

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by residents of the community of Nipawin. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

These petitions come from Prince Albert, Melfort, Birch Hills, across the North, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, to present petitions as well. Reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

This petition is signed by individuals from the community of Melfort.

Mr. Bjonnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with aboriginal and Metis leaders in the province of Saskatchewan in an immediate effort to end the destructive and dangerous practice of night hunting in the province for everyone regardless of their heritage.

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

The community the signatures came from, Mr. Speaker, are the

town of Saltcoats. I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition as well. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Weldon and Kinistino.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased as well on behalf of Saskatchewan residents to present a petition this afternoon dealing with the Channel Lake/Jack Messer situation. These petitioners come from the Kinistino, Prince Albert areas of the province and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the people from the area surrounding Assiniboia, Mankota, and Glentworth. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of people concerned about the Plains Health Centre closure. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who've signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Waldeck, Gull Lake, Wymark, and Swift Current. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

The signatures are from Pilot Butte, White City, and surrounding areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll read the prayer for relief:

Your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent its closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Your petitioners include some of the upset and concerned citizens of McLean, Regina, and Qu'Appelle. I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues here today and bring forth petitions from people throughout Saskatchewan who are becoming increasingly frustrated and angry with this government's decision to unilaterally close the Plains hospital . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now the hon. member will be well aware of course, that in presenting petitions one is not to enter into debate. A brief description of the petition but without the debate is most appropriate, and I will invite him to present the prayer of the petition immediately.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

The people that have signed the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Mankota. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of continuing pressure, I'll read the following prayer for relief from the people of Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

Today these folks are all from the community of Fox Valley, and I'm happy to present it on their behalf, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order a petition regarding the Plains Health Centre presented on April 1 has been reviewed; pursuant

to rule 12(7) it is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received.

According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly regarding the funding of the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway; acting to save the Plains Health Centre; and cancelling severance payments to Jack Messer and to calling an independent inquiry into Channel Lake.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

Regarding home schooling in Saskatchewan: (1) please indicate what types of support are available for families engaged in home schooling; (2) how is this support determined; and (3) how is this support accessed?

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

Of the Minister of Energy and Mines: (1) During the last reporting period how many crude oil, salt water and other related spills of pollutants occurred in the province; (2) how many flow line breaks and well head blow-outs and breaks occurred; (3) how many effluent overflows and spills occurred in the natural gas field, including brine collectors?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you a very distinguished gentleman sitting in your gallery, Dr. Jack Boan. I wonder if he might stand please.

He was a professor emeritus of health economics at the University of Regina and a member and past president of the Canadian Health Economic Research Association. Dr. Boan is also the president of the Justice Emmett Hall Memorial Foundation and is here today to accept a cheque on its behalf. Dr. Boan had the privilege of being a researcher on the 1964 royal commission and a colleague of Justice Emmett Hall.

I would like all members of the Assembly today to join with me in welcoming Dr. Boan to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Multiple Sclerosis Fashion Show

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saskatoon volunteers and businesses rose to the occasion once again when they joined forces late last week to make the first annual MS (multiple sclerosis) Spring Fling Fashion Show a tremendous success.

Fun was the focus of this special evening and every member of the sold-out-to-capacity crowd not only had a great time but they got to be entertained by Ramblin' Dave; Maurice Drouin with Melanie Gibbs; Ventson Donelson of the Saskatchewan Roughriders; and they all went home with a personal gift pack to boot.

All of this was made possible by the generosity of local sponsors and the hard work of the MS Society's staff and a host of volunteers, including Saskatoon fire-fighters.

Every single dime raised goes to helping to find a cure for multiple sclerosis. I am very proud of my community, Mr. Speaker, and very grateful to those who care so much about the quality of lives of other people.

I wanted all members to know of this terrific event and extend to them an invitation to the second annual MS Spring Fling Fashion Show — not so easy to say — to be held in Saskatoon in March of 1999.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Donation to the Emmett Hall Memorial Foundation

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For a small province we have given to Canada a disproportionate number of men and women who have made a difference in the life of our nation, whose influence has extended far beyond our provincial boundaries.

Two names in particular are associated with our national health care system, Saskatchewan's gift to Canada, as our Premier says; Tommy Douglas, members of the Assembly might have heard of before; and as we are reminded earlier by the Minister of Health, another distinguished Saskatchewan son, Justice Emmett Hall, chaired the 1964 royal commission which recommended that the rest of the country join Saskatchewan in providing universal, accessible, portable, comprehensive, publicly funded and publicly administered health care.

Both Premier Douglas and Justice Hall can be rightly called fathers of medicare. Both brought honour to our province. And I know all members are pleased that Dr. Boan and his association are establishing the Emmett Hall Memorial Foundation in order to, and I quote, "honour those who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of health ideals of equality, fairness, justice and efficiency in Canada's health system."

We are pleased that the government today has presented a contribution of \$7,500 to the foundation and we look forward to the biennial Emmett Hall memorial lecture. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Betaseron Approved for MS Victim

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not often that the Liberal opposition will stand in this House and thank the Minister of Health for a job well done. But today we're doing just that.

We recently introduced the minister to a number of MS victims, including Debbie Roger of Avonlea, and called on him to personally ensure her case and others are treated fairly by a formulary committee.

Mr. Minister, Debbie Roger of Avonlea has been waiting months for this government to allow her to access Betaseron and today we've received news that the formulary committee has approved an application for Ms. Roger. We hope that she will now see an improvement in her quality of life as other MS victims have seen after being able to access these drugs.

On behalf of Debbie Roger I would like to thank the minister for addressing this issue in such a serious fashion. I only hope this is a sign that the minister and his government are starting to listen to and care about the health care concerns of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Turtleford Fair Canada's Best for 1997

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Turtleford's claim of having the best little country fair in the West has gained new credibility. It was recently chosen as the best local fair in Canada for 1997.

The Saskatchewan Association of Agricultural Societies and Exhibitions nominated the Turtleford Fair over all other competitors from Saskatchewan. The Canadian Association of Exhibitions then judged Turtleford against all other Canadian local fairs.

Special attention was paid to the quality and variety of programs offered, demonstrated community support, participation of volunteers and exhibitors, and the use of innovative ideas and concepts.

To put on a fair of this calibre takes a great deal of planning and a lot of volunteer effort. Congratulations are in order for all involved. A special thanks to Marion Nordell, secretary-treasurer of the agricultural society; Marlene De Graaf, president of the agricultural society; and Judy Reimer, executive director of the Saskatchewan Association of Agricultural Societies and Exhibitions, who accepted the award on behalf of the Turtleford Fair in Toronto last month.

In 1998 the fair will be held on August 1 and 2 in my constituency. I invite all of you to come and enjoy the best little country fair in Canada in Turtleford. You'll find it in my constituency. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Road Hazards

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Labour stood in this Assembly during reply to the budget address and spoke on the merits of the occupational health and safety program and its regulations. He lauded the Act for providing persons the right to refuse work if their lives are endangered or they are in danger of injury; and he suggested such persons could not be terminated from their job or be

penalized if they refuse to work in a dangerous environment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on that very same premiss, I am thinking of claiming that very right this day, because every day I find my life endangered as I am tossed to and fro in my vehicle travelling on the crumbling, life-threatening, crater-ridden roads of Saskatchewan praying all the time that I will make it to my destination.

