

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan people and I'll just quickly read the prayer for you:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to order increased efforts and enforcement and to pressure the federal government to amend the Young Offenders Act to reflect principles of restitution, stricter sentencing, and public identification of offenders.

I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of Saskatchewan people primarily from the city of Regina.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of people throughout the province who are concerned about the detrimental effects on our society due to the government's gambling policy. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take some responsibility for the ill effects of its gambling expansion policy, and immediately commission an independent study to review the social impact that its gambling policy has had on our province and the people who live here.

The petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are from Lloydminster, Muenster, mostly from Muenster on these petitions, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring forward today some petitions regarding big game damage in the province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to change the Saskatchewan big game damage compensation program so that it provides more fair and reasonable compensation to farmers and townfolk for commercial crops, hay, silage bales, shrubs and trees, which are being destroyed by the overpopulation of deer and other big game, including elimination of the \$500 deductible; and to take control measures to prevent the overpopulation of deer and other big game from causing this destruction.

And as in duty bound, your petitioner will ever pray.

The people that have signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from the Kincaid, Mankota, and Hazenmore areas of the Wood River constituency. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise on behalf of

concerned citizens with respect to the government's gambling policies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take some responsibility for the ill effects of its gambling expansion policy, and immediately commission an independent study to review the social impact that its gambling policy has had on our province, and the people who live here.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures on the petition are from St. Gregor, Humboldt, and Cudworth, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petition has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) is hereby read and received.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 21 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: what is the total cost of the operational review of the public prosecutions' division of Saskatchewan Justice submitted by Peter Martin and Earl Wilson of Calgary

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Thursday next move first reading of a Bill, the integrity of members of the Legislative Assembly Act.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to welcome to the Assembly today 6 students who are in your gallery, accompanied by their teacher, Warren Gervais. These are people from SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology); they're from the adult basic education class.

Mr. Speaker, I may say in passing that this is the last day before a long weekend. Fridays are often fairly lively, never more so than before a long weekend. It is perhaps appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that the only school group we've got with us today are adults to witness our proceedings.

I'd ask all members to . . .

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Easter Greetings

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today begins the final weekend of the Easter season, the most significant religious observance for Christians. Today is Holy Thursday, the day on which the commandment to love our neighbour was given, and tomorrow is Good Friday, and of course Sunday is Easter.

A Legislative Assembly, I know is not the place to promote a particular creed, but as we prepare to take a break, to spend time with our families, friends, and constituents it is not out of place to reflect for a moment on what the season represents to all of us.

Most importantly, Easter is the Christian expression of gratitude for the end of a season of adversity, to be followed by the season of rebirth and new beginnings. Spring follows winter just as in the Christian tradition life follows death. Easter week begins with betrayal, suffering, and death, and closes with renewal and rejoicing — a fitting observance of the cycle of life in the natural world and in our lives. Optimism out of pessimism, joy out of sorrow, good out of evil, and life out of death.

Mr. Speaker, as we should throughout the year, we pray for peace among the nations, for goodwill to all people, for respect for the less fortunate, for seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And I know that all members will join with me in wishing everyone today, a happy Easter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teenage Inventor

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate a young inventor from the Humboldt area, Andrew Benning. Andrew is a 16-year-old grade 11 industrial arts student. As a project for his industrial arts class he invented a bale-moving gadget.

While many people have welded together various contraptions to move these huge wads of hay, few, if any, 16-year-olds have achieved this sort of accomplishment.

Andrew's design consists of a pair of iron teeth operated by a hydraulic cylinder, which when closed firmly, secure the bale. The three-point hitch then raises the bale off the ground. And because the two teeth grip the bale in the centre, unrolling the bales for feed and bedding for the Benning's 175 head of cattle is no longer a back-breaking problem. They just take the twines off and set the bale down and drive ahead. It works very slick, and the estimated cost to make it was approximately \$200.

Congratulations, Andrew, on your invention.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northwest Health District Accreditation

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health care

system of this province is one of the finest in the world. The people of Saskatchewan have worked hard to maintain the system as a world leader in providing universal health care.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring special attention to one health district in particular. The Northwest Health District lies within my constituency of Meadow Lake. Earlier this month the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation awarded the Northwest Health District the highest possible accreditation ranking. The ranking, Mr. Speaker, reflects the evaluation of the quality of care and the continuous improvement of that care to patients.

The significance of this award, Mr. Speaker, is multiplied when one recognizes that the health district was one of only five or six other health districts throughout Canada that received this accreditation. This is a tremendous achievement for the staff, management, physicians, and board members of the Northwest Health District.

Has health care changed? Yes. Have we adapted to those changes? Yes. Will we continue to adapt in order to provide Saskatchewan residents with the best health care system anywhere? The answer again, Mr. Speaker, is yes.

I want to ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in congratulating the achievement of the Northwest Health District in continued efforts to provide residents with high quality health care. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to Regional Drama Festival Participants

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anyone who has participated in a drama production knows it requires a phenomenal amount of preparation and hard work to produce a successful production. The community of Wadena recently was able to enjoy the results of this hard work and preparation by seven schools who performed ten productions at the Saskatchewan Drama Association regional festival in Wadena.

The festival entries from Wadena Composite, Invermay High School, Wynyard Composite High School, Yorkton Regional High, Sturgis Composite School, and Kamsack Comprehensive School, and Sacred Heart School were assessed and critiqued. Sacred Heart School won the competition and will represent the region at the provincial drama festival in Swift Current with their production of *Life After Hockey*.

It gives me great pleasure to recognize the award winners from Wadena. Ryan Jesmer and Amy Gutek, acting award of merit; Alayne Lennox and Cameron Tweidt, light and sound design; and Paul Kulyk and Kyall Glennie, achievement in acting awards.

Congratulations, staff and students of Wadena Composite for hosting this successful event; to the award winners; participating students from seven communities for your hard work in producing these productions. And good luck, Sacred Heart School, as you participate in the provincial drama festival.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Weyburn Kentucky Fried Chicken Outlet
Wins National Recognition**

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing on which all members of this Assembly on both sides can agree is that an important engine of our economy is small business. Small business throughout the province supplies a large number of jobs. And we can agree that small businesses survive and prosper because of their hustle and their ability to meet the needs of the consuming public. Those that don't, don't survive.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a small business in Weyburn has just had this ability recognized on a national level, and I am happy to extend that recognition to members of this Assembly.

The Weyburn KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) outlet has just been named the number one Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Canada. Out of 800 outlets, the one in my constituency was named the best.

Great Saskatchewan service teamed with Saskatchewan quality chicken has made another Saskatchewan success story.

I am happy for Larry Seimens, Christine Erickson, and Glenn Lucas, and for their staff, all of whom won, as the award says, for service, selection, and satisfaction.

I congratulate them and invite all members, especially the Premier who is a fine connoisseur of KFC, down to Weyburn for a good meal served well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bridgepoint Centre for Eating Disorders at Milden

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, there are many people throughout this province who must deal with personal problems. We hear regularly about problems such as alcoholism and drug addiction. Treatment centres and focus groups have been established throughout the province to provide the necessary help that will enable people to overcome these personal problems.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to bring the Assembly's attention to a centre that offers help and treatment to individuals attempting to deal with eating disorders. The Bridgepoint Centre for Eating Disorders, located in the community of Milden, is the first of its kind in Canada. In operation since the fall of 1995, Bridgepoint offers counselling, weekend retreats, and crisis management to sufferers of eating disorders. These disorders are many and varied, ranging from bulimia to anorexia nervosa.

Raising the awareness of eating disorders, Mr. Speaker, and increasing the amount of support services available to the public, like Bridgepoint has done, will go a long way to helping the many people who are suffering from an eating disorder.

I think today it is appropriate for all members of this Assembly

to congratulate the achievements of the Milden community. They are demonstrating what rural communities in Saskatchewan are capable of accomplishing. They are providing a much-needed and often unrecognized service to the residents of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations to the Regina Pats

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate the Regina Pats on really what has been a terrific season. Not the finest end that one would wish for, but a terrific, terrific season.

They went through this year with a record of 42 wins, 27 losses, and 3 ties. In the process, and this is important for Reginans and people in the area, they entertained more than 150,000 people. That's up more than 33,000 from their previous record attendance.

So the Regina Pats have really, really put a good product on ice. Unfortunately they cooled off at exactly the wrong time. When the weather was warming up and it should be play-off time, they cooled off, went into a slump, and our hearts I'm sure go out to them for that after such a terrific season.

Unfortunately, last night the Red Deer Rebels ended the Regina Pats' season. But as the Melville *Advance* says in a power of positive thinking editorial:

... there have been setbacks. And it's the set-backs we hear most about. But good things are happening. There's no denying the power of positive thinking.

And we do have reason to be positive.

The Regina Pats have got a very good base to build on next year and I wish them all of the very best. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spring has Arrived

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a very long, windy and snowy and cold winter. However, spring and the birth of new life has arrived. No matter how severe the winter is, the horned larks return in February. Similarly, regardless of the amount of snow cover and cold temperatures, crows and Canada geese arrive in March.

Bird migration is triggered by the length of daylight hours. Availability of food is also a factor determining migration. The spring migration will continue into early June, and surprisingly the fall migration is under way by late June.

Hibernating animals such as Richardson's ground squirrels have emerged from their burrows. Within a couple of weeks, frogs will awaken in the fine mud at the bottom of sloughs and ponds. Crocus buds appear as soon as the soil warms and can already be found on south-facing prairie hillsides.

Spring is indeed a time for renewal of life — for all of life — birds, mammals, amphibians, and plants. Spring is a time of

courtship, nesting, raising of young, and flowers. As an example, great horned owls have been sitting on eggs for two weeks already.

Spring is also a time when people spring into action. At the earliest opportunity, people shed their heavy winter clothes, drain water off their property, wash their cars, rake and clean up the yards, light up the barbecue, and bask in the sun.

Unfortunately, winter is always hard to get rid of and undoubtedly we will awake to a white landscape at least once or twice in April or May. We can be assured, Mr. Speaker, spring will win out over winter and we can look forward to green grass, shady trees, and sunny skies. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fire Prevention Levies

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The official opposition has urged this government on more than one occasion to consider exempting fire-fighting equipment from the provincial sales tax. Our calls came after the Naicam fire department indicated that the additional PST (provincial sales tax) cost hinders the community's ability to purchase essential equipment.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of where the government would find the finances for this purpose, they may wish to examine the fact that all fire insurance contracts in Saskatchewan are subject to a 1 per cent levy to pay for fire prevention services and fire suppression. At present this tax raises some \$2.1 million, and of this amount 1.3 goes directly into general revenues.

