskatchewan? They have taken away $400 million from the farmers of this province when they eliminated the Crow rate, after they promised by the Prime Minister in Saskatoon that it would never, never be abolished, Mr. Speaker. This is the federal government that . . .

And member from North Battleford talks about hidden taxes. Well here is the Liberal member who talks about his colleagues in Ottawa, who are the masters of developing the hidden tax — harmonization of the PST and the GST (goods and services tax) in what they call the blended sales tax. And then they insist that in Atlantic Canada that that tax be hidden in the price, so that it is not known and shown to the public when they come to buy the items at the store. Now that is a hidden tax, Mr. Speaker. So I think for the member from North Battleford or for any Liberal members to talk about hidden taxes is really putting a big stretch on any kind of an argument.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me speak directly to the budget. And first of all, let me commend the Minister of Finance who has presented just the other day a budget which we can all be proud of. And I say to the Minister of Finance and to the members of the Treasury Board, having been there myself and knowing the kind of diligence and commitment and hard work that it takes to put together a budget, that we appreciate what they have done and that we appreciate what is presented here because of their labours and their work.

This Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, has shown the courage, the determination, and the leadership, against some very difficult odds, to be able to stick to the agenda of the government and to the agenda of the people of Saskatchewan and bring a budget based on the need for investing in people and building this province for the future.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in our lives every one of us can speak of days or events or experiences which are particularly significant. Today is such a good day for me. Today I can stand in this legislature, in my place, and speak about a budget which has been made possible by decisions made when this government was first elected in 1991, and about Saskatchewan people sacrificing and working together to prepare for a better future. This budget invests in people. There is after all, Mr. Speaker, no more important obligation of government than to build for the future, for our children and their children, and to make a better quality of life for future generations.

Governments that pay attention only to the present — as I hear some members of the opposition doing, only pay attention to the present — but governments that pay attention only to the present are governments who take our society backwards. They put in debt the futures of our children and cater to greed and selfishness when they should be fostering cooperation, community, and compassion. It saddens me to say that we have had such governments in our province. The length of time that they have governed has not been long but the harm that they have inflicted has been very severe.

In 1982 this province was debt free. On the Consolidated Fund of government there was no debt. Oh, the member from Rosthern laughs — I don't know what he's laughing about — but he obviously does not know anything about the history. But in l982 this province was debt free. There was debt in the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, which was debt used for investment purposes and its repayment was done by revenues, or like you would do in any business. Self-liquidating debt; not dead-weight debt, which is what the debt is on the Consolidated Fund. And you know, Mr. Speaker, in nine short years the Conservative government — through mismanagement, through short-sightedness, and worst of all, driven by ideology — caused our debt to grow to almost $l5 billion.

In 1983, Mr. Speaker, the premier of this province — a Conservative premier of this province, Mr. Devine — went to New York. I think it was either New York or Chicago. I think it was New York. And he said, and I quote: "Saskatchewan has so much going for it that you can afford to mismanage it and still break even." I don't have to say any more. That said it all. That said it all, Mr. Speaker. And from that day that's exactly what they did — they mismanaged this province to the point where it almost reached a crisis situation and mortgaged the future of our children for many years to come.

Now what's even more remarkable, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberals in this House are proposing to do the same thing. Just listen to them. Just listen. The member for North Battleford says . . . Well I invite the member from North Battleford to take all the speeches that the Liberals have made and to look at the questions which they have asked and add up the numbers.

That's all I ask him to do. Even lawyers could do that, I'm sure.

But I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if he did that and compared what they are saying to what was said by the Conservatives in 1981 and 1982, you would think it was from the same speech, the same script, the same speech writer. We hear them in this legislature every day making the same speeches, asking, as Mr. Devine did and his Conservatives did in 1981 and 1982, the same questions.

It seems, Mr. Speaker — and some might think this is an unkind thing to say, but this is the way I see it — that their personal political futures have become more important than the future of this province. And I find that very disappointing.

Day after day they defend a Liberal government in Ottawa that has inflicted more harm on this province than any federal government, at least in my lifetime. None has done worse.

Their research staff spends so much time thinking up gimmicks that they provide no constructive debate on any item of substance, Mr. Speaker.

Now this afternoon when the Minister of Agriculture rose to address the question of great importance to this province and to the farmers of this province, and the Leader of the Third Party rose to respond, I think it was very telling that no Liberal member rose when that opportunity presented itself to say something about the vote on the Canadian Wheat Board vote as it applies to the sale of barley. It said everything, Mr. Speaker. And I have been here as long as most people, and I'll tell you this is the first time I can recall that it's ever occurred in this House.

Now what does it tell us? Well I think it tells us two things. One, I think it tells us that the Liberals want to put themselves in the position where they can go to people who oppose the Canadian Wheat Board and say, well we agree with you; you're right. And then when they run into somebody in the next coffee shop who says, I want the Wheat Board protected because it's the best thing for Saskatchewan farmers, the Liberals then want to say, oh I agree with you.

That's what it's all about, Mr. Speaker. That's about that kind of hypocrisy that the Liberals have had a tradition of having over the years.

Now the next point, Mr. Speaker . . .

**An Hon. Member**: — It's called democracy.

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — Oh democracy is telling one person one thing and telling persons something else. I don't think that's what democracy is, Mr. Speaker. The basic tenet of democracy, Mr. Speaker, is for the politicians to be honest. And there's something dishonest about the position that the Liberal Party took in this House today.

The other thing that troubles me, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

**Mr. Hillson**: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member impugning the integrity of members opposite.

**The Speaker**: — Order, order. Order. Hon. members will be aware that the rules of the House have for a long time prohibited the impugning of bad motives on members of the House. And all hon. members will be aware that the rule's applied when directed to other members of the House and in a personal kind of way. I was listening very carefully when the hon. member from Regina Dewdney was making his remarks, and I did not hear the impugning of bad motives by other individual members, hon. members of the House. The point of order is not well taken.

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was my first point. The second point I want to make is that because we know, and we listen to the Liberals with some care, that everything they say in here is being said and directed by the federal government in Ottawa, the Liberals in Ottawa . . . That's what they're doing, they're puppets.

So although on one hand they want to be able to deceive Saskatchewan people by talking about different sides of the issue on the Canadian Wheat Board, they have also signalled in here by not getting up to speak on that issue . . . Mr. Speaker, something about the federal Liberal government. And what it says about the federal Liberal government – who said to them, don't get up and speak on that issue – is that we are going to say what we're going to say about the Wheat Board vote that just took place, but get us elected with a majority after the next election and something may change and that vote may not mean a thing. Just like the promise on the Crow rate, Mr. Speaker, the promise by Liberals on the Canadian Wheat Board is about as reliable as that one was or the promise on the GST.

Now, Mr. Speaker, governments and all people in public life must do more than that, Mr. Speaker, or they betray the trust which their electors put in them. I'm proud that this New Democratic Party government has been prepared to provide the leadership with the courage and the political will to make the right decisions for the people of Saskatchewan, even when those decisions were unpopular with some, at least until they were able to see the results.

This budget is one of the results of those decisions and that leadership and that's why I'm proud of it, Mr. Speaker. It's because the right decisions were made that we are presented with a budget that invests in people, that creates growth and jobs, that provides hope and optimism, and most important, prepares a future for our children and our young people.

Mr. Speaker, you know I've been reading a lot about what has been said about this budget. Some of the analysts have suggested that somehow this budget is the result of good luck, that somehow it's because of a thriving economy. Well it's true, we have a thriving economy. But that's not solely why we're able to do in this budget what has been done, and I will address that in a moment.

But I really do wish that some of the people who report the news and write the articles about public affairs would learn something about history and look a little bit in the past so that

their stories are less cynical and more based on the reality and objectivity.