And, Mr. Speaker, I may not be the only person in this Assembly who has encountered danger on our streets and roads. The member from Regina South turned up in the Assembly this week with a black eye and a fat lip. Could it have been from the dangerous roads or perhaps the dangerous streets?

So in respect to the aforesaid legislation, Mr. Speaker, I am heartened to know that I cannot be terminated from my job or penalized should I refuse to work because of the state of Saskatchewan highways. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I shall be speaking to the Premier, the Minister of Highways, and the Minister of Labour about improving those conditions on the roads, and the possibility of extending to me the rights, in this great piece of legislation . . .

The Speaker: — The hon. member's time has expired.

Saskatoon Cadet Selected for Honour Band

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A young constituent of mine, John Weisgarber, has been selected as a member of the prestigious cadet honour band of the prairie region. John is one of 100 cadets chosen from the 210 sea, army, and air cadets units from across the prairies to tour with the honour band.

The Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, the Royal Canadian Army Cadets, and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets are collectively referred to as the Canadian Cadet Organizations. These 1,100 units are located across Canada. The Navy League, the Army League, and the Air Cadet League, in conjunction with local community sponsors, operates and support the Canadian Cadets Organization in partnership with the Department of National Defence. The aims are to develop in youth the attributes of good citizenship and leadership, promote physical fitness, and stimulate interest in the sea, land, and air elements of the Canadian Armed Forces.

John plays the bagpipes and is a member of the 2293 North Saskatchewan Regiment of the Royal Canadian Army Corps. The unit is commanded by Captain Mark Rosin and is sponsored by the 38th Army, Navy, and Airforce Veterans Association. The cadet honour band of the prairie region will play concerts in Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton. And I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate John, and to wish him the best of luck in his future.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

B.C. By-election

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about what is now a

little red riding in a certain neighbourhood in a province called B.C. In this riding voters wanted a candidate they could send to the big House far away in Ottawa. First the people visited the Reform candidate, but this time they thought his policies were much too hard. The people of this "little red riding" then visited the NDP (New Democratic Party) candidate. His policies were much too soft and cost far too much.

They tried to visit the member from Kindersley's Tory cousin but, although the lights were on, no one was home.

Then the people of this riding visited the Liberal candidate and they thought his policies were just right. So when it came time to send a candidate to this House in a far away land, the people of this riding chose the Liberal candidate.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, 1,000 more people chose the Liberal candidate over the Reform candidate and over 6,500 chose the Liberal over the NDP candidate. And almost 10,000 more people chose the Liberal candidate over the member from Kindersley's sorry Tory Party.

Mr. Speaker, this is no fairy tale; this is reality. And I would like to congratulate the new Member of Parliament from B.C. (British Columbia), and wish Lou Sekora good luck.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

E & C Quine Resource Centre

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, one of Canada's most prominent library suppliers, Brodart, recently issued their 1998 catalogue. On the cover of the catalogue is a picture of the E & C Quine Resource Centre at the Yorkton Regional High School in my constituency.

According to Brodart, E & C Quine Resource Centre is a truly beautiful learning centre — lots of natural light, an abundance of oak and greenery creates an atmosphere of warmth. The circular resource centre is the heart of the school.

In 1997, thanks to the generosity of the Quine family and the support of the school board, most of the furnishings in the centre were replaced and the entire centre was redecorated. All of the redecorations were planned by the school staff with the expert guidance of the art teacher, Ms. Diane Koch.

Mr. Speaker, the E & C Quine Resource Centre is a credit to the Quine family and the Yorkton Regional High School. This national recognition is a tribute to the Quines, the Yorkton Regional High School, and the quality of education in Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier or his designate.

This morning's article in the newspaper confirmed what everyone already knew, the Premier's political interference in SaskPower cost Saskatchewan taxpayers millions of dollars.

According to David Leighton, a well-known professor of business at the University of Western Ontario, the Premier undermined the authority of the SaskPower board when he stepped in to save Jack Messer's job in 1994. Professor Leighton says that you weakened the company . . . says the Premier weakened the company and contributed to the eventual loss of millions of dollars in the Channel Lake fiasco.

To the Deputy Premier: will the Premier of Saskatchewan agree to testify under oath in front of the Channel Lake investigation to explain the political rescue of Jack Messer?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I know that all members will be impressed with the new approach by the member opposite — not ranting and raving today, calmer, quieter. And I would congratulate the member on this new approach.

Rather than calling the committee a kangaroo court, rather than coming to the committee unlike your colleague from Melfort who asks his questions in a reasonable way, your new approach today of asking in a reasonable tone of voice doesn't go unnoticed. Because I would expect that since you started down this road, collapsing your vote to be equal with the Liberals has led many to believe that your ranting and raving at the committees of this legislature is not working. So I accept today your reasonable approach.

I want to say to you clearly that the Premier explained his rationale for trying to bring harmony in government at every level. He explained that very well in the House. And for you to try to say that there is any other motive, I think is irresponsible.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Premier, in 1994 the SaskPower board wanted to fire Jack Messer because he was incompetent, but the Premier stepped in to save Jack's job. You and your government have sent a clear message to the SaskPower board that the NDP Premier for Saskatchewan is running the company and he isn't interested in what any NDP SaskPower board member thinks.

The message from the SaskPower board members was clear, that they were puppets for the NDP and nothing more. The message from the Premier was that either you do what you are told or the NDP will get different board members.

Mr. Deputy Premier, it's time to stop the NDP patronage games. He's already cost the province millions of dollars. Will the Premier agree to come clean and explain his actions, under oath, before the Channel Lake investigation?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, now for close to 20 days we have been here answering all of the questions that you put forward about the arrangement; we've tabled the documents. I say again, unlike you, sir, and your government, the Devine government which you supported, which you went to the leadership convention to support Mr. Devine. You can run and hide now and pretend you're not a Tory; you can do that. You can pretend it all you like.

But the fact of the matter is that we have been more open with this file than anything your government did in the nine years they were in government while they ran the debt up to the tune of \$15 billion. You've never apologized. All you've done is run and hide and pretend you're in a different political party.

Come clean with the public. Admit you're a Tory; apologize for the 15 billion in debt. It will be good for you because being open is an exercise that is important in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Yesterday Jack Messer testified under oath that SaskPower was paying for lawyers advising him on the Channel Lake investigation.

First the Premier rewards his old buddy, Jack Messer, by making him president of SaskPower in 1991, then the Premier steps in to save his job in 1994, and then again in 1996, in spite of the fact that the SaskPower board wanted to fire him. Then Jack goes out, Jack Messer goes out and loses five million bucks because he forgets to read a contract and the NDP is forced to fire him, but not before the Premier has arranged for a \$300,000 parting gift courtesy of the Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Now we find that SaskPower is paying for Jack Messer's lawyers. Mr. Minister, who gave the order to have SaskPower pay for Jack Messer's lawyers, and how much of taxpayers' money has already been spent on this?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — That member opposite and his Tory buddies who are in court more than anyone will know about who pays for lawyers. And I think the question that many people have is are the lawyers that are defending your former colleagues being paid out of the slush fund? That's what many people are asking.