Will the minister explain why this government is not directing all of these funds into fire prevention-related services as they are supposed to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, first of all I'll leave aside for the moment the sometimes repeated case by the Liberals and the Conservatives that there should be dedicated tax spent exclusively for dedicated purposes. That I think is an argument which needs to be threshed out during estimates. And generally speaking, all of the money ends up going to the general coffers.

But let me say this, Mr. Speaker, more fundamentally to the question put by the hon. member. This House and the people of the province of Saskatchewan are absolutely and rightly confused about where the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan stands on the question of taxation.

Because the member gets up today and says that she has asked for what? — a further narrowing of those tax items which are subject to the PST by excluding fire-fighting equipment, and we pay tribute to the volunteers and all those people who do a wonderful job in fire-fighting. Narrowing the tax base, that's what she says, the PST.

What does her leader say? Her leader says on November 26 — I have the copy right here — "Grit wants tax harmonization." Quote: "Saskatchewan should follow the Atlantic provinces and harmonize its sales tax to the federal GST, says Liberal . . ."

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Premier has given us another sermon, but what I really want to know is, for the people of this province, why can't we use the money that has actually been dedicated to fire prevention?

We've got communities out there who are working very, very hard. We have volunteers that are putting a lot of time and effort into making sure that we will actually have some fire prevention in our area. This isn't something for rural Saskatchewan or urban; it's for everybody. It can help the whole province. Our recent surveys that we've did found out that there's about \$200,000 is all it would cost if you would actually put the money back, if they wouldn't have to pay that tax.

Would you please tell us why you won't make this exemption for fire-fighting equipment in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — You know, you tell the legislature and you tell the fire-fighters why it is that the Liberal leader of the provincial government wants tax harmonization. Tell us, is your position tax harmonization? You must tell the people of Saskatchewan whether you're for tax harmonization, because if you're for tax harmonization you are not going to exclude the fire-fighters, you're going to expand the fire-fighters. You're going to have the repairs. You're going to have the other aspects of the fire-fighters included in the taxation. You want harmonization. That's the Liberal position.

Don't get up and grandstand, when you have people in the legislature saying you want the lower tax base for the PST when your official position is to expand it. And in the Atlantic provinces when you've expanded it, you have doubled the PST everywhere. That's your position, not our position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Establishment of Youth Justice Committee

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, since 1984 there has been provision in the Young Offenders Act for the Minister of Justice to establish a youth justice committee in this province. Now of course the last few weeks the Liberal opposition has been pressing for the appointment of a youth justice task force, a suggestion which last week in the legislature the Premier ridiculed.

I was disappointed that the Premier had taken that position on it and then I was very surprised and delighted to see that on the order paper there is now in fact a suggestion for the government, for the minister, to proceed with a youth justice

committee.

And I wish to ask the minister if we are going to get a youth justice committee and if this is a response to agitation from the city of Regina and the Liberal opposition?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm not sure what the member is referring to. If it's a reference to the legislation in this session then I think perhaps I should basically say that it's to deal with some of the questions that the Department of Social Services has in administering the Young Offenders Act. And I'm not sure if you have more questions but that's practically what it is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is in reference to Bill 34 which is providing for the establishment of youth justice committees. And I just want to get this straight. As members opposite have been gracious enough to point out, I'm sometimes a little slow. But I want to make clear, is the decision to move on a youth justice committee now a mere coincidence, a random occurrence, that has nothing to do with the problems in the city of Regina and the petitions introduced in the legislature by my learned friend for the constituency of Melville? Or is this a response to our position in the legislature which was ridiculed by the Premier last week?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that we will have ample, ample opportunity in discussion of the legislation outside of question period to discuss what is in the legislation.

I will remind the member what is in the legislation. The legislation which is now proposed before the House would protect those citizens of our province who today are serving on youth justice committees in their communities — already existing.

The legislation will protect those individuals from any liability that may accrue against them as a result of serving in their communities.

The member from North Battleford should have a chat with the member from Wood River and learn of the great work that's going on in the community of Shaunavon in this very regard today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Roads Funding

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, rural municipal councils have been dealt another blow. The government is axing the futures program. As a peace-offering the government is offering RMs (rural municipality) a one-time pay-out of \$16 million. This, Mr. Speaker, is money owed to RMs for roads that have already been built. And, Mr. Speaker, this payment comes with strings attached as it eliminates the

RMs from being able to go into futures.

When the government came to power in '91, Mr. Speaker, it cut the futures from four to two years. Now the government is cutting the two years out. How can the Minister of Municipal Government expect RMs to do road projects of more than 1 kilometre unless they pick up 100 per cent of the cost?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. RMs this year are getting, in addition to the future pay-out of \$16.3 million, \$4.4 million from the infrastructure program and 21 million from the Crow offset. A total of \$40 million.

And the futures program, Mr. Speaker, had a design flaw. There was no schedule, no schedule to pay the money back. And it was a liability that the province owed to municipalities. We're honouring our commitment to pay back that money, Mr. Speaker.

In the future, if there is another futures program, it will be designed in such a way that the time lines are finite and everybody understands from a financial point of view exactly where they are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is definitely right. Everybody understands where they are — the RMs are left on their own with no government funding. Mr. Speaker, the government's axe doesn't stop with the future program, and to my amazement, and to the complete decimation of the rural road system, the minister has dropped the cost-sharing agreement for farm access programs, if I am understanding this right.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has already slashed rural government funding by 50 per cent, and now the minister has even gone further and killed the farm access program. The government's job creation performance is dismal to say the least, Mr. Speaker, and the latest action is just another nail in the economic coffin of rural Saskatchewan. Road construction will come to a complete standstill and road contractors won't be hiring and engineering firms in small centres such as Yorkton will probably be forced to close.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Municipal Government even have the nerve to show her face in public when it's obvious she has written off rural Saskatchewan? Will the minister please reconsider these drastic measures and give the people of rural Saskatchewan some hope that they will have rural roads to drive on in the future?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the members opposite should have a caucus meeting sometime and decide exactly what their position is. A few days ago they wanted more housing in rural Saskatchewan because there are people ... there's a shortage of housing. Now rural

Saskatchewan is going to empty out.

Mr. Speaker, the farm access . . . there's still maintenance and re-gravelling for farm access roads. It is necessary, in this period of changes to the grain transportation system, to pay more attention to the main roads and not extend the network by further construction of farm access roads.

The rural municipalities have exactly the same amount of money they've traditionally had, Mr. Speaker. There's the same cost sharing. The only thing that's changed is the flawed futures program that got hatched during the decade of the '80s, and as most financial considerations in the 1980s, it was flawed. So it's gone but the municipalities have their money in their pockets.

I think the old saying, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, is just as true here, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Free Votes

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, more and more voters are demanding that their MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and MPs (Member of Parliament) be allowed to vote on behalf of their constituents instead of being forced to toe the party line.

Yesterday I introduced a private members' Bill to allow more free votes in the legislature. Under the proposal a government could only be defeated under a specifically designated vote of non-confidence. Individual pieces of government legislation could be defeated without bringing down the government or forcing an early election.

Mr. Premier, I was very pleased yesterday to hear the Health minister is considering our private members' Bill calling for a health ombudsman. You have now had some time to look at our private members' Bill, I would hope. Would you consider supporting the legislation?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again at the appropriate time when the legislation comes up for debate in the House, all of us or some of us will have a response to the proposal put forward by the Conservatives, as opposed to question period.

However since the question has been asked in question period, I would say that we need to liberate the role of all members of the Legislative Assembly to express on some matters their opinions based on their own personal beliefs and conscience, which may have no relevance to political ideology or mandate, political mandate, for election.

I'm not sure that in the case of a budget, that that is one of those instances. The budget, the throne speech, several other documents, are very central to a government's confidence and the government's form of conducting business. And in the consequence that your idea that some form of a non-confidence motion would trump the vote on a budget and therefore

back-benchers could vote however they would want to vote — although I confidently predict that almost all of this House will or should vote yes for this budget today — I don't think that in the case of the budget, this is a case that free votes are involved.

We're studying it; we'll give you a response at an appropriate time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Public Prosecutions Review

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're certainly grateful and we thank the Premier for the fact that we will have an opportunity to debate this piece of legislation in the not-too-distant future.

But I have another question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today we have another example of this government's inability to meet deadlines. When the Martin review on public prosecutions was first announced over a year ago the minister said it was expected to take about six months. On March 11 in this House the Justice minister promised that the Martin report would be released within two weeks.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we learn of another deadline extension. The minister is now saying April 7. Mr. Minister, what is the hold-up? Is the Justice department in even a bigger mess than you expected? Or is there something in the report that you want to hide? What is it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question. You will be receiving a copy. All members of the legislature will be receiving a copy of the full report on April 7. And I would ask you to review it carefully and give your comments to me. We are also at the same time releasing a response to a number of the . . . well to all of the recommendations, which will allow for further discussion at that point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, at that time will you as well let us know what this cost has . . . the cost that this report is to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan? We were told that it was expected to be around \$100,000. We're now informed that it's going to be much higher. Will you also include the figures of the cost of the report when you release the report, please?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We'll plan to release the costs of the report when we know what they are. At this stage we don't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Wheat Board Contracts

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, I'm sure you are familiar with the Warburtons contract. Canadian Wheat Board has cooked up a special deal with some select Manitoba Wheat Pool members to sell wheat at a \$30 per tonne premium over

and above what other farmers get. The wheat is then sold to the Warburtons Mill Company in Britain. This is a sweetheart deal for the Manitoba Pool. No Saskatchewan farmers can participate. It's unfair and it's discriminatory. It may even be in violation of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

Mr. Minister, what are you doing about the Warburtons contract? Have you contacted Ralph Goodale to complain about this sweetheart deal for the Manitoba Wheat Pool?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, you know what this is of course, is a continued attack on the Canadian Wheat Board and I think the hon. member's leader might do what the leader in Alberta did. When they so badly lost he had to remove his minister of Agriculture . . . (inaudible) . . . to save him some embarrassment because he was such a strong supporter and confident the board was going to win. So now that he's moved out maybe his leader would want to move him out to save him some embarrassment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board trades grain around the world in a manner that gives Saskatchewan farmers a bonus, a premium of over \$300 million annually. And I just ask the member again and again and again: please, why do you want to continue your attack on the Canadian Wheat Board and remove that \$300 million from farmers' pockets?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear from the minister's answer he has absolutely no idea what he's talking about. Why is that minister defending the Canadian Wheat Board and not Saskatchewan farmers? Because this is a perfect example of the Wheat Board's double standard. If a farmer went out and negotiated a contract like this on his own, people like you and Ralph Goodale would throw him in jail. But when the Canadian Wheat Board cooks up a sweetheart deal that benefits only some farmers, that's perfectly okay with the minister. And worst of all, we have no idea how many other such sweetheart deals the Wheat Board has cooked up because the Wheat Board is exempted from freedom of information.