And while acknowledging in the business page of the *Leader-Post* on the Friday after the budget . . . an article, while acknowledging the positive aspects of the budget, just couldn't resist dwelling on a cynical view of why the decisions were made and how they were made possible. I quote one part of it, Mr. Speaker. It said:

> So MacKinnon's decision to provide a major across-the-board tax break to consumers and business appears to have been more of a Hobson's choice than enlightened fiscal policy . . .

**An Hon. Member**: — Good grief.

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — One of the members says, good grief and I say good grief.

That is not objective analysis, Mr. Speaker. Had the writer of that article bothered to read the budget of 1992 he would have seen that getting to what is possible today was clearly set out in that period of time. It's not good luck; it was more than that; it was good government.

Then I must say that another analyst — in this case in the column on the sort of fourth page where we have reports from the legislature — had it more correct, because he said, and I quote:

> . . . MacKinnon's budget is making a believer out of you, me and likely most of us in this province is an issue that's certainly worthy of more exploration before we leave this column.

And then he said further on:

> Fortunately, wisdom of past budgets has braced the government's coffers for this hit.

And then he said later:

> . . . let us not lose sight of what's been accomplished here by dwelling on the petty.
> Perhaps more importantly, though, it's a faith rebuilder.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, we have needed for a long time in this country and in this province some faith rebuilding and I'm pleased that this budget and this government is doing that. There should be no doubt that if this government had not managed the finances in the way that we did, all of the growth in our economy which we are blessed with today would have been swallowed up by the interest charges on an even greater debt. People would not have benefited for the improvement that we see in the economy today.

(2000)

The bond dealers and the bankers would have gotten richer, and Saskatchewan people would have gotten poorer, and our children's future would have been grimmer. This wasn't luck, Mr. Speaker; this wasn't accidental; this was decisive government. In fact our economy might not have grown to the extent that it has because of the lack of confidence if those decisions had not been made. In fact there would likely have been a need for a tax increase instead of a 22 per cent sales tax decrease.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget of 1992, which I had the honour to present, this government spoke of, and I quote:

> . . . eliminating wasteful spending, ensuring accountability, and restoring financial well-being, and these actions prove our commitment to rebuilding the public trust.

And it was also said in that budget, Mr. Speaker, that:

> . . . today our province stands at a critical crossroads. We must choose a path for the future and that choice must reflect the harsh realities of what the (former government) did to the financial integrity of (this province).

Mr. Speaker, those choices were made and that future is here today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the first page of that speech, Mr. Speaker, we talked about rebuilding Saskatchewan together — not just the government, not just members of the legislature, but the people of this province. And that's what was done. And that's why although in other provinces where some of the difficult decisions are being made there are protests and there are demonstrations and people are upset because of the way those governments are doing it, in this province Saskatchewan people understood. Saskatchewan people understood and they appreciated the fact that the approach that was taken was balanced and compassionate and it wasn't just the hack and the slash that we are seeing in Liberal and Conservative provinces across this country.

Now during that time, Mr. Speaker . . . And I'm going to take this opportunity to commend the people who were involved, and I can't speak of them all so I'm just going to use some examples to highlight what I mean. But the members of this caucus showed the courage and the determination to get the job done. And I will recall for ever the Minister of Agriculture at that time, who's the member from Rosetown, who had to withstand the kind of criticism that came from the opposition when this government was bringing forward changes in agriculture which have made the diversification which is taking place in Saskatchewan today possible.

On the other side of the House, that was a terrible thing to do. They wanted the status quo. They wanted to leave things just as they were, so that nothing would change. Well had we done that, Mr. Speaker, we would not have the diversification that we have today.

I recall the leadership that was shown by the former minister of Health. I can mention her name because she is not a member now — Louise Simard — who provided the leadership to bring about the most important and progressive renewal of the health care system in Saskatchewan — greater than anywhere else in this country and North America — to the point where it is

recognized everywhere in this continent except maybe by the Liberals and the Conservatives, Mr. Speaker. Every member of this side of the House knew what had to be done and they committed themselves to do it. It wasn't easy, but it was the right thing to do.

So I say, Mr. Speaker, what we're doing here is considering a budget whose time has come. But also we're considering it in the context of a book which I remember reading called *A Tale of Two Cities*. I think one could stand and speak at some length about the tale of two budgets in an address to the budget speech here today. And we are seeing here the difference between a New Democratic Party government in keeping its promises and restoring trust, and a federal Liberal government which has shamefully broken its promises and fostered mistrust.

In the area of taxation, Mr. Speaker, for example, the federal Liberal politicians promised to eliminate the GST. The Prime Minister promised it. Mr. Martin promised it. Mr. Goodale promised it. They all promised it. Instead they have pushed hard to harmonize the GST with provincial sales taxes and shift billions of dollars in taxation from business to consumers and to families struggling to make a living.

This Liberal government has not only had to apologize to Brian Mulroney, but it's implementing every Mulroney policy initiative which he began and could not quite accomplish. And every one of those things, Mr. Speaker, when those Liberals were in opposition they said they would never, ever do any of them. But the minute they got elected, they began to do every single one.

But because people forget, members of this House forget — especially the members opposite — I will read again what the Prime Minister said about the GST. I quote:

> I am opposed to the GST. I have always been opposed to it, and I will always be opposed to it. It is a tax that is both regressive and discriminatory.

This is from *The Globe and Mail*, October 29, 1990.

Well when the time came to deliver, Mr. Speaker, that promise was forgotten and instead the proposal became, well he's now going to harmonize the GST and he's going to call it the blended sales tax and he's going to hide the tax in the price of the product so the people wouldn't know that they're paying the tax. What a difference, Mr. Speaker. That's what Liberals do.

But when this government went to the voters in 1995, our commitment was, as the economy improves and we have some money to spend, one third of it would be spent on enhancing services and programs — which this budget does — one third would be spent on repayment of debt, and one third of it would be spent on tax reduction as is possible.

Well last Thursday we had all three. The debt has been reduced considerably. The services have been enhanced by funding which is being provided, not only replacing the huge cut-backs that the federal Liberal government has made, but actually putting more money than just replacing those cut-backs in for those services. And the sales tax has been reduced from 9 per cent to 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker. A promise made and a promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Tchorzewski**: — The Liberal GST-PST harmonization would expand and include almost every purchase that is made by the consumer in Saskatchewan. Our provincial sales tax has got more exemptions than any other sales tax in this country. As a matter of fact some more items were added to those exemptions related to health care: glucose monitors and cholesterol testers, medical supports, and braces.

If the GST was ever harmonized with the PST, Mr. Speaker, all of those things would be taxed. That's the Liberal proposal. That's the proposal that the members opposite support, because when the new leader, the researcher in the Liberal caucus office, was asked about the GST, he said unequivocally, very clearly, that he was in favour of harmonizing the GST with the PST. That's the Liberal position, Mr. Speaker.

The same, Mr. Speaker, could be said about social services and in particular child poverty, which is, as the speech said, I think it said something like, it's a blight on our society. There is nothing more hypocritical than the way that the Liberals have dealt with child poverty. After four years of cutting back on programs to provide assistance to children and people in need — $7 billion from the transfers to the provinces for health care, education and social services — after four years of cutting back and increasing the numbers of children in poverty, all of a sudden they have seen the light.

And in this budget they've put in a pittance of $600 million for all of Canada — for all of Canada — but you can't have it until 1978 after the election is over . . . '98, Mr. Speaker, 1998 after the election is over. Now why is that — why is that Mr. Speaker? Is it because, is it because their commitment to do what they say they're going to do is as firm as their commitment was to preserve the Crow rate and eliminate the GST?

The voters of this country will have to ask that question when they go to the polls sometime this spring or sometime this year. And I think they're going to find it very difficult to believe that promise which is in the budget but somehow isn't going to be put into place for another year, in fact over a year.