As it would relate to Mr. Messer, as it would relate to Mr. Messer's legal bills for the inquiry — which you now admit is a legitimate process — SaskPower is not paying the legal bills.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we asked Jack Messer why SaskPower was paying for his lawyer, after he made the admission that SaskPower was paying for him, and you know what he said, Mr. Minister? Jack said that the lawyers were representing both SaskPower and himself.

Mr. Minister, do you think that the NDP should be paying for Jack Messer through SaskPower? Paying for his legal interests and SaskPower's legal interests are one and the same. Under whose direct authority did SaskPower hire Jack Messer a team of lawyers to assist him in testifying in front of the Channel Lake investigation? And, Mr. Deputy Premier, have you made arrangements to have Jack Messer reimburse SaskPower the legal services that he's already received.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I congratulated the member earlier for his new approach — reading his questions; being disciplined. And I understand that that's a nice new approach but that you also should listen to the answer which I gave you to the last question. I said we are not . . . I said SaskPower is not paying for Jack Messer's legal fees in the inquiry.

Now I see the member who chairs the Public Accounts yelling from her seat. And I want to make it clear to her, who calls the committee a kangaroo court, that we are not paying for Jack Messer's legal counsel in the inquiry that we're holding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporations' Foreign Investments

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). More heads are now rolling over at SaskPower in a desperate attempt to save your hide. Now you've fired Michael Hogan over the botched Guyana deal that cost taxpayers millions of dollars, but who approved the little adventure in Guyana? You did — you and the former minister and the Premier. You stood up in the House, and in public day after day after day, telling us what a wonderful deal this was. But when it all went haywire every one of you went running for cover and left Michael Hogan to take the fall.

Mr. Minister, are you going to start taking responsibility? When are we going to start seeing you and other NDP ministers involved in some constructive dismissals?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to that member opposite who's running for the leadership of the Conservative Party, having run as a Liberal, having run as a Liberal, having deceived his constituents, having deceived his constituents that he was a Liberal — having promised and signed documents saying he would never leave the Liberal Party — and then to turn his back and run as a Conservative . . . And he talks about credibility. He talks about credibility.

I want to tell you about the situation as it relates to Guyana. There was a letter of intent signed to review whether or not this was a good arrangement. And, Mr. Speaker, if you get some control over the yelling and hollering from the Conservatives, it would be very helpful.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It's obvious that we never get any answers in question period. We're going to have to ask you to come and testify under oath and maybe that will get to the bottom of some of the questions we've been answering.

Mr. Minister, finally in Guyana you recognized that you blew a million and a half of taxpayers' dollars, and it looks as if SaskPower actually got the messages of getting out of these ridiculous deals. Unfortunately, SaskEnergy and SaskTel haven't quite figured it out.

People over Saskatchewan have said, we don't want you in Guyana or New Zealand or Chile. Haven't you learned anything yet, Mr. Minister? Haven't you learned from NST or Guyana?

Will you direct all Crown corporations, Mr. Minister, to get out of all foreign adventures and use taxpayers' dollars for the benefit of Saskatchewan taxpayers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I understand what the member is

saying. When he moved to the Conservative Party, he accepted the program of privatization. I know you believe in privatization.

Now I want to say, tomorrow when you read the *Leader-Post*, I don't know what the result will be as it relates to the public opinion on Crown corporations, but I'll make my bet that you're on the wrong side on the issue as to whether the public supports Crown corporations in this province or not.

Because I've been out at Unity, I've . . . I can't hear, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the — order, order — the Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the minister providing the answer. Order. And I do note that when the hon. member was putting his question, the House made it quite possible to be able to hear the question put. And I will ask for the same courtesy to be extended to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say again, the members opposite want to privatize the Crown corporations. We understand that.

But I want to tell you that I was in Unity the other night where we had a meeting with the chamber of commerce and we had a show of hands of how many people supported equity investment outside of Saskatchewan. And do you know what? Over 90 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . This is the chamber in Unity, to the member who's yelling from Cannington constituency, continues to yell, Mr. Speaker, to the point where you can't hear in here. Yelling and hollering from their seat . . .

The Speaker: — I will ask for the — order — I will ask for the cooperation of the House to provide the courtesy for the answer to be heard. And I'll ask the minister to wrap up his response briefly.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again, I've been at a number of public meetings — in Watrous, in Humboldt, in Unity — and I ask the chambers and the business people whether or not they want equity and consulting done outside of the province, by Crown corporations.

At every meeting the majority say yes, on a cautious basis, with proper support, go and do equity, do consulting, and do project management. And I'll tell you, when the poll comes out tomorrow in Crown corporations you, sir, as Leader of the Conservative Party, will be again on the wrong side of that issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Plains Health Centre Closure

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition and the Save the Plains Committee joined forces today, announcing a number of initiatives so people don't have the closure of the Plains shoved down their throats.

A number of public forums will take place in the weeks ahead to give people a chance to speak out on this issue. When the minister was asked by the media if he planned on attending a Regina forum he said, it may not be appropriate. He didn't

know what role he could possibly play.

Well for God's sake, he's the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. Start acting like a minister. Will you attend this meeting? Will you listen to what the people have to say? Will you place a moratorium on the closure of the Plains hospital until after the next provincial election?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have now over the last three weeks, on the questions that the Liberal opposition have asked me, what is the intention of the Plains Health Centre . . . And the member knows that yesterday or the day before there was announcement by the Minister responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management and the minister responsible for Post-Secondary, made the announcement that the Plains Health Centre will be assumed by the Saskatchewan institute of applied arts and science and will soon become the new technical institute for southern Saskatchewan and the rest of the province.

And I say to the member opposite, when he says to me that he is going to be holding a number of public inquiries, going to be going around suggesting that we should keep the Plains centre open and what will be my role in the future, I say to the member that the district health board made a decision on the Plains Health Centre in 1993. And the decision that they made is that they're going to have in Regina two state-of-the-art facilities. And they're going to provide more services in this part of the province and to Regina people than ever before in the past.

And I say to the member opposite, he needs to understand that, have an appreciation for that, and begin to assist in people in southern Saskatchewan learning about the wonderful new services that we're going to receive in Regina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Speaker, as Save the Plains chairperson Darlene Sterling put it this morning, this issue is now about more than just saving the Plains; it's about saving our health care system and saving lives.

The so-called plan to consolidate health care services that we're hearing from this afternoon is out of whack, and a couple of examples illustrate this point. The cost of building City Hospital in Saskatoon in 1992 totalled to \$110 million for a brand-new, state-of-the-art facility, and that's about the same amount the NDP is spending just to renovate the General Hospital. The cost of a large expansion to St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon in 1989 totalled \$46 million, 62 million less than this government is spending today just to renovate the General Hospital.

Mr. Minister, in health care and financial terms, your plan is way off-base. Will you come to your senses? Will you place a moratorium on the closure of the Plains hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that today demonstrates the total lack of understanding and appreciation that the member from Thunder Creek has in what's been done with the health system over the last four years. Because when the member talks about the enrichments that were made in the

Saskatoon City Hospital, why doesn't he talk about the acquired brain injury to the eighth floor that was designed and developed to assist people across the province, not only from southern Saskatchewan but all across the province.