Mr. Minister, why the double standard? Where's the pooling you and Ralph Goodale are always crowing about? Why aren't you demanding that Saskatchewan farmers be given a chance to sell their wheat under the Warburtons contract? Or better yet, why aren't you demanding that farmers be allowed to negotiate premium deals like this on their own under a dual-marketing system which a recent study for the Department of Agriculture says the Wheat Board will flourish?

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I guess we heard the point, as I said earlier — dual market. Dual marketing means the end of the Wheat Board — another blow at the Board.

Mr. Speaker, think of it this way: why would this opposition caucus promote the destruction, dismantling, of a trading bloc, when all over the world we are seeing larger and larger trading blocs formed for power purposes, for the benefited amount. And what these people want to do is Balkanize western Canada,

take away the premium prices that farmers get, and they'll do it any way they can.

So, Mr. Speaker, again I ask the member to answer this question: why do you want to take over \$300 million away from farmers in western Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Highway Maintenance

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Highways.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, each and every day I receive letters about Saskatchewan highways, and calls on our 1 800 621 Bump Line, and each and every day the calls are shocking and dramatic. One of the calls was from Mr. Bob Joyce of Dodsland who phoned me and asked that I raise with you the poor conditions of Highway No. 3 north-west of Rosetown heading to Dodsland. He states that this highway is impassable, that the province could stock fish in these potholes, and that truckers actually charge more money to haul over this highway.

Mr. Minister, will you give Mr. Bob Joyce your assurance today that you will have your Department of Highways repair this highway today, or immediately install enough warning flags for each and every one of those large potholes that you refuse to repair?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell the member opposite that . . . I think he was here when our Finance minister gave the budget address, when she stated very clearly that we're going to spend another \$30 million this year on highway construction — up 18 per cent, Mr. Speaker, over last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but the Finance minister said that we are committing \$2.5 billion to roads in the province, in Saskatchewan, over the next 10 years.

But I wanted to tell the member opposite that this a good opportunity to give my little road report again because flooding is still occurring in the south-west part of the province. And I get this updated each day, Mr. Speaker, from the department officials, so I want to make a few statements here.

No. 2, 9 kilometres south of Bushell Park — water on road, reduced speed required. No. 8, 24 kilometres north of Kamsack to 15 kilometres south of Pelly — water on the road. No. 13, 16 kilometres west of Aneroid to 17 kilometres east of Cadillac — local detour, road closed, bridge out, reduce . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister's response is exactly what the people are saying — the highways are in horrible condition. Just don't agree with them

— fix them.

Mr. Minister, another caller to the pothole patrol hot line comes from Judy Sawchuk of Fort Qu'Appelle. Judy says that the 60-mile stretch of Highway No. 52 from Willowbrook to Ituna is so bad that she won't drive her car on it. In fact there are so many potholes on this highway that vehicles must drive on the wrong side of the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. Now all hon. members will recognize that although the hon. member for Wood River is located close to the Speaker, the Speaker is having difficulty being able to hear him put his question, in spite of comments from all caucuses in the House, and I would ask all hon. members to come to order and to allow the hon. member for Wood River to put his question.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact Judy says there are so many potholes on this highway that the vehicles must drive on the wrong side of the road and face the threat of oncoming traffic.

Mr. Minister, Judy Sawchuk asks that you please fix these potholes before someone gets hurt. And please, Mr. Minister, please get more warning flags up to warn the people of the danger.

Will you do this today, Mr. Minister, before people coming home for the holidays risk their lives?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I want to thank the member for his question, Mr. Speaker.

I was reading a little article in *The Estevan Mercury* the other day and it says here — and this is a quote from a Mr. Glen McPherson, MLA Wood River constituency, opposition Highway critic . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now the hon. member knows that he is not to use proper names of members in the House, and it didn't sound to me as though it was a quote that he was giving when he was using it. I simply caution him on that point and ask him to . . . Order.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The article states very clearly, and I quote:

Once the fiscal situation our federal government has faced is brought under control the way it has been done here in Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: —

. . . then that level of government should direct a large portion of tax collected to where it is intended — the highway infrastructure.

Very interesting comment. I mean one story in the Estevan

paper but another story in the legislature, and often we hear that.

But I want to tell the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that the reason I give the highway report here, because it's an Easter weekend. People should have caution when they're driving, especially in the south-west. I would recommend that anybody driving over this weekend, they should get a hold of the Highways' road information line at 787-4986. We want to warn them because there is some difficulties every time there is a flood.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, you're still just making my point. All levels of government that collect fuel taxes for the highway system should put those dollars into the highway system. But thank you for helping out with the point.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, the safety of our school children that spend hours on school buses and the safety of the sick and elderly that now travel much further for their health care needs should be paramount to you and your government. However the people of Saskatchewan do not feel safe on our highways.

As Doug Hennifer stated when he phoned the pothole patrol hot line, and I quote:

Somebody is going to get killed on that stretch of Highway No. 48 between Kipling and Highway No. 9.

And there are miles of Highway No. 35 north of Cedoux, that is like a goat trail and a danger to people needing to drive this highway.

Mr. Minister, can you give your assurance in this House today that these stretches of highways will receive your department's immediate attention so that no one needlessly has to die in traffic accidents this Easter weekend?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. I want to remind the member one more time — I hope he will remember that this government is putting an extra \$30 million into road construction this year, \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years, Mr. Speaker.

And what does the federal government do? The Liberals in Ottawa, what are they doing? We've asked them to help us with a national highways program. They say no, Mr. Speaker. The federal government in this country put 6 per cent into highway construction, the lowest of all the industrialized countries in the world, Mr. Speaker. And they support the federal Liberals and argue about a government that puts \$2.5 billion into highway construction. I don't understand it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, I respectfully

request that questions 28, 29, 30, and 31 be converted to notices of motion for return (debatable).

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — And items 1, 2, 3, and 4 are converted to motions for return (debatable).

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in this Assembly and respond to the budget. Mr. Speaker, contrary to what some members across the floor might expect, I have no intention of making this budget into what it is not. There are some good things in this budget, and in fairness to people of Saskatchewan I'm not going to pretend that I disapprove of them.

On budget day, for example, I had invited a constituent who operates a dairy farm, and he's just now preparing to construct a new dairy barn. And earlier this year when I had learned the Premier was suggesting extending the input tax credit for PST paid for inputs to build hog barns, I was a bit concerned. I'd informed this particular constituent and I'd invited him here to see whether this credit would be fairly extended to inputs involved in the construction of dairy barns as well. Well we were both pleased to learn this credit would be fairly extended to dairy as well as hog barns and also the construction of horticultural facilities, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention that I'm pleased with the cut to the provincial sales tax. In our election campaign we also proposed cutting the PST, and I believe the members opposite made the right decision by cutting this tax. While the cut to the PST is a laudable initiative and may temporarily ease the public clamour for further reductions in this tax, I'd like to take an opportunity to remind the members opposite about one of their past positions.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might be thinking I'm going to twist the facts. Well I assure you that this isn't the case. But it's only appropriate to remind the members opposite of their earlier commitments in an effort to encourage them to act fairly on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's my expectation that the Premier will be speaking soon after I'm done here today, and I direct this reminder at the members opposite, but most particularly at the Premier.

In January of 1991 the New Democratic Party caucus released a

paper entitled *Tax Fairness for the 1990s*. It was their way of addressing what they believed was going to be a hot issue in the 1991 election.

On page 3 of that document, the New Democratic members opposite, Mr. Speaker, stated:

A graduated income tax is the most progressive. A constant or flat income tax rate is the least progressive since it does not take into account the relative difference in ability to pay. That's not fair. That's regressive. Tax fairness based on the ability to pay — that's progressive. The PC flat tax — that's regressive.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this paper went on to note that large families, the elderly, and those with high medical expenses were hardest hit by this flat tax.

Well for the benefit of members opposite and the Minister of Finance and particularly the Premier, I'd like them to reflect on their party's comments on the issue of the flat tax. Right now, Mr. Speaker, this flat tax, which as they admit penalizes the poor, is set at 2 per cent of individual income. Few people in this province get any relief from this burdensome and unfair tax.

If the members opposite want to do something positive for the people of Saskatchewan, quit penalizing the poor, the sick, and the elderly. Get rid of this tax. Remain committed to what you said you would be committed to do.

Obviously the Premier, the Minister of Finance, and all the members of the NDP (New Democratic Party) caucus deserve to be reminded of what they said on page 20 of their *Tax Fairness for the 1990's*. On that page they said they were committed to that, and I quote, "The tax system must be progressive and it has to be based on the ability to pay."

Well make good on that commitment and get rid of this unfair tax and ensure that our tax system is indeed based on ability to pay.

I remind the Premier, commitments aren't just something that you make before elections; they're things you keep after elections. Two votes have passed. The 1990s are almost over. So please, for the sake of integrity, make good on this promise to ensure we have fair taxes, not PC (Progressive Conservative) flat taxes, in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment on some of the concerns which the budget measures presented by the government have on the Thunder Creek constituency. Before I do though, I'd like to make a few comments with respect to the member from Regina South.

There's been some debate in this House as to whether . . . as to the abilities of this member. And young as he is, albeit, but what's important here is that he's gained the confidence of his constituents in an electoral race against another member of his community, Mr. Ross Keith. And as the Premier will know, the

voters are always right. And I assure the member from Regina South that he has my full respect as a member of this House.

Mr. Speaker, it's encouraging to see younger people run for elected office. And while the member is not a Liberal, his work as a back-bencher has been worthwhile. Last year, for example, while on the Public Accounts Committee, the member voted with members from this side to ask that a commission be formed to investigate unfunded pension liabilities and other pension matters. He voted this way despite the opposition of his more senior colleagues, such as the Minister of Finance.

The member from Regina South deserves our respect and I hope he'll continue to work hard during his term in this Assembly and remain open to suggestions from the opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — In respect to the Thunder Creek constituency, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are pleased with some aspects of the budget, but they remain concerned about or opposed to others. My constituents are cautiously optimistic about increases in spending to health and education, Mr. Speaker. They are cautious about promised increased spending to health because our region of the province suffered heavily over the last few years.

Thunder Creek rests in a part of south-west Saskatchewan which is sparsely populated. Many towns in fact have outright disappeared. I can think of Kelstern as an example, Mr. Speaker. It once had over 600 people, but the last of the residents of that town moved out a few years ago and if you drive by that site now you'd never know that it was once a bustling community.