Mr. Speaker, what a contrast to the budget in Saskatchewan by an NDP government — what a contrast. Here in this budget there is $30 million more for the assistance of children in need, to support those children that need the help that they need.

And, Mr. Speaker, even during our most difficult time when we were struggling with trying to bring balance to the budgets, while we were struggling, Mr. Speaker, to keep the bankers off the backs of our backs in Saskatchewan — a problem which was created by the previous government — even during that time in 1992 when we presented our first budget, I can proudly say that we said after we were showing where we had to save money we said very clearly there will be an additional $28 million for social assistance, to help people in need.

That's the difference, Mr. Speaker, between the kind of

handling of a financial difficulty by an NDP government and the handling of a financial difficulty by a Liberal or a Conservative government, Mr. Speaker. This government, this NDP government, did it with balance and compassion and looking after those who needed the help that they needed. Those Conservative and Liberal governments, Mr. Speaker, tried to solve their deficit problem on the backs of those kind of people and cut the funding from them which they can sorely afford, Mr. Speaker.

Now in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude the way the budget of 1992 concluded because it says a lot about where we were and where we are. And that budget said:

> Today is a new beginning . . . (for our) province. Today we begin to confront the future with high hopes and great faith, secure in the knowledge that New Democratic governments throughout our province's history have been successful in achieving their mandate(s).
>
> . . . as they have succeeded, so too will we.
>
> It will not be easy. (because) Nothing (this) important ever is. (And) While we have to pay for the mistakes of the previous administration, let us (all) look forward to the day when our community can join together in celebration of financial freedom.

Safe in the knowledge that the mistakes of the last 10 years will never happen again in the province of Saskatchewan.

> Let us look forward to the day when we can tell our children that though we entered the 1990s plagued by financial crisis, we made the difficult decisions. We turned a new page in our history and put this province firmly on the path for prosperity.
>
> Mr. Speaker, it is now time to rebuild Saskatchewan together.

And this budget achieves those objectives. I am proud of that fact, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of our Minister of Finance for presenting it. I am proud of our Premier for providing a leadership through these years so we could get to this point. And I am proud of all of this caucus that stood up and did what we did and did not succumb to the kind of debate we're hearing from the members opposite, which is based solely on the politics and very little on the reality of what needs to be done.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you is so good — even I think the Tory leader will agree with me — that everyone in this House should be able to support it. Now I know that the Leader of the Conservative Party said before the budget, he says — this is not the exact quote, but it's pretty accurate — he says, we will not be able to support the budget unless there is a 2 per cent cut in the sales tax. Well there is a 2 per cent cut in the sales tax.

I look forward to Friday to see whether the Conservatives stand up and vote for the budget, Mr. Speaker. Because that will not hurt them. That will not hurt them. In fact it'll probably enhance their status. And it's being enhanced pretty good now when you compare to what we're hearing in the House here in this session. But I really urge the Leader of the Opposition to stay true to his word and stand up in this House on Friday and support the budget. I will praise him if he does. I will go outside and praise him if he does.

(2015)

And I say to the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, they can do the same. They can do the same. Oh this is true that this budget does not spend another $500 million like they'd like us to spend and put the province into greater debt. But this budget does provide a balance. It provides more funding for education. It provides more funding for health care. It provides more funding for poor children. It invests in people and therefore it is worthy of the support of everyone in this House.

And that, Mr. Speaker, I ask them to join me and the rest of my colleagues when we stand up on Friday and vote in favour of a 2 per cent sales tax cut, or vote against a 2 per cent sales tax cut. But I think it would be much wiser if they voted for the 2 cent . . . 22 per cent sales tax cut instead of voting against it. Their voters would appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that even they would enjoy a much happier Easter if they took that noble step and voted in favour of the budget on that day.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Ms. Julé**: — Mr. Speaker, in the budget address last Thursday was a message from this Premier and his government to supposedly inform the people of Saskatchewan on how their tax dollars would be used within the next year, and how our money will be portioned out and utilized in order to make the province a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, some time ago the Premier gave us a hint that this budget was going to be a good news budget, and so many people had their hopes built up. Mr. Speaker, they were hoping for changes, because in the past five years they had experienced the overwhelming destruction of this province's infrastructure through health, education, and municipal cuts. They have experienced great feelings of helplessness and frustration and anger as a result of cancelled contracts and broken promises; and ineptness and incompetency of government in dealing not only with funding issues, but also with negligence and inefficiencies on the part of this government surrounding the red tape of bureaucracy.

People tell me daily, Mr. Speaker, of the obstacles that they encounter — of being stone-walled by this government and government departments. They speak of government inaction or lack of ability to act because they don't have consistent policy guidelines to follow. And why is that? Because policy can be and is manipulated to suit this government's political agenda, and that's the only agenda that they have.

Mr. Speaker, laying out a budget is only one factor to consider in good governing. The other factors are, number one, ensuring the electorate that government will commit to consistent, effective, open, and accountable policy direction. And number two, ensuring that government's budgets are geared towards creating opportunity that will result in an optimum quality of life for everyone in this province.

In short, people do want a government that they can trust; a government that adheres to a vision, and a vision that is supported by a clear-cut, responsible, and detailed plan — a plan that offers complete disclosure in a timely, accountable manner.

Governments must state what they are hoping to achieve — determine and state exactly how they are going to achieve it; monitor some progress carefully and report every action in detail to the citizens of this province. But this is not being done. Instead, what we've had is 30 years of back-room, clandestine meetings with plans being made behind closed doors on how our money is to be spent; plans that serve only to accommodate the need of inflated egos, that serve only to quench the thirst of power-hungry individuals rather than a sincere dedication to the well-being of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have greater transparency in how government is doing their business. For instance, Mr. Speaker, this government has stated that there is a need to redesign social assistance, and I agree with that. But I don't agree with shifting money around from one department to another without presenting a detailed plan to explain the changes in funding and exactly why, where, when, and how this redesign will be effectively implemented. And if there is no disclosure of a plan, the people of this province have a great reason to be concerned.

I can't condone this haphazard approach of fixing things. We've had a prime example of that with health care, and it appears that we are headed in the same confusion with social services. It's important for this government and all governments to recognize that at all times the people of this province have a right to know exactly what government initiatives are when dealing with public money and public trust.

Mr. Speaker, I question whether this government is far-sighted enough to implement "trainfare" in an effective manner because they have already attempted to do this through the New Careers program which was implemented a couple of years ago.

The idea was good; however, many social service recipients applying for entry into training courses were told that they would be placed on a waiting-list. Some waited for up to two years. Others started some form of training only to be told about half way through that funding had dried up and they couldn't complete their course. To top it off, there were insufficient spaces available at SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) facilities to accommodate the number of applicants.

How in the world will we now accommodate that even greater demand? I notice that there is an extra $7 million targeted for provincial training allowance under Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. I also see that Social Services spent $524 million last year, and that's down to $511 million this year — a $13 million difference — as well as 13 million being used for the child action plan. However, only twice did I see a specific reference to where some of this money would be spent. That was to a Youth Futures pilot project in Prince Albert and teen wellness centres in six specific centres.

And so many questions come to mind. Does government intend to spend $18 million to expand physical facilities and hire staff to accommodate the growing numbers requiring training? Has the government determined what courses will be developed to meet the need of employers? Has the government considered the rapidly changing world we live in? And do they have the appropriate classes to meet the changing needs of our world?

Money has been targeted for training programs. But government is not working well to determine where training is needed or how to meet the great needs out there. And the minister responsible for post-secondary skills and training stated in a news release that over a period of three years their new training strategy will create 10 per cent more training and employment opportunities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that translates into about a 3 per cent increase in employment and training opportunities each year. So how will this strategy accommodate the 5,923 single employables and 6,196 that are partially employable and presently on social assistance? How will this formula accommodate all the single moms in need of training and their need for child care and transportation? How will this change contribute to meet the complex and immense needs of northern communities?