The developments of the eighth floor, to ensure that we can work with people who are . . . who need rehabilitation, who have been in car crashes or in physical injuries. He doesn't talk about that investment that we made in the Saskatoon City Hospital to ensure that that occurs. Doesn't talk about the dialysis system that was set up in the St. Paul's health centre to ensure that we can provide for all of Saskatchewan people the newest and the most adequate technology to ensure that we can provide those kinds of services.

The member, Mr. Speaker, is stuck on a building, he's stuck on a facility, and he's not concerned about the services that we're going to provide to Saskatchewan people, which is the case that will happen here with the transition to the two new facilities that we're going to have here in Regina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Inquiry into Channel Lake

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a crisis of credibility. What the former head of SaskPower is telling us and what the Deputy Premier is telling us simply cannot be reconciled. On December 17 the Deputy Premier told this House, and I quote:

. . . Mr. Portigal, in working for Channel Lake, did work on the negotiations. The company was sold; Mr. Portigal was then without work and the new company hired him. That's about as devious as the plot . . . (gets).

Well, Mr. Speaker, that was eight days after the minister had already ordered a full review of Channel Lake. That was over six months after Mr. Messer had fired Portigal for his apparent double dealing. There is a way out of this unfortunate situation. It has . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Now the hon. member has been extremely lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to go directly to his question immediately.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister file with this House, documents which can assure us when he was informed . . . that he found out about Portigal's firing and that he knew that this was not a simple case of him quitting? Will he file documents that will clear up the discrepancy between what he is telling us and what Mr. Messer is telling us?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yesterday the member was shocked that Mr. Messer had a different recollection of the circumstance as compared to the Deloitte Touche report, and he couldn't understand that. And he was dismayed by the fact that there seemed to be a discrepancy between what the Deloitte Touche report said about the relationship between the board and management, and what Mr. Messer said. That astounded him.

Well it shouldn't astound him at all because obviously Mr. Messer was interviewed by the people at Deloitte Touche. He was interviewed and I assume he told them the same thing as he

told you and the committee, and the Deloitte Touche report came to the conclusion that documentations, and I quote:

... presented to the board of SaskPower was, at a critical juncture, incomplete to the point where the board was not being effectively informed.

You're right, there is a discrepancy between what the report says and what Mr. Messer explained to them. I'm sure of that. And there'll be other discrepancies.

So I say to you, sir, when I found out, as I delivered my comments in the House four weeks ago, I said that when I found out this was an issue, I called for a report by CIC and we called for a report from Deloitte Touche. As soon as we received those reports we tabled them here in the Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — The Deputy Premier can simply file the documentation he received from Mr. Messer at the time that Mr. Portigal left. That will clear up all the discrepancy.

Yesterday I asked the minister about Mr. Messer's contract of employment and the details of severance. According to that contract, Mr. Messer is entitled to two days severance for every year worked prior to 1996 and five days for every year worked thereafter. That means that according to his contract of employment, Mr. Messer is entitled to severance of \$7,352. My question of the minister: why didn't we simply follow that contract? Why did we choose to ignore the contract and instead follow the precedent set by paying George Hill 300 grand? Why did we follow that precedent instead of following the contract?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to reiterate to the member opposite, who seems to not understand the situation here as it relates to what is known as the retirement severance benefit, which applies to all IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) members and to all people who work in SaskPower, you're right. It's a small token that tops up their pension, and you know that very well.

It was explained to you yesterday. And being a lawyer you know that it doesn't mitigate under the law what he is entitled to under common law. You know that. You're a lawyer. And to come here and plead ignorance — to plead ignorance of the law — is not good enough. And it's unbecoming of you as the member for North Battleford to pretend that Mr. Messer, because of something that's in the agreement for all employees of SaskPower to top up their pension, mitigates or detracts from what they are entitled to under common law.

You know that. You're faking it here in the House. And I say to you, apologize, because you know better.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, if my integrity as a lawyer is being called into question, then I don't think I'm the one who has to apologize. I think you should be joining the Saskatchewan Party, who yesterday told us there isn't such a thing as an honest lawyer in this province.

Well I'm not the one who has to apologize. And if you're saying that I as a lawyer know that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I will ask both sides of the House to come to order and to allow the hon. member for North Battleford to complete his question. Order. Order.

Mr. Hillson: — I am saying that as a lawyer I know no such thing, that a contract of employment would not be valid and binding. If the contract of employment said upon termination he's entitled to 15 days, then that's what he's entitled to. Will you file the contract of employment?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite, he's playing games and he knows it. He knows very well. And I say you do a disservice to yourself, to your caucus, and to your profession when you pretend — and you are pretending — that Jack Messer gave up any right under common law because of something based on severance in a small token which all employees are entitled to, and you know that. You are playing games with words, which does a disservice to you, your profession, and your caucus, when you say that he disbanded his right under common law to severance. You know that isn't true and I say you should apologize.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Proposed South Saskatchewan River Dam

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the minister of the Saskatchewan Water Corporation, and I know that this is a pretty tough act to follow but we do have other things to talk about besides Channel Lake.

Mr. Minister, a group of people calling themselves the Meridian Water Management Association have initiated efforts to build a dam on the South Saskatchewan River. This dam, as proposed, will be on the South Saskatchewan River west of the town of Leader, Mr. Minister, and it would greatly improve the irrigated crop diversification for our farmers in Saskatchewan as well as Alberta. And the area provided will provide much-needed water for the expansion of industry as well as livestock operation, as well as to provide a crossing for railroads and highway traffic and new sources for cheap electricity.

Have you met with representatives, Mr. Minister, from the Meridian Water Management Association, the Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce, or anybody from the provincial Alberta government to discuss this matter and to see what results there can be from meetings?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The member from Maple Creek, who asks, I think, probably the most legitimate question of the day dealing with the water project being proposed by individuals from Medicine Hat and south-western Saskatchewan on a project known as the Meridian project, I have met with association members in Medicine Hat as well as here in Regina and there's ongoing discussions as to the worthiness of the proposal.

As the member knows, in building a dam on any river or stream in the province or in western Canada there is a lot of research and diligence that has to be proven on the project. But I say to

him I would be very interested in meeting with him. And I'm sure our minister of Sask Water or others involved, the Department of Environment, would be very interested in arranging a meeting where you're present to deal with this issue.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I request that question no. 19 be converted to order for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Question no. 19 is converted to motions for return (debatable).

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR COMMITTEE OF FINANCE (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words on this budget. In the last few days we've certainly had some very dynamic speeches from members on this side of the House. I particularly enjoyed the passion of the member from Swift Current and the dry wit of the member from Regina-Victoria.

I want to just go back a little bit to the year 1991, when we formed government, and the first thing we did was open the books — and the huge debt we found that we had to deal with. In fact I think the province was very close to being in a state of bankruptcy. But we decided that it was possible to work this out. We decided that with the help of the people of Saskatchewan and some tough decisions, that we would come through this. And we did; we did make some tough decisions.

But something we never did was cut funding to the most vulnerable people in Saskatchewan — the children and the families. We never cut any funding from Social Services, and we never cut any funding from Health. But we did realize that we would have to do things differently. And we began, therefore, on the road to health renewal, changing the way in which we delivered services.

Well we all contributed and we all helped with the tough decisions. And I think it's important to continue to thank the people of this province, because without them we could never have done it. But, by golly, in 1994, Mr. Speaker, we balanced the budget, and we have balanced every budget since then, including the one that was tabled on March 19.