My point in providing the members with an example like that is that the communities which remain in this area can ill afford to lose any more infrastructure in the form of schools, hospitals, and government offices and services. If we want to maintain healthy communities, our governments must remain committed to not destroying core services which will result in the destruction of trade patterns towards small, rural centres.

Over the past five years of cutting, communities like Vanguard, Gravelbourg, and Bateman have lost many services. While the government promises to put additional money into health care, we know it can't reverse the damage that's already been done.

With factors like inflation, my constituents wonder whether the modest additional monies that will be provided will be enough to cover rising salary, utility, equipment, and input costs. They also wonder whether new rounds of cutting will be necessary if the proposed increases in the budget are not enough to cover inflationary costs.

Only time and future budgets will prove whether health care will be adequately funded so as not to deteriorate further in the future. It's my sincere hope that the members opposite will provide the monies needed to ensure that health budgets keep up with inflation.

Mr. Speaker, another health-related concern in my constituency,

also relates to this budget, is a concern about retaining doctors. There's a particularly great concern in the South Country District about retaining physicians, and in the Moose Jaw-Thunder Creek Health District the concern also exists but it relates more to retaining a sufficient core of specialists within that community.

Nevertheless I'm hopeful that the steps the government has proposed to deal with this difficulty will be adequate to provide my constituents with the health services that they require. The job of convincing people their proposals work, however, rests squarely on the government members opposite.

One final concern about health care which the constituents of Thunder Creek continue to be affected by, regrettably — and it remains in the budget — and that is that the Department of Health continues to provide money to the health districts according to the needs-based funding formula. If residents of a district travel to other districts to receive services, this government will eventually adjust that district's funding to take that out-migration into account.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency for the most part is covered by a number of health districts which have a small population base. In addition, most have smaller facilities. Thanks to years of health cuts, many patients in Thunder Creek must now travel to Regina to get many of the services that they need. Out-migration is now just a part of the system.

Under this government's funding formula, this out-migration will result in the allocation of even fewer dollars to the smaller health districts which cover most of Thunder Creek. Even the city of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan's fourth largest city, is affected, Mr. Speaker. It's part of the Moose Jaw-Thunder Creek Health District, and because of its proximity to Regina, many residents of that city, and the district, travel to Regina. And it results in less revenue under this government's formula.

Many of my constituents depend on Moose Jaw for medical services and any cuts to that district, thanks to the government's unfair funding formula, will continue to adversely affect my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, if this government wants to turn the cautious optimism of my constituents into optimism on their handling of health care, then please address concerns like the unfair funding formula. Assure them that their services and facilities will continue to receive the funding that they require.

My constituencies . . . or my constituents are also cautiously optimistic about what is coming for education. They hope school closures are over, and that divisions will have the revenues they require to attract teachers. At the post-secondary level they are hopeful that the announced increases will allow universities and other post-secondary institutions to delay these increases to tuition that might prevent other young people from attending.

Just yesterday they learned that the funding levels in this government's budget weren't sufficient enough to help the U of R (University of Regina) avoid a six and a half per cent tuition hike. It's for reasons like this, Mr. Speaker, that I can't support this budget.

(1100)

On education, Mr. Speaker, I must also note another concern that I have. Recently we saw a tremendous outcry in Regina over suggestions that many schools might be closed and new ones constructed at a significant cost to the taxpayer.

Well my constituents find it sadly amusing that they often lack the operating monies needed to provide a host of educational programs, including some sciences, while capital monies are used to build massive and impressive-looking structures in our two larger urban centres. Our investment should be in people rather than buildings.

On the issue of highways, Mr. Speaker, I note that there'll be increases in spending on our highways, as nominal as they may be. While my constituents might think it is a little better than nothing, they still think what is being proposed here is far too little to address the crumbling state of our highways. For this reason I also cannot support this budget.

Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite know — and we heard from him again today — my colleague from Wood River launched the pothole patroller program. The idea behind this was to give people a forum to impress upon this government their great concern for not only their local highway, but for our whole highway system.

One of my constituents wrote me and said that in travelling from Moose Jaw to Coderre the potholes were “too numerous to count.” Another travelling on Highway 19 counted some 120 potholes over a 30-kilometre stretch of road. Another counted “lots” over a 25-kilometre stretch en route to Corrine, just to the east of my constituency.

Another constituent wrote and told me there were hundreds of potholes between Gravelbourg and Swift Current, and the same between Gravelbourg and Moose Jaw. Still another describes the road between Herbert and Chaplin as “a real car buster.” Lastly, one constituent describes the road between Briercrest and Moose Jaw as “one continuous pothole,” Mr. Speaker.

Oh yes, also I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that that same constituent told me to keep up the good work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Until these potholes and these highways stop crumbling faster than they are repaired and rebuilt, Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Thunder Creek will remain sceptical about the government's commitment to good highways.

Two highways which are of a particular concern, Mr. Speaker, are Highways 339 and 334. These two highways link the cities of Moose Jaw and Regina on the Trans-Canada to the Claybank brick plant and Long Creek golf course, as well as other tourist attractions.

I constantly hear the government members discussing just how committed they are to ensuring that our tourism industry continues to grow. They say they're committed, but each year

these two highways continue to crumble. If they sincerely want people to see these world-class attractions and others without the need of a 4 x 4, I suggest they show us some money and fix these two highways.

I challenge any of the members opposite to take the time to travel towards Avonlea and Claybank. When they return, whether they would admit it publicly or not, I'm sure they would agree with my constituents that these highways need more attention.

Well the member suggests they have no money. We know what they really have are choices. They can choose to engage in some silly activities. They can leave funds socked away in the Liquor and Gaming fund. They can waste money cross-subsidizing Crowns which have neither a social purpose or a chance of economic gain. But in the end the result is the same.

They must choose what sort of priority our highways are going to have. While they fail to give this infrastructure the priority it deserves, each new hole in the asphalt represents another debt a future generation must bear.

Mr. Speaker, while I admit there are positives in the budget, I remain deeply disappointed with the government's decision to cut municipal grants. Governments, despite suggestions made by the Premier and some of the members opposite, local governments, are some of the most efficient of any government. Most local governments have been cutting for years, and there's little room for further cuts.

Many municipalities in my constituency are now facing considerable flooding problems. Some have taken flood prevention measures to avoid damages, and I question whether there will be enough money available to do these sorts of things in the future after these cuts. In addition, I question whether there will be enough money to fix the roads which might be washed out by the flooding.

Mr. Speaker, while I do not support cuts to local government in this budget, I believe I've been fair to this government. My constituents are pleased with some of the provisions of the budget. They're cautiously optimistic about others. And they are most certainly opposed to provisions like cuts to their local governments. I've been fair with the budget put forward by the members opposite, and all that I would ask is that the members opposite would just show the same regard.

Throughout this debate the members opposite, of the government caucus, have been calling on us to be more optimistic, to look to the future and help offer hope to Saskatchewan people. I agree with them, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan deserve a level of discourse in this House which is not focused on the negative.

Regrettably, throughout the debate, Mr. Speaker, I heard the government members make some terribly negative remarks. If I were to search the legislative Internet site for a federal Liberal, Mr. Speaker, I think I'd get references to each speech offered by the members opposite. While the Premier has not spoken in this debate, I'm sure his remarks will be no different, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in each of those references I'm sure I would find negative remarks made by each and every member opposite about the Government of Canada.

While the members suggest optimism and hope are the order of the day, they fail to rise to their own words when it comes to the federal Liberals, who now serve as the Government of Canada. I'm saddened by the remarks of the members opposite in this regard.

While they insist that everyone be optimistic and hopeful about their record of office, they fail to extend the same courtesy to the federal government. While hope and optimism are important, I believe it's more fitting to just be fair when considering the actions and policies of any particular government.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the paper I read with some interest some comments made by the Parti Québécois Minister of Finance on the presentation of his budget. Well the separatists' Finance minister blamed absolutely every ill on the federal government and the federal Liberals, Mr. Speaker. He not only blamed every single ill on them, but he did his best to twist other issues so as to paint the Canadian government in a poor light. Mr. Speaker, the separatists do this because they want Quebecers to believe that Canada and our federal system do not work. They do this for their own political gain.

When I look across this floor, Mr. Speaker, and listen to the comments of the members on the government side, I'm ashamed for them. Each and every day in this House, Mr. Speaker, particularly in this debate, they've attacked the federal government. They've used exactly the same despicable tactics and arguments that the separatists would use to prove that Canada doesn't work — for their own political gain.

Mr. Speaker, each and every member on that side has let their tremendous hatred for Liberals lead them to standing up in this House, slamming the federal government, the federal system, and Canada itself. What is sad about all of this is that they know governing a country as diverse as Canada is by no means easy. In fact it's possible only when we as Canadians and we as legislators demonstrate those traditional Canadian values of compromise, patience, and understanding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — The members opposite know full well that Canada is a country whose future depends upon our ability to overcome regional, ethnic, linguistic, and even social divisions. In order for Canada to work, we as Canadians must defend our values of compromise, patience, and understanding. Mr. Speaker, this great country we so value hangs in that balance.

Each day in this House during this debate, and many others, I've watched the members opposite attack and undermine each of these traditional Canadian values in what has become a shameful un-Canadian display. The members know full well, if this country is to succeed as it has for the last 130 years, they as legislators have a special responsibility to uphold those traditional Canadian values. Yet they attack them, Mr. Speaker.

Each day in this House we hear them attacking the federal government. In doing so, they show no sense of compromise, patience, or understanding. They sit there and they shamefully fan the flames of regionalism with no regard for the future of the country — no regard, Mr. Speaker, for the values which Canadians hold dear.

The members opposite attack the feds on everything, regardless whether any of their criticisms have any sound, logical basis. They stand up and they argue that they're defending programs like medicare, social welfare, and infrastructure spending, while they attack the very values that made these things possible.

It's our Canadian values of compromise, patience, and understanding that make health care and social programs possible. Those same values make equalization and cost-shared infrastructure programs possible. Without those values, Canada will not survive. Without Canada, these programs certainly would not survive.

I find it shameful that the members opposite and the Premier carry on this way. The Premier, who can claim to have helped patriate our constitution, somehow forgets that he cannot undermine Canadian values on a daily basis just like the separatists, without undermining the country and the programs which are built on those values.

Somehow between being defeated by a gas attendant turned hon. member, he's forgotten what it is that drives this country. He knows full well that governing a country divided by regional, ethnic, linguistic, and social differences requires compromise, patience, and understanding.