And if funding and facilities are not adequate to meet the needs, how will the Department of Social Services meet the financial needs of those employables who cannot obtain training or employment with only $13 million left in their budget?

How? Well I can imagine that the provincial government may use their portion of the $600 million — which would end up at approximately $40 million for Saskatchewan — that the federal government will be distributing to this province in July of this year. Maybe it's time to give credit where credit is due — to the federal government for its unwavering support to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many issues surrounding Social Services that are deserving scrutiny. The challenge is unbelievable in this area. But one thing is sure. As long as this government refuses to create a climate for the growth of creative, entrepreneurial activity, the problems will only escalate.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to make reference to the budget . . . to the budgeted $250,000 allotted for street youth and youth prostitution initiatives. Mr. Speaker, government says it will provide a means of helping children get off the street safely, and it will provide an option and a point of contact for those children about to run the street. But I question how government intends to do this. Will safe recovery houses be constructed? Is $250,000 enough to construct safe recovery houses and provide alternative measures for this immediate need in all Saskatchewan cities?

I ask this NDP government to state what the intended plan is, if there is a plan. Clearly there is no excuse for delay on this issue, as there have been well-thought-out written submissions to the minister from individuals and community organizations throughout Saskatchewan outlining very effective programs —

programs that would include professional voluntary assistance in alleviating and healing these young people, who need help right now.

Mr. Speaker, when I introduced the Bill to take measures to combat child prostitution, it was my hope that from that Bill would emerge the greater possibility of defining victims of prostitution as victims of child sexual abuse, and entitle them to protection under the care of the minister. The minister would then have the authoritative responsibility of ensuring appropriate treatment and safety for those children. The Bill would also open the doors for perpetrators to be charged with child sexual abuse — pedophilia — and be given a sentence that suits the crime.

Saskatchewan could take the lead along with Alberta to ensure that the penalty for such a crime would be effective enough to act as a major deterrent to pedophiles. Mr. Speaker, we need to have penalties that will make pedophiles think twice about the consequences of their actions.

Mr. Speaker, the issues of violence against women and children, poverty, and youth at risk are closely related. One in two females are physically or sexually abused by the time they reach the age of 17. To continue to do nothing about this violence is to condone it and, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are frustrated with government's inadequate action on these issues. We must immediately take measures to put a stop to these crimes.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few other points regarding the budget that I would like to make.

In listening to the budget address, the absence of support for rural Saskatchewan was glaringly apparent. Approximately 30 million in funding cuts to municipalities this year. An unbelievable withdrawing of funding to the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program to the tune of $60 million. A pittance of an increase to district health boards that will do basically nothing to support health funding to rural areas.

In the Central Plains Health District, the 1.8 per cent increase in funding will do little more than pay for the increased wages of district management. Boards of education have quickly realized that there is no increase at all in their funding from the provincial government.

And yes, the PST is down 2 per cent — wonderful. That is truly wonderful. But the overall effect of higher income and corporate taxes, higher utility rates, higher property taxes for most, exorbitant payroll taxes for business, and excessive regulations will continue the almost unbearable burden for many striving to exist. And there is no guarantee that this NDP government will not continue to broaden its tax base as it has discreetly done in the past.

And speaking of taxes, Mr. Speaker, let me remind the members opposite and the people of this province that we are still paying 790 million more in taxes than when this government came into power.

Mr. Speaker, this government is fooling itself if it thinks people will ever regain their confidence in this NDP administration. People from all walks of life have spoken to me of their disillusionment and distrust of the government. People from SaskPower, SaskTel, Workers' Compensation, Social Services, farmers, business people, doctors, nurses, lawyers, and teachers say that they have very little confidence in this government's ability to create opportunity and jobs because they say that they are incompetent managers trying to play in an arena of free enterprise with the social conscience — an arena that they're not familiar with or capable of understanding.

(2030)

And so, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I cannot support the budget as it does very little to support the dreams and aspirations of those that do understand the meaning of government's role to empower, to enrich, and enable the people of this province to seek out and determine their own solutions, to seek out their own destiny.

And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite cannot blame me for my lack of support, as even the member from Regina Victoria was dozing off during the Finance minister's address. If it's not exciting enough for him it's surely not exciting enough for me or the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Mitchell**: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to address my remarks tonight to my two main areas of responsibility, being the Labour portfolio and Post-Secondary Education.

I want to begin with the Department of Labour. And not to talk about the Department of Labour but to talk about working people and some of their concerns. And I'm glad that I follow the member from Humboldt in the speaking order tonight because what she said caught my interest.

She was talking about the point of view of people with respect to this government. And I, Mr. Speaker, do not know who in the world she's talking to. Talking to her colleagues perhaps, and perhaps to some members of her own executive. But I want to talk tonight about the views of a growing number of working people who are viewing what's happening in this House with increasing concern.

I'm not talking here about the Tories because the working people of this province have got a pretty good fix on the Tories right now. They understand that if the Tories were to ever form the government in this province again, they are toast. The working people of this province are toast if those people ever make it back into power in this province.

The concern that they're having, Mr. Speaker, is with the Liberal opposition — with the Liberal opposition. And people are fooled when they first think about the Liberal Party because they think that that word, liberal, signifies the small "l" meaning of the word, which denotes a kind of a progressive frame of mind, kind of a liberal attitude towards things, a kind of an intention that they will make things better, that they will

improve the quality of life of people.

But that's not so and that's not . . . and the fact that that is not so is being made increasingly plain by utterances from the leadership of that party. And I want to bring that to the House tonight because it is becoming more and more the subject of conversation among working people in this province.

Let me just take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the labour legislation that we have in this province. This is legislation which affects working people. It affects all working people. And when we talk about working people, we're not talking about some union leader in Toronto or some activist that we see on a picket line in a television image, we're talking about our neighbours. We're talking about our friends and our neighbours and people among whom we move every day. We're talking about our constituents. We're talking indeed in many cases about our own children. That's what we're talking about.

So when we talk about the labour laws of this province, we're talking about the legislative provisions and the regulations that affect our friends and our neighbours as they go about the ordinary business of making a living.

The Labour Standards Act, for example, provides in effect the employment contract for most of the people who are employed in this province. It sets the annual holidays. It sets the public holidays. It sets a wide range of conditions and benefits that apply to everybody. If we talk about fooling with the labour law, fooling with The Labour Standards Act in this province, we are really talking about tampering with the employment contract of practically everyone who works in this province.

And so it is with occupational health and safety — a piece of legislation that tries to guarantee that our workplaces are safe and healthy for our friends and our neighbours and our children and our constituents who have to work for a living. Now those people are very much aware that those laws are in place and are in place for their benefits. And so when they hear of a news release from the office of the Liberal opposition, dated February 5, 1997, which I have in my hand, and when they hear that the Leader of the Opposition says, in quotation marks, in his own press release the following, and I quote:

> Only when this government begins to address its present taxation and labour policies and reduces the regulatory nightmare facing business will there be any hope of significant gains in terms of job creation.

When they hear that, Mr. Speaker, it is a chilling experience for them, because they know when they're talking about the labour polices they are talking about The Labour Standards Act, they are talking about The Occupational Health and Safety Act, and they're talking about The Trade Union Act. And these are the very things that guarantee to our working people a quality of life which is the pride of this country — which is the pride of this country.

And they know that when you talk about addressing those policies, what it means, it means that these policies are to be weakened, that this legislation is to be changed, that rights and benefits that are guaranteed to working people will be watered down and taken away, and it frightens them. It frightens them.