And not only that, but it includes plans for three more balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

Our economy is growing; our economy is diversifying. Incomes are going up and taxes are going down. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

When I speak with people across my constituency and across this province, they tell me that jobs are very important to them. We can tell them that we are working in partnerships with business, with labour, with farmers, with cooperatives and communities, to create new job opportunities. And it's working, Mr. Speaker. More people are working in Saskatchewan than at any time in our history. There are full-time jobs . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Jobs for women; jobs for young people. In fact 13,000 jobs were created in 1997. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

The budget focuses on four key elements vital to jobs and growth in Saskatchewan: building the local economy, encouraging investment and growth, strengthening our transportation system, and enhancing education and training. Let me just tell you about two of those.

Building the local economy is crucial to our communities. People are organizing local resources to build on local strengths. They are using their local regional economic development authorities. They are using them for training; they are using them for business counselling. And this budget, Mr. Speaker, doubles the amount of money we invested last year in regional economic development. It doubles it to nearly \$6 million. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

One more point on the local economy. This budget helps SARCAN recycling and its member organizations. It helps SARCAN by stabilizing its funding and expanding our recycling program to include juice boxes and other cardboard beverage containers.

And actually I saw, Mr. Speaker, in the *Sun* of March 29 that, according to Dale Botting, who's the executive director of Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, that the extra work means SARCAN, which provides employment for disabled people, will add 10 new jobs in '98 and '99 and in the long-term, 35 new jobs could be generated. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, we have a local SARCAN depot just in the same mall as our constituency office and we've got to know the people who work there very well. They're wonderful people, very committed to their jobs. And it's wonderful to see the dignity that a job brings to these people.

I'd like to say a few words about encouraging investment and innovation. The budget address says this:

Economic expansion and jobs also depend upon creating a climate for business and industry to invest and grow.

Invest and grow, Mr. Speaker. Our targeted tax strategy is paying off with more investments and jobs. The manufacturing and processing sector alone created 3,200 jobs last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — So what are we doing this year? This year, Mr. Speaker, we are providing a 15 per cent income tax credit for research and development to help a broad range of industries stay competitive and invest for the future — 15 per cent income tax credit. We're eliminating the sales tax on exploration equipment purchased for use in mining. And this next one is a very exciting one, Mr. Speaker. We are introducing a film employment tax credit equal to 35 per cent of the cost of employing Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — This will be increased by an additional 5 per cent of eligible expenditures for productions in rural Saskatchewan. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

I think we are all very proud of the film and video industry in this province. It is vibrant, it is innovative, it is exciting, and it's flourishing. Have you seen their ad campaign which says, lights, camera, jobs? Skilled, well-paid jobs for our youth and our future.

The last few days the member from Regina Wascana Plains and I have had the opportunity with meeting many of the people involved in this vibrant industry. They're very excited about this initiative, Mr. Speaker, and they have made a real effort to say thank you, and we appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken just briefly about community economic development and targeted tax incentives. There's much more to say on the issue of economic development and job creation and I know that my colleagues before me have spoken of many of these initiatives and others speaking after me will do the same.

But I want to move on to say a few words about this budget and building a modern, secure health system. The budget address says Saskatchewan people today have access to a broader range of fully insured health services than ever before.

We worked together to get here, Mr. Speaker, beginning in 1991. Saskatchewan people worked with us — and it wasn't always easy — to build a modern, secure health system, a health system that would carry medicare forward into the next century.

But look where we are, Mr. Speaker. Our health services today include province-wide screening for breast cancer; nutritional supplements; education and counselling for expectant mothers; treatments for people with eating disorders; new health and safety programs for farm families; in-home renal dialysis for over 100 Saskatchewan residents; specialized pediatric teams to transport children anywhere in Saskatchewan for specialized services. This is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, one-third of our entire budget — one-third — will be invested in health care. That is \$1.7 billion, Mr. Speaker — \$1.7 billion — an increase of \$88 million over last year. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, that is the largest investment in health care in the history of this province, \$1.7 billion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — And what does that mean for the people of this fine province? It means health districts can recruit and retain physicians. It means physicians can provide better emergency coverage. It means more people will receive improved emergency service with more and better trained first responders and paramedics.

It means upgraded, modern base hospitals in Saskatoon and Regina with a full range of quality services for all Saskatchewan residents. It means increased specialist services such as kidney and cancer treatment and CT (computerized axial tomography) scanning. It means a new MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) operating in Regina, Mr. Speaker, to improve access to this service in southern Saskatchewan. It means expanded immunization programs and it means advanced clinical nurses bringing more health services to more communities.

(1430)

And there's more, Mr. Speaker. We are working on our new Saskatchewan Health Information Network, or SHIN. SHIN will allow physicians and other health care professionals to share vital health information. It will give people faster access to informed information and reduce duplication of medical tests. It will give health professionals advance warning of potential drug interactions to ensure the safety of Saskatchewan people. And as we are developing this system, Mr. Speaker, we are ever mindful of the importance of the confidentiality of patient information.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people today have access to a broader range of fully insured health services than ever before. We are proud of that, Mr. Speaker, we are proud that we are investing more money in health care than we have ever done before in the history of this province.

And we will continue our commitment to health care. We will continue to work with the men and women who are our health care professionals — our nurses, our doctors, our home care workers, our paramedics, and our lab technicians. We will work with these professionals and our health districts to build a secure, publicly funded, modern health system that will be there not just for us but for our children and for our grandchildren. And this is good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murray: — Mr. Speaker, there is so much more good news in this budget. The increased funding in education, the dollars for agricultural research and development, the cost-sharing formula for RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) policing, the 10 per cent increase in the Highways budget, the reduction in the personal income tax rate, and, Mr. Speaker — and this is very dear to my heart — the announcement last week by our Premier and the Minister of Social Services of our "building independence" strategy.

I have spoken of this initiative before and I look forward to doing so again. Because as I said before, Mr. Speaker, this I think, is a defining moment for this government. The new

Saskatchewan Child Benefit, the Saskatchewan employment supplement, and the family health benefits — programs that target assistance to children and low income families. Programs that break the cycle of dependence and build bridges to jobs and independence.

Mr. Speaker, a fifth consecutive balanced budget, which includes plans for three more balanced budgets. A budget that invests in people, invests in jobs and growth, invests in stronger, safer, healthier communities. A budget that reflects our growing financial freedom and looks to a prosperous future. A budget that is good news for Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, I shall be proud to support the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a little bit hard to actually, to follow that member because she is always so sincere about her thoughts on Saskatchewan. And she's speaks very eloquently about the province always, and in a very forthright manner. And we'll be very disappointed to see if the rumours of her moving from Saskatchewan come to pass. And I hope that that — actually I hope that that isn't the case — but we hear that that's a possibility.

I unfortunately don't share her enthusiasm for the Government of Saskatchewan. The fact of the matter is, is not even her warm wishes for the province are going to be what is needed for Saskatchewan these days.

The budget, in my view, has many, many priorities that are wrong — a budget that is predicated on a lot of assumptions of revenue for the government that are going to be difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at. If you look at, for example, oil price predictions, they've been very volatile the last little while.