Exactly the things that he and his House Leader are having the members opposite undermine here on a daily basis in this debate. The Premier and his House Leader, Mr. Speaker, sadly have designed a strategy to attack Canadian values here in this House, and elsewhere in this province, on a daily basis.

The Minister of Finance, who also undermines those same values on a daily basis, should know from her private career as a history professor, with background in Canadian-American relations, that governing such a diverse country is made more difficult when you live next to a superpower.

Both the Premier and the Minister of Finance know better.

Mr. Speaker, I ask myself why these people consistently, in an un-Canadian fashion, undermine Canadian values. Why do they undermine the virtues of compromise, patience, and understanding in their daily attacks on the federal government? They do so for political gain.

We all know this is a federal election year, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, I imagine, continue to attack the federal government and undermine our treasured Canadian values because they want to elect a few more Democrats in Ottawa. They're willing to do anything, even undermine what we hold dear, for personal gain.

Mr. Speaker, I might also add that their hatred for Liberals surely plays a part. I say to the members opposite and to the

Premier, who as a first minister has a special responsibility to defend this country, do you want this to be your legacy? Do you want to continue these often senseless attacks and continue to undermine the values which this country was built on, or do you want to join us and give Canadians resident in this province the more optimistic and hopeful future that you promise?

Just some short months ago, as the members well recall, Canadians went to the brink. Separatists came some 50,000 votes from hurling Canada into social, economic, and political turmoil. In the aftermath of this scenario, we see the Government of Quebec commit itself to holding yet another referendum.

This country has enough things tearing it apart and we all accept that the federal government must continue to move toward getting our national affairs in order. The Premier and the members understand it's not possible to get these affairs in order without compromise, patience, and understanding from Canadians, particularly provincial governments.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite appeal to these same values to get support for their attack on the deficit, but they're not willing to reciprocate the favour in this, our country's hour of need. Worse yet, these members know full well that every Canadian, including every resident of this province, will benefit tremendously from ridding the federal deficit and putting to rest many of our national problems. Instead of offering compromise, patience, and understanding, these members are willing to recklessly fan the flames of regionalism for the benefit of the New Democratic Party and jeopardize Canada's future.

Is that optimism, Mr. Speaker? Is that hope? I think not.

Surely we all admit some mistakes are made at the federal level. Those mistakes are hopefully honest mistakes, but they're no worse than some of the silliness that goes on here. If the government members need reminding, need I point to a few of the numerous examples: the Jack Messer, the Carole Bryant raises; patronage jobs, hotel rooms at the Drake in New York. While Sheila Copps gives away flags to erect on buildings, this government gives away erect wooden penises. The list goes on and it's silliness at either level. All governments err and do things that we disagree with. The important factor is how one chooses, how one chooses to criticize.

(1115)

Canada can be compared to a maple leaf. Each lobe on the leaf represents a part of this diversity we know as Canada. The shameful things I've seen in this debate is that the members opposite have chosen to attack in such a way as to eat away at the very peduncle or stock of that leaf. If the leaf falls to the ground, every lobe on the leaf will perish with it. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, their personal political gain comes before any concern for Canada as a whole.

All members of this House will admit that many of the things we value would not be possible without Canada. This country has prospered and created a just and tolerant society. We are the envy of the world. Yet the members opposite continue to treat this success story with little respect, through their actions.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming months we can all foresee this country coming to the brink again. Saskatchewan can ill afford the economic chaos, rising interest rates, and political uncertainty that could result from a direct hit on Confederation. I love this country, my constituents love this country, but we realize that all is not always well. We must change those things we disagree with by using positive means.

I ask the members opposite, the Premier, to show they love this country too. Stop using the same tactics the separatists use every day, of blaming everything on Ottawa. Stop letting your members cling to personal self-interest and political gain. Those are American values, not Canadian values. Join with us in this debate and give Saskatchewan residents the future of optimism and hope that can only come from defending the values of compromise, patience, and understanding that make us all proud to call ourselves Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to take part in this debate. I want to begin by saying that in my many years of political life in the province of Saskatchewan — some in opposition and some in government and some in semi-retirement — I have been called many, many, many things. But I have to admit that this is the very first time that I have ever been called a separatist, as the hon. member from Thunder Creek has indicated that I am.

I do say, with the greatest of respect to the hon. member from Thunder Creek, that if — and rather immodestly if I may say so — that if he has a record and can stand up in this Legislative Assembly, or anywhere for that matter, some day, somewhere down the future and say that, even in a fraction, his commitment to a strong, unified Canada, not in words but in deed, comes up even in a fraction to the contribution, if I say immodestly that I have made, then I'll be very pleased to say so.

But I see no evidence of this. And I don't see any evidence of this because the hon. member talks about values — Canadian values — of caring and compromise. We all share those Canadian values. We support those Canadian values. That's not our concern. Our concern with the federal Liberal government is that words come very, very cheaply.

But caring and sharing and community values have got to be translated into programs. They've got to be translated into programs which mean something to Canadians and define Canadians to each other, define Canadians to the world.

Social programs in Canada, which by the way we invented in Saskatchewan, which I might add, over the opposition of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party in Saskatchewan in 1962 — social programs like medicare, which we invented in Canada and is our gift to Canada, are now being attacked by the federal Liberal government to the extent of \$7 billion nationally.

Words are fine; it's the programs that count. It is fleshing out

the words with actual programs which mean something to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, to the people of the province of Alberta, to the people of Canada.

And I want to tell you that almost every premier — not almost every premier — every premier, without reservation, in varying degrees, has objected to the federal Liberal government dismantlement of the social programs which define us on the block transfer payment reductions; has objected to the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) dismantlement; has objected to the railway deregulation and the destruction of rural Saskatchewan; has objected to the abandonment of the Crow rate; has objected to the lack of vision; has objected to the lack of consultation on tackling a national deficit and a debt.

I want to say to the hon. member opposite that if he says he is such a strong defender of Canada, don't give us the words, give us the actions and the deeds and tell your federal cousins to give us the words, actions, and deeds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And I take no second place and I will not give one quarter at all for criticizing any federal government of any political ideology when they dismantle those things which unify this great country. Whether it is the CBC or whether it's medicare and hospitalization, I will criticize and attack any federal government when I see those values that you talk about being destroyed, right at the street level.

And you may call that negative. I don't. In fact if you call that negative I'm reminded of what old Harry Truman once was told. Harry Truman was told once by his advisers, "Harry, why don't you get in there against those Republicans and give 'em hell." And Harry said, "No, sir, I'm not going to give those Republicans hell, I'm just going to tell them the truth."

I'm not going to give the Liberals and the Conservatives hell. What this caucus, and what this Premier and this government is doing is just telling you folks the truth, the simple, bald truth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And sometimes, Mr. Leader of the Third Party, when the Liberals get in the kitchen and it gets a little bit hot, obviously they simply can't stand the truth. Well the hon. member opposite has got to understand that if he can't stand this heat on a vision of Canada, if he can't stand this heat based on this budget, it's going to get a lot hotter. And as the old saying goes, if you can't stand the heat you better get out of the kitchen. And if you're not going to get out of the kitchen voluntarily, come next provincial election time, the people of Thunder Creek will kick you out of the kitchen, that's for sure, because you can't stand the truth and the heat.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, let me say . . . let me say, Mr. Speaker . . . I'm going to say a word about the Tories in a moment, but let me say, Mr. Speaker, lest anyone have any doubt about this at all — any doubt — I want to say at the outset I'm going to vote for this budget, described by almost

every independent observer in Saskatchewan including, if I dare say so, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, as the best provincial budget in Saskatchewan in over 15 years . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And who, Mr. Speaker, would vote against a budget which has a 2 per cent reduction in the sales tax — \$180 million? Who, Mr. Speaker, would vote against \$57 million more, permanently, for health care? Who would vote against \$8 million on K to 12? Who would vote for more money for the universities and post-secondary systems? Who would vote for \$25 million to help kids in poverty and reform our welfare system? Who would vote against \$2.5 billion for roads for the province of Saskatchewan? Who would vote for doing all of this while still balancing the budget, reducing the debt, and turning the corner on the prosperity? Who would vote against this kind of a budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I tell you who will not vote against the budget, and that is the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Regina Health Board people say it's going to be a big boost for the Regina district, that we deserve.

Dan Kelly of the CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business) says, 60 per cent of our members told us cutting the PST would help improve the bottom line of the company, and we support it.

Don Anderson of the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour) says, it's probably the best budget we've had in 15 years.

Don Wells, university president: for universities this is by far the best budget we've had in a decade.

The students at the University of Saskatchewan, President Natasha says: it's really encouraging to see the government is reinvesting back in students.

Lloyd Boutilier of the chamber of commerce says: this is a very good budget for business. Casey Davis of the chamber of commerce says: any reduction in taxes is welcome relief, not only for business but for the residents of Saskatchewan. Kelly Hague of the Regina Chamber of Commerce says: it's a good thing, not just for consumers, but businesses making purchases and paying the PST.

And down the line one can go. Cory Exner, president of the University of Saskatchewan.

Here's one quote that I like. David Perry, senior research associate for the Canadian Tax Foundation, taking a look at our budget and comparing it with other provinces, says it's so good, you know, the following, Mr. Perry says, "Sometimes I wished I lived in Saskatchewan."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, David Perry wants to come to Saskatchewan; the hon. member from Thunder

Creek and all the Liberals want to leave Saskatchewan. I don't understand what the logic here is.

And then you can go through editorial and editorial. Here's the Toronto *Globe and Mail*. I want to give you a little quotation about the headline in Saskatchewan five years later. It's a very laudatory editorial by *The Globe and Mail*. Get this. This is what *The Globe and Mail* says — not exactly a socialist newspaper, that's for sure:

So Mr. Romanow and his government — those high-spending, irresponsible, weak-kneed, bleeding-heart socialists resolve to clean up the financial mess left by Grant Devine and his Conservatives. Last week, five years later, we were reminded of their success.

... is what *The Globe and Mail* editorial said.

And in this morning's *Globe and Mail*, Jeffrey Simpson, nationally, in *The Globe and Mail* says:

Saskatchewan's NDP government knocked down the sales tax from 9 to 7 per cent in its fourth consecutive balanced budget. Those impressive social democrats intend to chop \$4 billion from the provincial ...

Impressive social democrats. They're not going to vote against the budget. No, they're not going to vote against the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — So who in the world is going to vote against the budget? Well, for awhile I thought, before he got up on his feet today and spoke, I even thought the member from Thunder Creek was going to vote for the budget. But he wasn't going to take the chance of voting against the budget and having this being reminded over the next two, three years to his constituents.