And then when they hear stories and rumours about speeches made in this House to the same effect, they become even more frightened. And I quote from the speech of the House Leader of the opposition, the member from Melfort, given in this House on March 20. I quote from that speech the following, Mr. Speaker:

> Saskatchewan's onerous labour policies remain impediments to small businesses. Labour standards, The Trade Union Act, The Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, these are only but a few of the hurdles this government has thrown in the way of small business. And if we are to continue to build a strong economy and promote economic development, we must find a friendlier climate for small business. These things have been pushing us in the opposite direction.

Which things, Mr. Speaker? The Labour Standards Act, The Trade Union Act. Not mentioned is The Occupational Health and Safety Act, but I'm sure the member from Melfort would admit that that's included in this list. And it scares our working people in a very fundamental way because they all know that it is the labour laws of this province that govern what happens to them when they're on the job. It defines their rights, it defines their benefits, and it defines their protections.

And we're not here talking about some union leader from Toronto or some activist that you see on a picket line on TV. We're talking about our friends and our neighbours and our constituents and our very families. And those are the people who we should be protecting.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Mitchell**: — Mr. Speaker, those are the people whose quality of life we should be seeking to enhance. Not to tear apart, not to reduce, not to drive them down in a race to the bottom.

Let me talk about a race to the bottom because I think that's very much the point that the Liberal Party is trying to get at with this press release and with the speech from which I quoted. And no doubt we will be hearing more about this in the future.

With the so-called globalization of the world economies, the internationalization of the economies, and the free trade agreements and all the rest of it, there are incredible pressures on all governments to weaken labour laws, to weaken labour and environmental standards, to reduce the cost of doing business — all to support the business sector. Now we do a lot of things in this government to support the business sector, but there are some things that we're not prepared to do.

But the pressure on us and on all governments to take steps in that direction is significantly heavier, significantly higher than it has ever been, and it is . . . The pressure comes to us, Mr. Speaker, from manufacturers and exporters who are having to compete against countries of the Third World where wages are low and working conditions are bad and environmental standards are bad. And the pressure on these governments,

including our own, is to lower our standards so that they will be in the better position to compete against manufacturers and exporters from Malaysia and from Mexico and from Ecuador and from the other less fortunate countries in the world.

And we have people, and many of them sit across the House from me now, who are prepared to engage in this race to the bottom, to weaken standards and lower standards in Canada so that our manufacturers can compete against manufacturers from the Third World. Mr. Speaker, we have made it as plain as we can that we are not going to engage in that race. We're not engaging in the race to the bottom.

Our philosophy on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is that we should be levelling up, that what is sacrosanct is the quality of life of the people who live in this province and in this country. And all of their hard-won gains ought to be maintained; the fact The Labour Standards Act applies, as I said, to practically every person who works in this province. And those gains in that Act have been a long time coming and many people have worked hard and long to achieve those advances and they contribute a great deal to our quality of life. We're solidly in favour of protecting and safeguarding and, where possible, improving those benefits. We are not about to engage in the race to the bottom.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Mitchell**: — The rhetoric that we've heard so far from the opposition have indicated that they are prepared to participate in that race to the bottom. When you talk about rolling back the labour legislation of this province, that's precisely what you're talking about. And we on this side of the House are not going to do that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to my other responsibilities with respect to post-secondary education. And I want to begin by talking about the training system, the SIAST and regional colleges and the group of policies that have to do with training and retraining people who want to enter the workforce, or people who are already in the workforce and want to upgrade their skills so they can improve their jobs.

We had a discussion in this House about these matters in the last session of this legislature, and it was quite an interesting discussion. I would remind members that . . . well I would remind members of the history of this issue.

It was the case in this country for about the last 30 years that the federal government was the lead government with respect to training and workforce . . . or at least training-related issues. We used to call them manpower issues, but political correctness does not permit us to use that term any longer. But the federal government took the initiative in that group of issues about 30 years ago and they provided the leadership in this country and in this province with respect to those issues.

We in this province were content to go along with that and succeeding governments cooperated with the federal government and supplemented the programs of the federal government, filled in around the federal policies, and the combined efforts of the two levels of government provided us with a training and labour-market system as we have known it.

Now for a number of reasons, the federal government decided that they were going to get out of the training field. Primarily it was a jurisdictional question, and I think aimed at the province of Quebec, who have always objected to federal participation in these issues because they are education issues and that's within the exclusive jurisdiction of the province. Well the federal government accepted that argument a couple of years ago and they are getting out of the training field in a big way — for all practical purposes they're getting out altogether.

(2045)

This created in Saskatchewan, as it did in many other provinces, a vacuum as far as training and labour-market policies are concerned. And so we have moved as quickly as we can to develop a Saskatchewan training strategy that will do the things that used to be done by the combined efforts of the federal and provincial government. We have worked intensively at this, Mr. Speaker, over the past year, approximately a year, and that work continues.

And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and tell the House that in about three weeks time the training strategy will be in a position to be made public and be out there for discussion among the training partners and people who are interested in the labour-market system.

We have to thank practically all of the people of the province who have an interest in post-secondary training for the cooperation we've had in putting this strategy together. We began with a paper which set out some choices and options and alternatives that were important in putting this strategy together. We circulated that paper across the province and we had extensive consultations last May and June about this. Some of the members opposite participated in some of those discussions and we were grateful for that.

That was then followed by another round of consultations in September when we went back to the employer community to obtain their views with respect to a number of issues that related directly to them. And those meetings were set up across the province by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and by Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who organized very successful meetings in 8 or 10 centres in Saskatchewan. I attended every one of those, Mr. Speaker, and it was a very useful exercise.

One of the things that impressed me during that round, that second round of consultations particularly, was to realize what I really ought to have known all along, and that is that this province of Saskatchewan presents a number of different labour markets; that the labour market in Swift Current is vastly different than the labour market in Meadow Lake; that the labour market in Tisdale is vastly different than the labour market in Estevan.

And so it would be a mistake, I think, if we tried to formulate all of these policies centrally in Regina. We came to that conclusion and it is our plan — and this'll be included in the training strategy — to push out a lot of the responsibilities for

the labour market to the regions.

And there are enormous advantages in that. One of them has to do with the kind of information you need in order to run a training system. You need information about what kinds of skills employers need now and what kind of skills they're going to need a year from now and five years from now. And you have to know that so that you can be sure that you're going to mount the training that will be necessary to equip your people with the skills they're going to have to have to qualify for those jobs.

That's an old issue, Mr. Speaker. The federal government tried to do that for the whole 30 years that they were involved in this field. And they worked hard at it. And they tried many, many different elaborate schemes and a lot of information was collected. But none of it really seemed to work very well; at least it didn't work very well in this province of Saskatchewan because it didn't seem to fit us. It didn't seem to work in Swift Current and certainly didn't work in Prince Albert and so on.

And we in the provincial government have from time to time made a stab at doing this, at collecting labour-market information that would be useful to SIAST and the regional colleges and to other labour partners in organizing training, and being sure that people had some way to equip themselves with the skills necessary to get these jobs.

We have concluded — now I think rightly — that that kind of intelligence is best garnered and gathered and collated at the community level. At the community level in Saskatchewan everybody knows everybody else. Everybody knows every employer. People are able to talk to each other. People in our regional colleges and in our other organizations concerned with these issues can go to the employers whom they know, who they curl with, who they probably went to school with, and talk to them on a personal basis to get a clear idea of what kind of plans are being formed in that company and what kind of skills are they going to need.

And so on a community basis, on a community-by-community basis, information can be gathered that will be sounder, better, than any information we have ever had in this province as far as the labour market is concerned. At least that's my belief and I think that the government is accepting of that belief and we're going to give that a try, and that will be part of the training strategy.