I had a discussion the other day with the member from Rosetown-Biggar about the prices, and he knows as well as I know, coming from an oil producing area, that the prices are extremely volatile right now, with the prices being impacted upon by an OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) agreement that may or may not result in lower production. If the production is reduced we may see increased prices here in Saskatchewan, but unfortunately already it appears that the agreement is falling apart, with Venezuela, in the last few days, suggesting that they may boost production to offset any reductions in mid-east oil.

And as a result of that the prices are extremely volatile right now. It's a little bit like commodity trading in natural gas futures contracts in Channel Lake; you better know what you're doing. The RBC Dominion forecasts for oil in the next year, for the balance of 1998, are \$14.80 — somewhere close to the Bank of Montreal's prediction of \$15.00. You don't get up to . . . The government's projection was \$17.25, if memory serves, and according to RBC, they don't predict a \$17.34 barrel of oil until calendar 2002. So we're out by a little bit there, folks.

And when it comes to forecasting, RBC has a pretty good track record, pretty good track record, and so you have to be pretty cautious. And I'm surprised, I'm surprised frankly that the government would want to go out on a limb as far as it has in terms of predictions of prices in the oil industry, particularly

given their track record in other commodity ventures lately. You would think they would want to be as conservative as possible in terms of making predictions in these areas.

An Hon. Member: — No pun intended?

Mr. Boyd: — No pun intended. Absolutely.

The fact of the matter is, is the balancing of this budget in this past year and this current year and the upcoming year have been a result of a lot of forces that have happened outside of Saskatchewan. Low interest rates have had a huge impact on the balancing of the budget here in Saskatchewan. Transfer payments from the federal government have had a huge impact on it. Three hundred million dollars — \$300 million, the member speaks from his seat — \$300 million compared to about \$30 million last year, of transfer payments. And it's a huge increase to the province of Saskatchewan.

This budget would not be balanced had it not been for a big, fat welfare cheque arriving at the doorstep of the Department of Finance here in Saskatchewan. And that is not something, Mr. Speaker, that I think we should be proud of, of Saskatchewan people.

We work long and we work hard in Saskatchewan, and still, in spite of all of that effort that Saskatchewan people have put into it, this government is incapable of balancing the budget except for the fact they were getting a big, fat cheque courtesy of Ontario . . . courtesy of Ottawa — courtesy of Alberta, more or less.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, had it not been for the privatization, the privatization of the upgrader up at Lloydminster . . . there was about another \$100 million that was poured into the budget here in Saskatchewan. So you have \$400 million that just came in under two things: welfare and privatization. Two words that this government never likes to talk about — welfare or privatization.

And they should talk about welfare here in Saskatchewan because we have increasing number of welfare recipients all the time in this province and the only thing that this government wants to talk about is the fact that we've had some success — we'll admit it — some success in job creation. When you compare it, when you compare it to other provinces, it is absolutely meagre in comparison.

But there has been some modest increase in jobs here in Saskatchewan in the service sector — relatively low paying jobs, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, but we do have some coming into the province.

If we were to believe all of the forecasting of the members opposite — and I think of the member from Estevan there when he was making his speech and a number of the other members talking about the wonderful job that they are doing here in Saskatchewan and how jobs are pouring into the province and how all of these kinds of economic diversification and things are taking place here in Saskatchewan — if that is happening, if that is happening here in Saskatchewan, why then aren't the people from Alberta . . . and Texas is one of the other places he mentioned; Arkansas is another good example. Arkansas is the

place you've been compared to lately by some business forecasters here in the last few days.

If that's the case, why aren't we seeing all of these people loading up the U-hauls and the moving vans and the half-tons and everything else and pouring back into Saskatchewan? Because it just isn't happening. Because it isn't true.

These people would have you believe that we are the best-managed place in the entire world. But the fact of the matter is, is we've got lots of problems, we've got lots of problems here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And the member from Swift Current should know that because on the west side of Swift Current there's one of the biggest U-Haul dealerships in all of Canada. And what do they do? What do they do? What is their business made up of?

I stopped out there awhile back and was talking to the dealer out there and he tells me we have a one-way traffic here. We load them up in Saskatchewan, we load up these U-hauls in Saskatchewan. We take them out to Medicine Hat; we take them out to Calgary; we take them out to Kelowna. We take them out to western locations all over western Canada and then we haul them in a convoy back, in terms of empty U-hauls, to load them up again and head out to Alberta. It's an unfortunate circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

In fact I was talking to a trucking company friend of mine just the other day and he says that they are hauling unprecedented amounts of barley out of Saskatchewan right now into Alberta feedlots. And you have to wonder why. And the answer is very simple. Because there is a tremendous increase in the feeding of cattle in southern Alberta, in feedlot alley, as it's called — some of the members will be familiar with that Lethbridge area right through to High River — feedlot alley, where there's just huge mass of investments in feedlots in that area. And as a result of that they're trying to bring in and purchase barley from all over Saskatchewan.

In addition to those feedlots, who are made up primarily of Saskatchewan feeder cattle to begin with, calving in Saskatchewan, winding up as feeder cattle in Alberta, fed with Canadian — or pardon me — Saskatchewan grain by Saskatchewan people living in Alberta . . . And it's a huge indictment of this government's fiscal management, this government's attempts over the years to socialize this province every step of the way. Any time we had anybody with any entrepreneurial aspirations, where do they go? They head to Alberta. And that's why you see, that's why you see out in Medicine Hat more housing starts in Medicine Hat than we saw in all of Saskatchewan in the last year.

And that's why when you go to . . . a good friend of mine also — I want to remind the member from Saskatoon Northwest — some good friends of mine own — used to own; they sold it recently because they made a fortune — used to own a business in Medicine Hat. It was a little business in one of the malls.

And they used to do an experiment every once in awhile because they were curious. One of the things that they were told

when they bought this franchise . . . oh, one of these businesses that caters primarily to female clientele, and they sold cosmetics — I forget the name of the business.

(1445)

An Hon. Member: — Body Shop.

Mr. Boyd: — No, it's not Body Shop. That's wrong. SoapBerry, SoapBerry is the name of the store.

And they'd been told by the parent company as franchisees that something you should know is to get familiar with your customers, where is your customer based. And everyone in business knows that that's really important, to be in touch with your customers.

So they do a very, very careful analysis of where their customers are from — and they have a location in the Medicine Hat mall, the big mall that services all of Saskatchewan — they do a very careful analysis of where their customers come from, and fully 75, 75 per cent of their customers write them a cheque from Saskatchewan, hand them a Visa or Mastercard from Saskatchewan, or hand them cash that comes from Saskatchewan.

They ask each and every one of their customers, they ask each and every one of their customers that comes up and purchases an item from there at a given time — I think they do this about one week every two or three months — they ask every customer where they're from and they keep extensive records of that, Mr. Speaker. And the reason they do is because as I said, they want to be in touch with their customers.

And I think that that is . . . They were astounded at that. They were astounded at that when they first started their business. They were astounded at it because they thought that their business clientele would be primarily made up of Medicine Hat people.

And even . . . in fact on top of that, most of the people that came up and purchased goods from them would say to them, well — they'd ask them where they're from — and they'd say I'm from Medicine Hat, but I'm formerly from Swift Current or I'm formerly from Rosetown or I'm formerly from Eston or I'm formerly from Herschel or I'm formerly from Saskatoon or I'm formerly from Regina or I'm formerly from Estevan or I'm formerly from any other place in Saskatchewan.