Because I note that in his area newspaper, the *Moose Jaw Times Herald* of a few days ago, he says this:

"Certainly I think the people of the province were expecting a good news budget, and it did have its fair share of good news," says Gerard Aldridge, MLA for Thunder Creek.

That's what the member from Thunder Creek said, end of quotation, in this particular operation.

This is what I thought the hon. member from Thunder Creek was going to do today when it came to voting for this budget. I didn't think that he would vote against this budget. Who in the world would vote against a budget in the face of all of the evidence in the province and outside of the province.

But now the member from Thunder Creek ... And maybe it's a free vote in the Liberal Party, so maybe he's all by himself. He was all by himself in the Liberal leadership race. Maybe he'll be all by himself in the vote here. Who knows? Maybe it's a free vote by the Liberals in this context, but I still would ask the hon. member to consider my remarks and ask yourself, do you really want to vote against this budget?

Well I'll tell you. I asked the question, who is going to vote against this budget? Well maybe the member from Thunder Creek will, but the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, he will not. His quotation is clear, Mr. Speaker: "Although I have some very, very serious reservations about some of the aspects of this budget, I will be voting in favour of it," is what the Leader of the Third Party said in *Hansard*.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1130)

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — He's too smart, he's too smart to vote against this budget. Not only is he too smart politically and in substance terms, a man of substance in voting for this budget, his statement is also very, very important. I'm going to say a word about this when it comes to the Liberals, when I return back to them. And remember these words by the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives. He says, I have some very serious, very serious reservations about some aspects of this budget, but I am voting in favour of it.

I'll just pick up on it now for the moment to say some of us have reservations about this budget. If people say, is it everything that we would want to achieve, the answer is no. Is it everything that we want to achieve in tax reduction? The answer is no. Is it everything that we want to achieve in terms of more for education and more for health care and more for roads? Although I think these are tremendous commitments of funds and projects, the answer is no. Do we want to do more for kids in poverty? Do we want to do more to aid social assistance and reforms? The answer is yes.

So the budget is not perfect. And like the Leader of the PC Party says, he uses the word, reservations. I don't have reservations. The Liberals say it's not enough. They don't say, reservations. They may say reservations, but basically they say, not enough. But unlike the Conservative leader, who's figured it out, you may have reservations but you've got to look at the heart and the soul and the substance of the budget. He says, I am going to override those reservations to make a public and political statement to vote yes for the budget, in effect putting the Liberals in the unenviable position of saying, great budget but not enough and I'm going to vote against it — yes, a good budget and I'm going to vote against it. In effect saying that the budget may have come seven-tenths of the way or eight-tenths of the way and I am going to vote against it and I am going to vote against coming eight-tenths of the way.

I say that is an incredible political position and it's a false position and you people will pay in your constituencies day in and day after for voting against this budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And when I say that this does not make logic, this is not logical, this is why the Leader of the Conservative Party is logical. You can say you have reservations and then you've got to make a fundamental decision. It's not logical, the Liberal position is ...

An Hon. Member: — Okay, enough already.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I know, it's enough already. You know something? I agree also. I'm getting embarrassed a little bit too much about quoting you, so let's both agree to get off it.

But while he's got some logic, here's where the Liberals are at, in addition to what the member from Thunder Creek says. Now I see the member from Arm River in his report, Monday, March 24, 1997, in the *Davidson Leader*, Arm River MLA report, he said this: "A 2 per cent decrease in the provincial sales tax. This will be . . ." What is he saying, Mr. Speaker? "This will be great for small business." And yet I'm going to vote against the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Great, great. Not reservations, but great. The Leader of the PCs, to come back to him for one last time on this issue, he has reservations. Your colleague, the member from Arm River, he doesn't have reservations. He says it's great and he says he's going to vote against the budget.

Well he's . . . maybe he won't vote against the budget. Who in the world, in logic and in politics, is going to have the courage to get up and to say no to this budget? I could continue on. I know that the member from Moosomin is not going to say no to this budget. The Moosomin editorial in the *World Spectator* says:

"MacKinnon deserves A plus for her latest budget."

Saskatchewan's Finance Minister Janice MacKinnon, deserves top marks for her latest provincial budget delivered to the Saskatchewan legislature. She seems to be doing everything right with the 1997 budget.

Says the Moosomin *World Spectator*.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Everything right. So I know the member for Moosomin is not going to be voting no for this budget, even on a free vote. Who in the world would logically, politically, substantively, analytically, even with the deficiencies, even with the criticisms, weighing the pros and the cons of this budget, on a turnaround budget, fighting our way through a deficit, fighting our way through a debt, fighting our way through a morass which was left on our hands by the Conservatives, who in the world would say that this budget — which is a turnaround budget, this budget which represents the people of Saskatchewan standing up and standing tall and saying to the rest of the province, from here on in, it's going to get better and better — who in the world would vote against this budget? Who in the world would vote against this budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, we don't need . . . and I don't say this in this House now. I'm saying it in the House but not saying it for House purposes. I tell you, the people of the province of Saskatchewan don't want the member from

Thunder Creek to be saying no. The people of Saskatchewan want us to say yes, because the people of Saskatchewan know that they have sacrificed. They've rolled up their sleeves. They've tightened up their belts. They knew that we had a goal, we had a vision, and they want us to say yes to this budget because we are rewarding them for their cooperation and support.

They want to say yes. Who else wants to say yes? How about all the nurturers? How about all the teachers? How about all those volunteers who have also had to make do with a little bit of less as we've got ourselves in this difficult financial mess. They say it's a turnaround budget. They want us to say yes.

What about our civil service, Mr. Speaker? Our civil service, fighting under difficult circumstances. And we've had to reshape and to refashion and to downsize. And they rolled up their sleeves and they met their challenges — the Department of Finance. But every civil servant here showed a dedication and professionalism; a dedication not only to the civil service but a dedication to the higher calling of the true meanings of the word, civil service — being civil and being servant to the public. They rolled up their sleeves. They want us to say yes to this budget as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And I say to the Liberal member from Thunder Creek opposite, rethink what you're going to say because somebody else wants us to say yes. The public at large is hungering for us to put aside our partisan bickering on areas where clearly the majority of the issues indicate support. The public of Saskatchewan wants us all to say unanimously, yes to this budget. They say we can lay aside the Liberal ideology and the Tory ideology and the NDP ideology in a wonderful celebration, and after six years we've turned the corner and we're standing on our feet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Yes, that's what Saskatchewan wants us to say — yes, yes, yes. And I want everybody in this House to say yes the same.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — There's another reason. There's another reason for saying yes, Mr. Speaker, and that is because this budget reflects a vision for the 21st century. This budget invests in people. This budget is a turnaround budget, but it's a turnaround budget to do what? Not just words, but to do what? To invest in people, to create jobs, and to create a climate for investing in people. Education reform — the best possible education that we can give and that we can afford. Kids in poverty, and social welfare reform. Making sure our health renewal — I'll say a word about health renewal — is maintained and improved. And we've done much here. In fact we lead the country in health renewal. Roads. And doing it all in a properly balanced situation.

The member from Thunder Creek talks about caring and sharing. Those are words. Our budget puts the meat onto the

bones. Our budget gives tangible, concrete programs like the children's action plan. They're going to vote against \$25 million for kids in poverty. They're going to vote against 2 per cent decrease in the sales tax. They're going to vote against a job creation climate which is going to boost jobs and the employment in the province of Saskatchewan.

They're going to vote against additional funding for K to 12. The teachers of Saskatchewan are going to be told that, that they're voting against the grant for . . . They're going to be saying no to the university students; they're going to be saying no to the SIAST students.

They're going to be saying no to all the contractors and to the member up there from Wood River who gets up last couple of days and talks about the potholes in the province of Saskatchewan, all the while pretending to care for the people for Saskatchewan and the roads. He's going to be saying no to highway improvement of \$2.5 billion. Maybe.

I'm still urging them to say yes in this whole situation because this budget has more than words about the soul of Canada. This has more than words about the vision of what it means to be a Canadian. This budget has a vision about investing in people — a vision, a dream, and practical programs. And it is a budget, I repeat again, that all of Saskatchewan, like all of Canada, is urging us, and I urge every member in this House, to say in a few moments, yes. Yes to Saskatchewan. Yes to the future. Yes to hope and to optimism. We're on the march again, Mr. Speaker. We're building again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had an interesting debate. I want to congratulate all members who've partaken in this debate. They've all participated and contributed something. Although I may have disagreed with many of the speeches made by the members opposite, none the less it's part of the contribution made.

But I want to contrast this vision that I've talked about, investing in people. That's our vision. Investing in Saskatchewan people, preparing for the 21st century — jobs, education, social reform, highways, health reform, and doing it while we've captured this dry ground from an ocean of red ink. That's our vision — investing in people.

Contrast that with the "visions" I use — I won't say vision — the statements made by the opposition parties in this debate. Let's take a look at it in the broad. Let's take a look at it in philosophical terms. Contrast this by the Liberals. First the official opposition, the Liberals, who supposedly have a new look, a new-look leader. Well I tell you, Mr. Speaker, they may have a new leader but they have the same old Liberal look.

They are the same old Liberal Party that has been the same old Liberal Party since goodness knows when. The same old Liberal Party, when in opposition, tries to talk progressively but when in government destroys social programs like the federal Liberal government has done — same old Liberal Party.

You know it's the same old Liberal Party in one significant

feature, Mr. Speaker. They're the only political party, I think anywhere in the world, that can sit on the fence and keep one ear to the ground. And that is an anatomical miracle, Mr. Speaker. The same old party. The same old party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Let me just tell you what I mean by this anatomical miracle of sitting on the fence and keeping one ground to the ear. Today in question period is a classic example of this.

The member from Kelvington got up . . . And by the way, the member from Kelvington has written to a couple of rural newspapers. The headline that I have here from the *Tisdale Recorder* says: "Need PST exemption." I'm quoting. "Sincerely, June Draude, MLA, Kelvington-Wadena constituency" — the Liberal member — and she says hear, hear.

And her issue was, and she raised it today in question period, the very same issue which she has written about. She says, exempt from those matters which are taxed by the PST, questions of fire-fighting equipment. That's what she says in the letter. That's what she says in the House.

Now here's my example about sitting on the fence and keeping one ear to the ground. As I tried to say in question period today, I'm going to say it in my remarks: what does the official Liberal Party of Saskatchewan say? Right here, November 26, right after the Liberal leader was elected in his convention. "Grit wants tax harmonization." Now let's be absolutely clear what tax harmonization means.

The GST (goods and services tax) taxes — pretend if you will, Mr. Speaker, just for demonstration purposes — it taxes all of the items listed on this piece of paper, like that. And in order for harmonization to take place, what you'd have to do is you'd have to add — according to law of Canada — the PST and all of the things that are taxed here, listed here, you'd have to come in just like that identically and cover the GST and PST. That's harmonization.