This is a very difficult world so far as the labour market is concerned because it is changing so rapidly and the jobs that are relevant 10 years ago where people went to university or went to SIAST in order to equip themself for those jobs, they simply no longer exist. And in their place are a whole bunch of new jobs that require entirely different skills.

And I think we all agree, Mr. Speaker, that not only is there change going on all the time but it's going on at a more rapid rate all the time. And this is a particular challenge for people working in the labour market to get a fix on. There is no pause button on this situation where you can sort of freeze the frame and do your analysis and make your decisions, because by the time you're done your analysis the picture has changed. And it presents an enormous challenge to the people I just spoke about who are trying to get some handle on what the skill needs are going to be next year, next month, leave alone five years from now.

So it's a difficult challenge but we have confidence in the local people at the level of the community to do a better job of identifying these skills than any central bureaucracy would be able to do. So that's the direction in which we head.

Another part of the labour-market situation that is challenged by the rapid pace of change are the institutions, SIAST being a good example. That institution has served this province very well over the course of its existence and it has a very complex array of programs that it offers in the four centres where SIAST has a presence.

Their programing is challenged by this pace of change because they have to continually ask themself the question of whether the training that they're offering in these courses is relevant to the labour market outside the walls of their institution. In other words, are their graduates going to be able to go out and get a job for what they're being trained for?

Too often we have seen in SIAST, courses being given to prepare people for jobs that used to exist and that don't exist any more. And of course with the scarce resources that now face all of us, including that institution, that just can't happen any more. But it is a challenge for SIAST to be able to understand the labour market well enough to be able to plan now to give a course starting next fall for jobs that won't exist for two years. But they have to do that because many of these courses will take more than two years to equip the student with the skills necessary to be certified as proficient for that particular occupation.

Another thing that I foresee in the training strategy is an increased emphasis upon partnerships between various actors in the labour market. In other words, we do not foresee a system that is driven by the institutions, by SIAST and by the regional colleges. They are major partners in it and have to be involved in it at most levels, but there are other partners who also have a very significant role to play. And I mention for example, employers and their associations and organizations, who are going to have to focus very, very carefully on their future plans and their future skill needs. I also have in mind employee organizations, including trade unions, but other organizations as well who are going to have to turn their mind to these same problems.

And I also have in mind communities who are very interested in educating their children for jobs that will be available in that community. So that they'll be able to stay in that community and raise their families and provide the kind of stability that those generation-after-generation citizens of a community will bring to their home communities.

So that there are a lot of people — I've mentioned only some of them — who will have to become partners with each other and work together.

I must also mention the aboriginal organizations who have such

an intense interest in the labour market and in post-secondary education for their children and for their . . . I mean it's no longer appropriate, Mr. Speaker, to speak of children or young people when you're talking about training. Because training will become more and more retraining and retraining as time goes on and as the economy changes and people have to go back to school to become re-skilled at different occupations in order to continue as valuable members of the workforce.

But the aboriginal people and their organizations have a great interest in these issues and they will also become partners in all kinds of arrangements that affect the labour market.

So I want to save something, Mr. Speaker, for the day when the strategy is formally released about the middle of next month, so I'm going to stop there. But I thought I'd mention those elements because they will be very important elements in that strategy.

I want to say a few words about universities. I spoke at some length about them last year and we had interesting exchanges in this House about aspects of the functioning of the universities. And the Assembly will recall that we appointed Harold MacKay as a facilitator to facilitate discussions between the two universities, and between the two universities and the government.

And I think that members of the Assembly who have taken the time to read Harold MacKay's report must have been very pleased with the fact that we gave him the responsibility to carry out this task. If I may say so, it was an excellent report. I have been around government, in one way or another, for many, many years and I've read many reports. And from a literary point of view only, Mr. Speaker, disregarding content, it was by far the finest piece of work that I've ever seen.

And from a content point of view, it was excellent. That is to be judged by the reception given to it by the universities and by the government. Everyone was enthused with the report and the progress that he was able to report.

Members of the House will know that attached to his report as appendices were no fewer than 17 agreements which he had facilitated between the two universities with respect to various things that they could do together, which they had formerly been doing on their own. Each one of those, Mr. Speaker, has, or almost every one of them has, cost implications in the sense that it saves money. And it saves money for the two universities who have been in a financial pinch and they will be able to . . . well, they're the better for it. And this was only the beginning. This was only the work that was being done during the time that Harold was doing his job. And he completed that job last September and reported to the government. The work goes on.

The two universities, who a year ago were having relatively little to do with each other, are today working in close contact with each other on a broad range of issues. And it is very encouraging for us in government to see that change take place. We're a small province of a million people. It is difficult to imagine that we are going to ever be able to afford two full-service universities. By full service, I mean universities offering a full array of programs.

And so a lot of cooperation is going to be necessary in the future to ensure there is no duplication, that there is no overlap, that the two universities are doing the things that they do best in cooperation with each other rather than in competition with each other. Because as I say, it is just impossible to imagine that this province would ever be able to afford two separate universities operating in isolation from each other and each trying to present to the public a full array of programing.

(2100)

So I am extremely pleased with the progress that has been made. I'm extremely pleased with the attitude with which the two administrations have approached these challenges. And I look forward to the future that I think will be filled with all sorts of cooperative efforts on the part of the two universities so that they can function together and provide our students with the best possible university education that we can afford in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we were able in this budget to provide a lifeline to the universities in terms of funding. Last year, for reasons that we articulated over and over again in this House, we had to announce to the universities a reduction in funding for the following two years. Now I'm talking about the budget that was delivered about a year ago which kept university funding level as far as operating funds were concerned, but said that they would be reduced by $5 million in '97-98 and a further $5 million in '98-99.

And we were able this year, by a stint of all of the efforts that we've put into the running of this government, to be able to say to the universities that that cut will not take effect. This has had the effect of relieving a great deal of the financial pressure under which the two universities found themselves.

In addition to that, we were able to provide increased capital funding so that they'll be able to do some of the necessary work that has to be done on their buildings and on their plant and equipment. And we have made funds available also for technological purposes at the universities so they'll be able to update their equipment and maintain their equipment and indeed introduce some of the new technologies that Harold MacKay talked about in his report.

So all things considered, I believe that we have treated the universities in a very appropriate way and in a way that will allow them, particularly with their new spirit of cooperation, to revitalize themselves, to sort of reposition themselves to meet the challenges of the new century. And we're very, very pleased with that.

I want to say a final word about SIAST and I'll conclude my remarks on that note, Mr. Speaker.

I have said that SIAST has a proud tradition and has delivered a remarkably broad array of technical and vocational training programs in this province over a long time. And the graduates from SIAST take their place in Canada with the graduates of every other comparable facility and are held in high regard and are very successful.

SIAST is in the process, Mr. Speaker, of trying to reposition itself with respect to the challenges that I've mentioned earlier, the challenges presented by a labour market in the midst of a rapidly changing world. And it is not easy. And I want to publicly state my admiration for the way in which President Art Knight and his principals and his staff have approached this problem. I want to recognize that the faculties in the four places where SIAST has a presence have been totally cooperative in the effort to renew and reposition the institutions.

And finally I want to pay tribute to the board of governors, the board of directors of SIAST, led by the Chair, Paul Dudgeon, who have worked tirelessly in an effort to deal with some of the issues with which SIAST is faced — issues of a financial nature, of a management structure nature, and of a policy nature — so that SIAST can take its place, its appropriate place, in this province and meet the demands of the labour market in this province, as it has always done and as I expect that they will be able to do in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention and I appreciate the attention of the members opposite on these important issues.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!
**Mr. Koenker**: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last Friday afternoon, Mr. Speaker — actually all day Friday, morning and afternoon — I had the occasion to be in Saskatoon and to go door to door in my constituency to secure comment from my constituents on the provincial budget. And this is something I do periodically. I don't do it every week but especially at budget time the last number of years I've done this exercise. And I went to four different parts of my constituency, four different streets, to secure comment from my constituents. I would say I must have visited in oh, 60 or 70 different homes; not everyone was home. There must have been about 20 or 25 people home during the course of the day.