That's what Saskatchewan has going for it these days is, it's got a lot of people that are really pulling for us. Unfortunately, they all reside outside of this province.

Why is it in Saskatchewan's history, why is it in Saskatchewan's history that we only have barely over a million people? And we have seen provinces like Alberta, who at one point throughout the history of Canada had less people than Saskatchewan . . . I would ask the member from Rosetown if he could provide me a little help in understanding that.

Why has Alberta's population blossomed to several million people — I'm not even sure what it is now — just about three million people, three times Saskatchewan, when

Saskatchewan's population has stalled for decades at a million people?

Why is that? Why is that? Why is that? Why is that, Mr. Member from Rosetown? You always have all of these theories about why things are taking place, and the Chair knows it. The Chair has heard you speak many times in this Assembly.

The Speaker: — Well now the hon. member from Kindersley will recognize that he's managing to offend simultaneously two rules of debate in the House. The hon. member will recognize of course, that he'll want to direct his debate through the Chair but not involve the Chair. Order, order. Order, order. And I know the hon. member is capable of debating effectively without that and I'll invite him to continue.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that momentary memory lapse. A number of people around this building are having those kinds of things these days, the least of which is the Premier of Saskatchewan. In fact we had people wondering whether he had been . . . Well I won't get into that. That's probably not a very good subject in this debate, Mr. Speaker.

One of the areas of my responsibilities as a member opposite, as an opposition member, is the Department of Agriculture. And as critic for Agriculture there's lots of concerns within the budget. And some of farmers opposite — well there's darn few of them — but some of them opposite might realize some of the concerns that agriculture is faced with these days. And the member from Saskatoon Northwest, well I'm pretty sure he'll understand what I'm talking about when I suggest that we are on, I think, on the edge of a very, very serious problem upcoming in agriculture in this upcoming year.

We see prices have been depressed by the Canadian Wheat Board by about 30 per cent in some cases in the last year. You have to wonder what's going on over at that office these days. But anyway, they've been depressed by the Canadian Wheat Board by about 30 per cent.

On top of that, we have a very, very dry soil conditions in a large part of Saskatchewan. We're hopeful that the snows that have come in the last little while, and there'll be additional spring moisture, we're hopeful of that, but if it doesn't materialize, we are onto the same kinds of drought-type proportions that we saw in 1998. And that is something that should be of great concern to this legislature — 1988 was the drought. That's what I said, 1988 — 1988 — check the record. 1988 was the drought year here in Saskatchewan. 1988 was the drought year in Saskatchewan as everyone knows. I remember it very well.

As a farmer that was . . . all I was involved in at that point was not politics, was only in agriculture, and sitting out there disheartened, as all farmers were across Saskatchewan, watching your crops wither.

One of the greatest joys that farmers have is, after you've seeded your crop and you watch it progress, is driving around in an evening with your family, your wife if you can talk her into going on these types of things — often you can't, but occasionally, occasionally — one of the greatest joys is driving

around and seeing how your crop is progressing.

And I'll tell you, about halfway through the summer, about halfway through the summer, in my area of Saskatchewan — I'm sure it was in the same in many other areas of Saskatchewan — farmers stopped doing it. They were disheartened to the point where they didn't even want to see their crop any longer, it was in such desperate shape. It was terrible, Mr. Speaker. And then in our area we had an unusual phenomena that came through. On August 11 of 1998 . . .

An Hon. Member: — '88

Mr. Boyd: — 1988 — he's confusing me over there — 1988, right in the middle of the drought, August 11 of 1988, we had 5.2 inches of rain. We had sloughs of water all over our entire farm to go around, to harvest around, to harvest nothing. We were driving around water to get to the next patch of grain that was virtually non-existent. It was the most disheartening thing I ever saw.

My father came out to our farm, and I'll never forget it. It's one of the few times I've ever seen him weep. And he came out to the farm and he got on the combine with me and he rode around for a little while. Then he started weeping and said, I have to get off of here; I can't stand this. I can't bear to see this.

He said, good crops grow this high. They don't grow 2 inches high. Good crops in Saskatchewan in this area that I'm from that we're familiar with, are crops of grain that are waist high or higher. He couldn't believe how desperate it was. He'd been away for a little bit that summer; he'd been ill, so he hadn't seen it until harvest and it was in desperate shape.

And I'm afraid, I'm worried, and I think many, many people in the farm community would agree with me that they're worried about this year. We look out the door today, it's an absolute beautiful day if you're a golfer. It's an absolute beautiful day if you want to go outside and go for a stroll. It's an absolute beautiful day if you want to go outside and bat a tennis ball around or play a little bit of basketball or something like that.

But if you're a farmer, every one of these days that goes by in the next few weeks leading up to seeding, is going to cause increasing concern and anxiety because there is less and less moisture available.

I toured my farm on the weekend when I was home to have a look at the moisture conditions, and there was literally zero — absolutely zero — run-off. The dugouts are not experiencing any run-off into them at all in our area, and I suspect it's the same in many areas of Saskatchewan. There is a desperate situation.

And I know the member from Regina Northeast is conscious of that because he has a background in agriculture. He's very concerned about it. I talked to him the other day about it and he is aware of the situation, coming from a, agriculture background and having family members that are still involved in the farming situation here in Saskatchewan.

But the problem that farmers are faced with in terms of lower prices and impending drought — that we hope doesn't happen

but is there — is also compounded by the fact, Mr. Speaker, that we have a safety net problem as well in agriculture. We virtually have no safety net any longer. NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) provides some support, yes; crop insurance provides some support, yes. But did this budget make any provisions whatsoever — and I would ask the Minister of Finance — did this budget make any provisions, Mr. Speaker, whatsoever for the fact that we may be faced with a very, very desperate situation in agriculture, one of the areas of our economy that we can't afford to have a substantial downturn in.

I'll just relate a little bit of what's going on in our area again, Mr. Speaker. I'm involved in the seed business, as some of you may know. And up until about Christmas time the seed business was in good shape; there was all kinds of activity. Farmers had a lot of optimism. There was lots of activity in terms of sales.

About January 2, when the Canadian Wheat Board announced the final payments and they were lower than a lot of farmers were hoping for and expecting, the buoyancy in terms of sales of seed — and when you talk to equipment manufacturers and equipment dealers they say the same thing — it literally dried up almost over night, sales did.

And I think it's in anticipation of the fact that farmers are concerned about cash flow management as we go into a year when we may see sharply — well we're going to see sharply lower prices — and we may see lower than normal production.

So there's lots of concern in agriculture these days. There's lots of concern because there is nothing in terms of a safety net program. And I hope, I hope it doesn't happen but I think, Mr. Finance Minister, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker, I think, Mr. Finance Minister, you better be prepared at some point to look into this situation and address it. And I hope you don't have to go cap in hand to the taxpayers of Canada to make an ad hoc . . . put together some sort of an ad hoc program. We all know the problems with those kinds of programs in the past, and I hope we aren't having to experience that.