Not lowering the tax base; not squeezing the accordion of taxes, but through harmonization, expanding the level of taxation. That's what harmonization is. And the evidence is everywhere. That's why in Atlantic Canada — which your new Liberal leader cites by the way, with such great affection — the taxation level on the PST is, on average, double of what it is in Saskatchewan. And what we did in this budget was two things. Not only did we lower the rate from 9 to 7, but we reduced those taxable items. It's not good enough for the member — by the way, forget about the major, fundamental contradiction . . . in the result, we have the lowest sales tax in Canada next to Alberta, which has no sales tax.

Now which is it, Liberals? Which is it, official Leader of the Opposition? Which is it, new Liberal leader? Which is it, Liberal member from Thunder Creek? Do you support harmonization and the expanding of the tax base, and by the way, the taxes to be increased for the consumers, or do you support the letter taken by the member from Kelvington? Which

is it? That is a fundamental contradiction. There's an example of sitting on the fence and keeping one ear to the ground.

(1145)

But I want to tell you something else about taxation, Mr. Speaker. In the same article, the new Liberal leader said the following, quote:

When asked about a shift in the tax burden from business to families . . .

Which is what harmonization does. The Liberals laugh about this, because they have no other defence.

When asked about a shift in the tax burden from business to families, Melenchuk (I would say Dr. Melenchuk; he's the new Liberal leader) said he believed the impact can be negated by further reductions in the PST over time.

But I've said enough about the PST and harmonization. Here's the part that I want to read. Quote:

He also sees the potential to generate . . .

Get this, Mr. Speaker, and you should know this, the member from Shaunavon or Wood River and anybody in the area of the oil patch.

He . . . sees the potential to generate large sums of money by selling 10- and 15-year development leases (development leases) to oil and gas companies and getting them to pay up front. The money could then be used to pay down the debt and free up money to help cover future reductions in the blended tax.

So you see he's looking to reduce the blended tax; so even he recognizes that the accordion for taxation is going to be wide open and we're all going to be taxed to death under harmonization. He's looking for ways to mitigate it. And what's his great idea? What's his great idea? He's going to go to the oil companies and he's going to say this: on developmental leases, we want you to pay up front, in cash, for 10 to 15 years, up front.

Now let's just figure out the common sense of that. Let's forget about the oil companies, what we think about them. That's like me saying to the Official Leader of the Opposition, it's like me saying to Dr. Melenchuk, you know what, I've got a great idea. You pay up your personal and corporate taxes for 10 to 15 years up front in cash. You may go bankrupt in your business. I don't care. You may not be able to find one single barrel of oil. You may spend millions in drilling, but I'm going to force you to pump into the provincial treasury millions of dollars up front. And then they say at the same time, not only are we going to pump millions of dollars up front; we are going to be open for business. I tell you, every oil and natural gas company will take their rig, oil rig, and they'll head so fast for Alberta — thanks to the Liberals — we won't see them for dust.

That's the policy. Harmonization — they're going to tax the consumers. Now they're going to tax the business people and

they're going to say, pay up front. Well I tell you something, Mr. Leader of the Liberal Party — I tell you something Mr. Official Leader of the Opposition of the House, the Liberal Party — put your money where your mouth is. Pay your taxes 15 years up front right now. Will you do that? Will you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Pay your taxes up front 15 years. Well we might . . . It's such a great principle we might as well expand it to the potash company, we might as well expand . . . I got a good idea. Why don't we expand it to the farmers of Saskatchewan? Pay your taxes up front for 15 years, it's such a doggone good proposal.

Mr. Speaker, is this a vision? What coherence is this? What kind of sitting on the fence and keeping to the ear to the ground? I cannot believe him.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is the question of taxation and the Liberal Party. But what about health? I've been watching this debate with a great deal of interest, and again I want to come back to the health. And it's interesting in question period. One member gets up and says: I want more for this; I want more for that; I want more for this; I want more for that; I want more. By the way, all the while . . . Well mind you if they get the oil companies to pay 15 years up front then I guess the problem is solved.

The lower taxes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, lower taxes except for the oil companies. We got lower taxes, going to balance the budget.

Now health care. Now this is something which everybody in Saskatchewan is going to know, if they don't know it soon. They know this . . .

An Hon. Member: — Send that quote over about the taxes.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — That tax thing I'm going to . . . Don't worry about sending it over. It'll be known province wide very, very shortly.

Here is the interview. Here I have, here I have . . . now, now hush down. I know that the Liberals, a little dose of truth, they're allergic to, you know, and it makes them very agitated. Here's an interview that the new Liberal leader, Dr. Melenchuk, gave to the CBC TV Monday, Costa Maragos, November 25, 1996. I'm quoting. This has been done by my colleague from Regina in that very, very excellent speech.

Here's a quotation transcript: Maragos . . . That's in case you don't know, those of you who . . . I don't watch the CBC, but I'm told he's the co-anchor of the CBC. I'm a strong supporter of the CBC, but I happen to like country music better. So in any event, Maragos is the host. So he asks the Liberal leader the following:

What inefficiencies would you find to make up that \$1.3 billion dollars? (referring to health care).

Melenchuk: Well, health care . . .

Maragos: How much would you save there? Give me a number.

Boy this Maragos asks pretty tough questions, you know.

Melenchuk: I don't know, because I haven't seen the numbers. I'll have to look at the numbers.

Maragos: (Another tough question.) If you don't know, then how can you say that?

I think that's a pretty tough question actually. I'll make a statement. When someone says, how do you know, he says, I don't know. Well if you don't know it why do you say it? I don't know why I said it. I just happened to say it. I'm a Liberal. I'll say anything at all. Well, he says, if you don't know, where would it come from?

Melenchuk: (Get this, this is the part.) Because (here it is) . . . Because (here's what it says) . . . Because I know . . . (I'll stop here to say . . . and I don't diminish the man as an individual. He's a professional, a doctor, and committed to care and we all respect that. But I know what he means when he says here.) Because I know . . . (meaning parenthetically, my words, I'm a doctor). Because I know that there are inefficiencies in the system . . .

That's what the good doctor says. I know there are inefficiencies. By the way, I'll stop there to say, if he knows, I challenge him and invite him to tell me where those inefficiencies are in detail. I invite the official Leader of the Opposition to tell me where those inefficiencies are in detail.

Quote:

. . . and I understand health care reform, and I understand health care systems. And I know that there are inefficiencies in the system right now.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he's going to find the \$1.3 billion of a \$1.5 billion budget in health care because he knows where the inefficiencies are. Don't know what kind of a health care we're going to have left with only 200 million. Not very much. It will be the Liberal approach to health care: here's two aspirins and call me in the morning, I guess, for \$200 million. That's basically what it will be.

I want the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan to tell me where those inefficiencies are going to be. I'm going to ask them questions. Is there an inefficiency in the way we pay our doctors fee for service, or should we, Dr. Melenchuk and the Liberals, start paying our doctors on a salary basis? Is that an inefficiency? What do you say about that, Mr. Official Liberal Leader of the Opposition.

Is there an inefficiency that we could perhaps remedy by using more nurses as the gatekeeper, and put nurse practitioners . . . and put more emphasis on nurse practitioners? What do you say about that, Liberal Party? Should we be maybe closing more hospitals because there are too many hospitals? Is there an inefficiency there, Mr. Leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Official

Leader of the Opposition?

Maybe we've got too many nurses. Maybe the Liberals should tell us if there are inefficiencies with nurses and they should be cutting back the nurses. Maybe we've got too many nurse practitioners who help out, the LPNs (licensed practical nurse) — the licensed practitioner . . . practice nurses.

An Hon. Member: — Maybe home care.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Maybe we should be saying to them . . . maybe home care. Maybe we should be putting on, as the member from Arm River says, two tiers. Maybe as the member from Arm River says, we should be putting on premiums and deterrent fees as the last Liberal government in Saskatchewan did. Tell me where those inefficiencies are because you said you could identify them.

And believe me, when the health budget comes up — and every budget, when it comes up right now to election time provincially in '99 or 2000 — I am going to be asking each and every Liberal, as I'm asking this House, as I'm asking the people of Saskatchewan to write to your Liberal MLA, and make them tell you specifically where they're going to cut \$1.3 billion from health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Make them tell you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Because I'll tell you, because I tell you, Mr. Speaker, they can't. And if they can, they will — like their kissing cousins in Ottawa — destroy the very thing that we in Saskatchewan invented. And so long as I'm here, and we're here, that will never happen there again . . . (inaudible) . . . Never happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — One last comment. One last comment about health care. And I got a . . . I got a charge out of. But I got a little bit of a charge, in sense of a smile, but I was troubled by this. This is March 10, 1997 and this debate, the official Leader of the Opposition, the member from Canora, is attacking us on health care. "Establishing puppet district health boards to act as its fall guys."

Then the member from Arm River, "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know full well," this is March 20, 1997 *Hansard*:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know full well, and so do the people of the province, that the district boards are only a front for the NDP (New Democratic Party) government's reform model, the wellness model.

Only a front. Puppets and a front. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a shameful comment and a slur on all of the hard-working people out there who are trying to make the system work, trying to make, with some difficulties and . . . It's a shameful slur on volunteers and others who come forward. A shameful slur, and

all the district health boards know that already.

But apart from that, here's a fundamental contradiction. I said the Liberals sit on the fence with one ear to the ground. Well look, we'd better call a spade a shovel right now, Mr. official Leader of the Opposition. If they're a puppet, or more importantly, as your colleague the member from Arm River says, that district health boards are nothing but NDP fronts loaded by the NDP, can you tell me please where Ms. Anita Bergman, member of the Regina District Health Board and president of the provincial Liberal Party, stands on this issue? Is she an NDPer? Don't know — we should check maybe the membership list. Is she a puppet? Maybe the Leader of the Liberal Party and the official Leader of the Opposition and the president of the Liberal Party should get together to figure out whether they're puppets and whether they're NDP fronts.

Because I tell you this, either Ms. Bergman agrees with the leader and the Liberal Party that she's a puppet and a NDP front and resigns; or in the alternative the Liberal leaders agree with Ms. Bergman that she's not a puppet and she's trying her best, and they both resign and let's get on with a proper leadership structure in the province of Saskatchewan for the Liberal Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker, a very brief word about my friends with respect to the Conservatives opposite. And what is their vision — what is their vision? What is their vision? I don't want you to change your vote, but you know this is . . .