What I would like to do this evening is to share first of all the thoughts of my constituents and their verbatim comments on the budget, and then I will add some of my own commentary to put their comments in some kind of perspective perhaps.

I must say that when I was on the doorstep I resisted the temptation to give any comment, such that I could secure their own thoughts and expressions of concern on the budget. So some of the constituents will no doubtedly recognize their voice. And I think that members in this Assembly will hear the voices of some of their own constituents that they have visited over the last number of months, or even years, because this represents really a broad cross-section of public opinion. It's all over the political map. Some of it is very informed. Some of it is very thoughtful. Some of it isn't so informed. But here we go.

The very first home that I went to where someone was actually home when I knocked on the door, there was absolutely no comment whatsoever about the budget or anything else. I think the individual was shocked that I was at their door. As has often happens with elected members when they go door to door, you run into people who simply don't have anything to say.

So I handed that individual a brochure on the budget and left her alone. I didn't take too long to get a comment though, because at the very next door I introduced myself and asked the woman if she had any comment on the budget. And she said, and I quote:

> It sucks! I'd like to see a bit more than 2 per cent. I'm working and I can't really complain. I don't know how to vote. Sometimes I'm just so fed up. I just paid $72.20 to dry cleaners for my bathroom curtains. Everything's so expensive.

Well I don't know whether the budget — well I won't use her word, because it's unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker . . . but I certainly concur with her opinion that everything is very expensive these days, and that's why I would say we want to be very careful as a government before we add to the expense of goods and services by going to a harmonized sales tax in Saskatchewan as Atlantic Canada has done.

We have brought down the cost of many goods by a 2 per cent cut in the sales tax. This individual wishes to see more than 2 per cent, and I think a lot of other people in the province would concur and I certainly would concur with her as well. As a matter of fact, this is going to have to occupy the government's agenda in the coming years — to try to do what we can to control household expenses.

The next door that I found someone home at, I received this comment and I quote verbatim again:

> Yes, there are a lot of things you can't do anyway because you can't fight gun control. You can only make a speech but you can't fight gun control. That 2 per cent we got there now, but who's in control of gas prices? It seems there's nothing that can be done about that either.

Well that's a pretty good summary of, I guess, the gun control issue and the issue of high gasoline prices. There's a lot of frustration behind that comment and I understand why a lot of it would be directed to an elected official. There are a lot of things that nothing can be done about.

Saskatchewan people, I think, assumed for awhile that nothing could be done about the mountain of debt that we had. Nothing could be done about the deficits that we were running for more than 10 consecutive years through the Devine era. And yet that seeming insurmountable mountain of debt, that obstacle where nothing could be done, something has been done. We've tamed the deficit beast here in this province and it results in being able to have a little bit more breathing space in this budget to give some modest tax relief and some enhancement of services. I'd also say that although this individual is frustrated with the fact that things can't be changed, they don't seem to change politically, I want to say to this individual and to all my constituents that this government is about change.

Fundamentally we are about rebuilding Saskatchewan and investing in people and investing in our future. And we are rather optimistic that some things can be changed for the better. We're not perfect but we have that goal and objective.

The next household, the individual said this, and I quote: "Oh, I don't have any thoughts." And that was basically the end of the conversation. I simply handed my brochure.

The next door a man answered and he had this to say, and I quote:

> I was very interested to see what's done and very pleased to see the reduction in the sales tax. It makes a big difference in the purchase of big items.

Well that's certainly true. I don't know that most of my constituents are purchasing big-ticket items. I think most of my constituents tend to purchase the smaller-ticket items and I don't know that a 2 per cent reduction in the sales tax is the be-all and end-all of taxation. I don't know that it provides that much palpable help for many constituents who aren't making big purchases. They won't save $500 unless they are purchasing a new car on that basis.

But I do know that in this budget, and I'm proud of the fact that in this budget, the government has reduced all sales tax . . . has eliminated the sales tax on medical supplies and equipment such as cholesterol testers, glucose monitors, medical supports and braces, and such things, not just a 2 per cent reduction but an elimination of the sales tax on those items because they're viewed as a necessary part of not only the family budget, if there's illness, but a necessary part of a commitment to wellness in this province.

The next household — and I must say, I should say parenthetically, this was on 108th Street in Sutherland in Saskatoon — the next household shared perhaps one of the most interesting comments of the day, and I read the quote. This woman said:

> The debt should be paid down, but not at the expense of social things, of course. It's kind of nice to see the taxes come down, but I would rather see others in need get something first.

And I'll applaud this woman. I really agree with her. Sure we all would like to see a little bit more money in our own pocket, but there are many people who have very little money in their pockets. And they deserve something first, I think, before all of us get back into the selfish mentality and start thinking about ourself first — the me too, I, greed sort of syndrome. And so I hail this woman for her comments, and I note that in this budget, there is a doubling of funding for the child action plan, $13 million in new money for child action programing in this budget.

(2115)

And the next area — that was 108th Street in Sutherland — the next area I went to, Mr. Speaker, was on Kenderdine Street in Sutherland constituency. And there I ran into a man who had this to say about the budget, "It was a surprise to me. I certainly wasn't expecting this."

This meaning what? I don't know exactly what he meant. I didn't press him to explain. I presume he must have meant the sales tax, but he didn't say so.

There's some things that surprised me in the budget. I was surprised that there was $1.7 million more for our parks system, which is falling to pieces — $1.7 million for each of the next 10 years. I must say quite frankly, as a member of the government side, there were many surprises for me in this budget.

Next door there was a woman who said:

> It was pretty good, except I didn't like them cutting grants to municipalities. The rest of it seemed really good. I liked the fact that they got a balanced budget.

Well I could say a couple of things about this comment, Mr. Speaker. First of all, that if you look at the totality of what is going to municipalities this year in the budget, it's more than they received last year. And secondly, the fact that we have a balanced budget really is something to be saluted.

And not only a balanced budget I would say in this instance, but here we have a budget for the first time in Saskatchewan . . . We've had balanced budgets before. Last year we had a balanced budget. We had balanced-budget legislation, as a matter of fact. But this year for the first time we've really come full circle to have a balanced approach to fiscal policy, as we promised Saskatchewan people, with one third of resources, financial resources, for debt reduction; one third directed to program enhancements in health, education, social services and the like; and another third directed toward tax relief.

We've been a little bit shy, as the Saskatchewan public will know, in the tax relief side. This budget really brings a balanced approach to public financial policy as we promised. So we don't just have a balanced budget, but we have a balanced financial picture as a whole for Saskatchewan people.

Another door on Kenderdine had this to say:

> I'd just like to see the roads get patched. Get No. 16 twinned.

Well we're investing in highways in this budget. We're investing in fact $11.7 million this year to twin the Yellowhead from Saskatoon to North Battleford. So this is certainly good news for this individual constituent.

I move on now, Mr. Speaker, to Kerr Road in the Sutherland constituency, and here's an individual who had this to say:

> Well basically I'm the same as anyone else. People in Saskatchewan are sick of being taxed to death. Basically that's my biggest problem with Saskatchewan.

And I think this woman speaks for many Saskatchewan people in feeling that the level of taxation is too high here. And the simple answer for that is that Saskatchewan has the . . . virtually the highest level of public debt of any province in Canada. Newfoundland and Saskatchewan are basically tied as being the debt kings of Canadian provinces. And when you have big debt you have big taxes. And that is why our government is trying so deliberately and intentionally, to not only pay down the debt but

to build the economy so that there's resilience in the economy; so that people are employed and working so we don't have to pay as much into social services, so that we don't have to have such high taxes. Big taxes are there because of big problems in the past, namely big debt.