An Hon. Member: — Cut it short.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Well I'm going to cut it short, but I'm going to say this. I categorize it as kind of a rear-view vision of the future. The driver of this car called PC, circa 1982 model — who by the way is an engaging, and I say this with genuineness, intelligent, political and policy person, although I disagree with almost everything he stands for — there he is, he's driving the car and it's loaded. He's got four others in there — one in the front seat and three of the other gentlemen in the back seat. And do you know what? He's keeping his eye on that rear-view mirror, future vision of the PCs. And the car is just careening from the left to the right and around, because he's not looking around. And he may even hit the odd pothole because he's not looking ahead into the future.

It's always back to the future. And I tell you the one thing that highlighted this was this issue of the bankruptcy debate which the member from Greystone raised the other day — and I thank her again. I said . . . and I'll just give you this quote very briefly, before I close on this issue, what the Bank of Canada says. We went from AA plus under the Blakeney administration to BBB plus. The number of sources of funds went from 140 to 155 down to 25.

And you know when we said it was a crisis, what happens? By the way, Mr. Hodgins said it was a crisis when he resigned. You all know that, I said it in question period. Well this is nothing new about the Tories when I say rear-view vision of the future. Because in 1992 when I went on provincial television and I told the province about the crisis — and by the way was criticized

by everybody for wasting the TV time and the like. I can't understand it, a nice television performer like myself and all the like — what was the Tory response? April 9, 1992, Swenson: "Romanow using scare tactics." 1992. So when the issue arose a few days ago on *The Globe and Mail* story on bankruptcy — rear-view vision future — what happens a few days ago? "Tories say Romanow exaggerated problem." Quote:

But Conservative MLA Don Toth said Tuesday the government was far from bankrupt, considering it had \$130 million socked away in the Liquor (fund) . . .

Back to the future, rear-view vision of tomorrow. They said it in 1992. They're saying it in 1997.

(1200)

And when you ask about where's the money come . . . and the Leader of the PCs says what does the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* editorialist say, you know what I want to tell the Leader of the PC Party? I don't give a doggone what the *Star-Phoenix* or the *Leader-Post* says about me at any time.

Because if I ever get a break from the Conrad Black newspapers, who are singing the alleluia chorus for you the Tories and the alleluia chorus for you the Liberals . . . I tell you, if I listened to the Tory . . . if I listened to the *Star-Phoenix* or the *Leader-Post*, I never would have entered politics 25 or 30 years ago, and thank goodness I never did.

And thank goodness, through my friends and colleagues and the support of my party and the people of Saskatchewan, today we have abandoned the rear-view vision of the future. We have a future vision of investing in people, preparing Saskatchewan for the 21st century. We are strong. We are tall. We are on the march again, thanks to this budget and thanks to this Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — No, Mr. Speaker, what I want to say about this comparison is back to my central theme. I am urging every member of this House to vote yes, because this budget is framed on a vision of investing in people and preparing for the 21st century, because of the specific things it does from the tax reduction to the enhanced programs.

Vote yes. Especially since you do not have a vision — one in the rear view, one all over the place, sitting on the fence with an ear to the ground; one with three leaders at least and very confused. So you don't have a vision. Vote yes. The people of Saskatchewan want you to vote yes.

And before I close, I want to just close on this quotation. There is one author, controversial in some ways, but he had one quote that I like. I want members to remember this. Peter Drucker is a controversial writer in some ways, but he writes the following, quote:

Long-range planning does not deal with future decisions but with the future of present decisions.

Present decisions are deciding the future in this budget — that's what we're doing — around the vision. Investing in people, preparing for the 21st century, shared values.

You know I've been talking nationally everywhere that I can about the need for a national alternative vision. The member from Thunder Creek was saying I'm not committed to Canada. He can say anything he wants about that. I know what my record is and my love and my belief is.

I've been talking to Canadians everywhere about a national vision which reflects the future of present decisions, a national vision which says, let's commit ourselves to social programs and don't cut back, including the child benefit plan. Let's talk about working as a Team Canada in deficit and debt reduction. I'm fully prepared to work with the Liberals in Ottawa if they'd only pick up the phone and tell me what they're going to do rather than all of a sudden announce in a press release that we get hit in the neck with another cut-back to health care, education.

I'd say, let's invest in people by building an infrastructure in education and health — the very thing that the Minister of Finance and this side of the government is doing in this budget — nationally. I say, let's stop this rush to the bottom that we see in Canada — because of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the free trade we've got to compete against Chile, we've got to compete against Mexico. We're never going to pay our workers \$4 a day. We shouldn't. We should be ashamed of thinking that.

We shouldn't be going to Alabama North and having right-to-work laws and attacking the occupational health and safety for workers and attacking minimum wage and attacking labour standards and attacking The Trade Union Act and attacking the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement).

We are building a society of compassion and hope and opportunity. Not just words but an agenda and a budget provincially which is — I think I say so in modesty but I believe accurately — a model for all of Canada of that alternate national vision of investing in Canadian people to prepare us for the 21st century. That is our hope and our vision. That is our hope and our vision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And just look how far we've come. Look in Saskatchewan — no deficit. Look federally — deficit. Look in Saskatchewan — attacking the debt. Haven't even touched the debt. Look in Saskatchewan — 57 million more for health care. Look federally — 2.5 billion this year alone loss in health care. Look in Saskatchewan — 2.5 billion for highways. Look nationally — nothing for highways. Look in Saskatchewan — a tax break of 2 percentage points. Look nationally — no tax break and no tax relief in sight and no vision.

Is it un-Canadian to talk about those values? It is Canadian to fight for those values and programs. And I'm urging everybody to make a political statement — to vote yes for this budget, to

vote for this vision. And if you do, we'll all be the better for it. Saskatchewan wants you to vote yes. Canada wants you to vote yes. I urge all members to vote yes and from here we can build a greater and better Saskatchewan and Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 12:10 p.m. until 12:11 p.m.

Subamendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 13

Krawetz	Gantefer	Draude
Osika	Bjornerud	Hillson
Julé	Boyd	D'Autremont
Toth	Heppner	Goohsen
Haverstock		

Nays — 39

Romanow	Flavel	Van Mulligen
Wiens	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Shillington	Mitchell	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Goulet	Lautermilch	Upshall
Kowalsky	Crofford	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Trew
Bradley	Lorje	Scott
Teichrob	Nilson	Cline
Serby	Stanger	Hamilton
Murray	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Jess
Langford	Murrell	Thomson

The division bells rang from 12:12 p.m. until 12:13 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas - 15

Krawetz	McLane	Gantefer
Draude	Osika	Bjornerud
Belanger	Hillson	Julé
Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth
Heppner	Goohsen	Haverstock

Nays - 39

Romanow	Flavel	Van Mulligen
Wiens	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Shillington	Mitchell	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Goulet	Lautermilch	Upshall
Kowalsky	Crofford	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Trew
Bradley	Lorje	Scott
Teichrob	Nilson	Cline
Serby	Stanger	Hamilton
Murray	Wall	Kasperski

Ward	Sonntag	Jess
Langford	Murrell	Thomson

very short time. So enjoy the break. Thank you very much.

The division bells rang from 12:16 p.m. until 12:17 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 42

Romanow	Flavel	Van Mulligen
Wiens	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Shillington	Mitchell	Atkinson
Tchorzewski	Johnson	Whitmore
Goulet	Lautermilch	Upshall
Kowalsky	Crofford	Renaud
Calvert	Pringle	Trew
Bradley	Lorje	Scott
Teichrob	Nilson	Cline
Serby	Stanger	Hamilton
Murray	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Sonntag	Jess
Langford	Murrell	Thomson
Boyd	Heppner	Goohsen

Nays — 12

Krawetz	McLane	Gantefoer
Draude	Osika	Bjornerud
Belanger	Hillson	Julé
D'Autremont	Toth	Haverstock

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture and Food Vote 1

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I've been able to wrest away the authority from the whip here to make this motion, but I want to take the occasion, before moving that the committee rise and report progress, to wish everybody in the Assembly — the Leader of the Opposition, the Third Party leader, all the members of the caucus, the member from Greystone, all the staff — a very, very happy, religious, wonderful Easter weekend, and to the people in the province of Saskatchewan. It is the time of hope and inspiration for all of us and I really want us to capture that spirit. And I think we deserve also, a few days break. So happy Easter to everybody.

And I move the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. But I think the Leader of the Opposition may want to say a word, if you'll permit.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, adding to the words of the Premier, we want to wish everyone — Mr. Premier, Leader of the Third Party, all other colleagues — just a great Easter break. I know it's very important to get back and share some time with family.

And I wish everyone a safe holiday and we'll be back in a very,

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the PC caucus we as well would like to wish all of the members of the legislature and the staff in the legislative building all the very best on the Easter weekend. It's an important time to share with friends and family and I'm hoping that everyone will have opportunity to do exactly that over the course of this weekend. It's a little bit of a break for all of us and it's certainly welcome. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Premier, have a good weekend, and certainly to all members of the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Before I ask the question I also want to wish everyone a very best Easter.

The committee reported progress.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure now to move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has moved this House do now adjourn. Before putting the question if I may just take a moment to — on behalf of the Chair and all of the staff of the Legislative Assembly — to acknowledge that the House has passed a motion to extend the return until Wednesday to permit members to spend a bit of time with their families as well as in their constituencies, and to wish all members, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly staff, a very happy Easter weekend with your families and in your constituencies.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:24 p.m.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Boyd	487
Julé	487
McPherson	487
Osika	487

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	487
-------------	-----

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Toth	487
Hillson	487

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Shillington	487
-------------------	-----

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Easter Greetings	
Tchorzewski	488
Teenage Inventor	
Julé	488
Northwest Health District Accreditation	
Sonntag	488
Congratulations to Regional Drama Festival Participants	
Draude	488
Weyburn Kentucky Fried Chicken Outlet Wins National Recognition	
Bradley	489
Bridgepoint Centre for Eating Disorders at Milden	
Wiens	489
Congratulations to the Regina Pats	
Trew	489
Spring has Arrived	
Scott	489

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fire Prevention Levies	
Draude	490
Romanow	490
Establishment of Youth Justice Committee	
Hillson	490
Nilson	491
Calvert	491
Municipal Roads Funding	
Bjornerud	491
Teichrob	491
Free Votes	
Boyd	492
Romanow	492
Public Prosecutions Review	
Toth	492
Nilson	492
Canadian Wheat Board Contracts	
D'Autremont	493
Upshall	493
Highway Maintenance	
McPherson	493
Renaud	493

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Kowalsky	495
----------------	-----

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

Aldridge	495
Romanow	499
Recorded Divisions	508

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Agriculture and Food — Vote 1

Romanow	508
Krawetz	508
Boyd	508