Another individual on Kerr Road had this to say:

> I'm in the film industry and I would like information on the labour-sponsored tax credit, whether it applies for films in Saskatchewan in this budget.

And I had to tell this woman that no, basically as far as I understand it, we are not introducing a venture . . . a labour-sponsored venture tax . . . venture capital tax credit for film development in this budget, but we are investing in jobs so that we can create a climate for economic growth in the province.

Some of the measures that we're doing in this budget to invest in jobs are to introduce a sales tax rebate on building materials for livestock facilities. I know that that doesn't mean a lot for many of my constituents, who are in urban Saskatchewan, but there is a manufacturing and processing tax credit that's been extended to used equipment. It had been on new equipment. This will certainly help to encourage investment, economic activity, and jobs. It's already done so because it's been applied to the new equipment. It's now extended to used equipment.

We're investing $640 million in this budget on capital projects to build schools, telecommunications projects, power projects, and other infrastructure projects. As I said, we're putting money into highways — an 18 per cent increase in highway spending over the next 10 years, each year.

So there are a number of initiatives to invest in jobs in this particular budget. Although not the credit for films. Another individual had this to say: "It's a step in the right direction; you can only do so much at one time." And isn't this true. In any household we can only do so much at one time. And I will say in this respect that given the limitations that we're still operating with, this budget is all about investing in people — investing in health care for Saskatchewan people. And that has been a priority from day one. When we were in the deepest, darkest days of financial distress we did not cut the Saskatchewan drug plan. We trimmed it but we did not eliminate it. And so there is only so much we can do, but for a New Democrat government health care will always be a priority.

The next couple of doors one woman said, "No, I don't have any concerns or comments." The next door after that the woman said, "I can't think of anything." The next door after that an individual said — and this is very interesting, Mr. Speaker — I'd like . . . and I quote:

> I'd like our taxes to be the same as Alberta's but it's good the PST went down. That's all right.

In truth — this is a little known fact — but in truth Saskatchewan taxes are really not that far out of line with Alberta.

And in fact if anyone would like the details on this I'll certainly share that with constituents or anyone else who wants to contact my office. But I think what we have to remember in this regard is that while Alberta has no sales tax, Alberta families do pay a medical premium of $816 a year, which is not all that far removed from the amount that the average Saskatchewan family would be paying in sales tax.

So you take those two things into considerations, they do tend to even out some of the perceived distortion in taxation policy with respect to Alberta. Not only that, but I would go on to add that an interprovincial comparison of sales tax for a family with an income of say $50,000 a year really shows Saskatchewan as having the lowest sales tax of any of the other provinces except Alberta, and this is because the sales tax is not paid in Saskatchewan on many, many items that it is paid on in other provinces.

Saskatchewan exempts food, drugs, medicine, children's clothing, reading materials, residential electricity and natural gas bills. If people look at their power bills, they'll find that they don't pay the sales tax on those bills and that's because these are viewed as being basic necessities for most families. And so when you take this into consideration, Saskatchewan's tax policy with the sales tax is not that far out of whack from what Albertans pay.

I want to sort of wind down, Mr. Speaker, with just a few more comments. One more comment from Kerr Road — this is very interesting. This gentlemen said about the budget:

> That was a waste of taxpayers' money. You should do something once about the highways. That $2 million over 10 years is (well, I'll say blank because I can't say the word) is (blank) in a bucket.

Well this individual was actually quite irate. I gave him a brochure and he immediately set it aside. He wasn't interested in talking to me.

The only thing I can say to him is that I think I heard him say $2 million over 10 years. In actual fact we're putting 2.5 billion — two and a half billion with a "b" — into highways over the next 10 years, an 18 per cent increase. And we're investing in our highway system, maybe not as much as he would like, but we are attempting to preserve the existing highway infrastructure that we have and to take care of what we have in the highway system.

And a final comment, and this actually was the final comment on Kerr Road on last Friday and it's basically a good note on which to close. And I quote. This was a woman who said this:

> I don't know. What do I think? Investing in education was great, I thought. The PST reduction was good. We all suffered and now it's better.

Isn't that true. Over the last 5, 10, 15 years, we've all suffered. Oh some of us have profited over those years, some of us have taken money for Jacuzzis. We all, most of us, enjoyed cheap gasoline, but in some fundamental respects all of Saskatchewan

have suffered. And now, as this woman says, some things are better. And I think that's a good note to conclude on.

Saskatchewan people have suffered many things at the hands of their government. And I say at the hands of the New Democratic government. There are some very strong medicine that was administered over the last five years, but now things are getting better and that is due not simply to the government and what it's done, but to the innate goodness of Saskatchewan people and their willingness to make sacrifice, and their willingness to hold out for a common good and a better vision of Saskatchewan as big and as broad as the Saskatchewan sky.

And I'd like to close then this evening, Mr. Speaker, by reading a poem by Ken Wah — that's spelled W-a-h — a poem entitled "Waiting for Saskatchewan" from a book of the same title *Waiting for Saskatchewan* that was published in 1985. And if I'm not mistaken, it was in that year that Mr. Wah won the Governor General's prize for poetry for this book.

(2130)

Mr. Wah was born in Swift Current of Chinese and Saskatchewan parents, and it's been said that characteristically his poetry combines imagery with a strong musical use of word and line that reflect some of his background or training in music. At times his poems are simply a succession of word images with a certain cadence to them. I'm not sure that I can read this properly, but I'm going to take a stab at it and ask that you and others bear with me.

"Waiting for Saskatchewan" by Ken Wah:

> Waiting for Saskatchewan
> and the origins grandparents countries places converged
> europe asia railroads carpenters nailed grain elevators
> Swift Current my grandmother in her house
> he built on the street
> and him his cafes namely the "Elite" on Center
> looked straight ahead Saskatchewan points to it
> Erickson Wah Trimble houses train station tracks
> arrowed into downtown fine clay dirt prairies wind waiting
> for Saskatchewan to appear for me again over the edge
> horses led to the huge sky the weight and colour of it
> over the mountains as if the mass owed me such appearance
> against the hard edge of it sits on my forehead
> as the most political place I know these places these strips
> laid beyond horizon for eyesight the city so I won't have to go
> near it as origin town flatness appears later in my stomach why
> why on earth would they land in such a place
> mass of pleistocene
> sediment plate wedge
> arrow sky beak horizon still waiting for that
> I want it back, wait in this snowblown winter night
> for that latitude of itself its own largeness
> my body to get complete
> it still owes me, it does

Amen, a member of the legislature says. Amen. So be it that Saskatchewan owes all of us and all of its people a future as good as its people. And that's what we're trying to do in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

**Mr. Koenker**: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to end debate, adjourn debate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . you do that.

**The Speaker**: — Well I have to have a motion.

**Mr. Koenker**: — Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

**Some Hon. Members**: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

## MOTIONS

### Legislative Assembly Sitting Hours

**Mr. Kowalsky**: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to move a motion with respect to the sitting hours for the beginning of next week. In consultation with the members of the opposition and of the third party, the members expressed their view that they would prefer to be home for Easter Monday and they also expressed the view that it would be advisable to be in their constituency offices which they expect to keep open on Tuesday so that we can attend to business at home.

Ordinarily this motion is made on the last day before Good Friday, but in order that you may advise your staff and we may advise our families and our staffs, we thought we'd make this motion tonight. So, Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move, seconded by the member of Regina Northeast:

> That not withstanding Rule 3(4) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* that when this Assembly adjourns on Thursday, March 27, 1997, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, April 2 at 1:30 p.m.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

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