But one thing I'll tell you, Mr. Finance Minister, and Mr. Speaker, that you'll have the full cooperation of this party, the Saskatchewan Party, if it comes to that where you have concerns in terms of agriculture and what we're going to do to address a sharply lower ag sector here in Saskatchewan. Because we are concerned about it, and I know you're thinking about it and concerned about it as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that hits very, very close to home for a lot of us. Virtually all of us in Saskatchewan are touched by agriculture at some point here in this great province, so we better pay a lot of attention. And although it's a great day outside today in terms of sunshine and a warm day, let's all hope and pray for about a 2-inch rain here one of these days.

Diversification is something that should be on the minds of the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, as well. Diversification of our economy is extremely important here in Saskatchewan. We have to diversify our economy in terms of many, many things. Improving upon the manufacturing sector is just one of them. Improving in terms of agriculture diversification is another one. In terms of all kinds of manufacturing is extremely important.

We see now, as was predicted by many people a number of years ago, that when the Crow rate was removed, when the Crow rate changed, there was going to be a lot of people deciding to themselves that rather than shipping the raw product to the coast or to Thunder Bay or to Hudson Bay, we were going to be in a situation where we better start diversifying.

And that's why you're seeing the kind of massive investment that you are seeing in agriculture today in this province, where we're seeing Heartland Livestock getting involved in huge investments in terms of pork production here in Saskatchewan.

I'm a little . . . I have to admit I'm supportive of that, but I'm also a little bit concerned about where that pork is all going to be going. A lot of that pork production is supposed to be going to Asian countries who, as we know, recently have been faced with huge losses in terms of commodity . . . or currency, pardon me, currency values. And so there's lots of concern about the Taiwanese economy and the Japanese economy and many economies in the Far East. Those were the areas that primarily we were hoping that this hog production would be going towards.

American production, American consumption, will take up some of that slack, but unfortunately I am a little bit concerned, and I think probably the Finance minister and his department and the Ag minister and his department are wondering about it as well, whether or not this is going to be the panacea in terms of how we can diversify some of our ag sector. And the fact of the matter is, if the exports to some of these countries start drying up, we're going to be in a lot of trouble in terms of these investments into hog production.

Many of these facilities . . . and I was at one not too long ago — last fall, Mr. Speaker — the opening of one in the very northern tip of my constituency. I think they called it West Pork, I believe was the name of that. I may be mistaken about that and I would apologize to the people involved in that project, but I think that was the name of the project.

And they were going to be carrying a tremendous debt load. I think their debt-to-equity ratio was up there pretty high where there was a lot of concern that if they saw a downturn in terms of prices, that they were going to be faced with a great deal of difficulty in meeting their debt schedules.

So we have to be concerned about that. And I would encourage the Minister of Finance and the Department of Agriculture to be paying some pretty serious attention to those areas.

As I said earlier, Mr. Finance Minister, and Mr. Speaker, the other area of concern that we have in the budget is the area of oil projections. I think you're pretty optimistic about your oil projection, sir.

As I said, I'm not sure whether you were present at the time, but the RBC Dominion forecast for this year, 1998, balance of '98, is \$14.80. And I would want you to see this and I'll pass it across to you.

(1500)

The projections for '99 are \$16.50; the projections for year

2000 are 16.95; 2001 are at \$17.18. Projections for 2002 are \$17.34. So we don't meet your projections of 17.25, accordingly to RBC at least, until year 2002.

So I would caution you, in terms of your budget projections in the future, to recognize that there are many, many sources of information. And I hope you would be accessing as many as possible — and I trust you are — that I haven't seen. And I would ask you, through the Department of Finance, if you would care to forward some of your projections as to where you're getting your projections from a barrel of oil.

Because I haven't seen any. There may be some that I'm not aware of, but I haven't seen any that are optimistic to the point, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Finance is making at this point.

The fact of the matter is, I believe the Bank of Montreal recently put out price projections that are in the, I think it's \$15 range, which is pretty much the same area that RBC is talking about.

I don't know the exact number and I would ask the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, to provide that information to the House; that if their projections are off, if their projections are off and we do see a barrel of oil coming in at \$14.80 or \$15, which those two outfits, RBC and the Bank of Montreal are suggesting it will, I would wonder, Mr. Finance Minister, what loss of revenue that that will result in to the province of Saskatchewan.

In my constituency of Kindersley we have a significant amount of oil production, as everyone knows. However, it's relatively an old, old field of oil production here in Saskatchewan and it's a very low producing field. Normal barrels per day, or metres per day as they say now, is not the kind of production that we see down in some of the other areas, the Weyburn-Estevan, sometimes even the Swift Current areas of Saskatchewan.

And my friends in the oil industry in the Kindersley, Kerrobert, right up to Lloydminster areas of this province, tell me that \$14.80 oil means only one thing to them — it means losses. And it means as a result of those losses that they start shutting in production. And the way they do that is they don't go around and turn the switches off on the pump jacks. That isn't quite the way they do it because they have costs that they have to meet as well.

But what happens is, is when an oil pump jack goes down, if they have trouble with it, mechanical trouble or something like that, they simply don't go and fix it. They just leave it, taking that well out of production for a time period. And as a result of that there is not only a loss of revenue to the government, there's a loss of revenue to the oil company and there's a loss of perhaps even employment through some of the people associated with that industry. So I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the Finance minister be paying pretty close attention to those areas as well.

One area, one thing that I do agree with that the government has done in Saskatchewan in the last few years, last several perhaps I think it is, and they have come with quarterly projections of where they are going. I would hope that as the next quarter approaches that we'll be getting a report from the Minister of

Finance outlining how they're making out on their projections of revenue from the oil industry, from the agriculture sectors of Saskatchewan, because those are two areas of our economy that there are some storm clouds ahead, I'm afraid.

The other areas of concern of course to people all over Saskatchewan, are our tax rates. And I know that the Finance minister has spent some time thinking about those areas as well. They have reduced the provincial sales tax last year by 2 per cent. I supported it then, I still support it. I would have supported another 2 per cent reduction and I was hopeful that we would have saw that in this latest budget.

The Finance department preferred to go in another direction and that was personal income tax. I don't think we always have to follow Alberta and Manitoba in terms of these kinds of things — Alberta and Manitoba reduced their personal income tax rates. So really we haven't made any more progress in terms of attacking the differences, different tax rates between Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba. All we have done is kept up with them.

And that's the concern that people have. If all we can do is keep up with them in terms of lowering it, we still have the differentials between the various provinces. And the Finance department I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, is aware that the differentials are causing a loss of economic activity here in Saskatchewan. That's difficult, yes, difficult to measure but is nevertheless there.

In the last budget we saw the projections, the conventional wisdom . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We'll get to the debt. If you want to talk about the debt, we'll get to the debt. We'll get to the debt, we'll get to the debt here in a minute if you want to talk about that.

The fact of the matter is that here in Saskatchewan we have a huge difference in terms of our tax rates compared to other provinces and it does impact. We always were under the assumption that we would lose about \$80 million per point of reduction in the PST (provincial sales tax). So when the government reduced the PST by 2 per cent last year, there was a widespread belief that it was going to result in \$160 million of less revenue to the government.

But what happened? That wasn't the case. An offset in terms of the amount of increased economic activity took place, and we resulted in a loss of not \$160 million but of \$30 million. Still a loss — yes — but not anywhere near the kind of loss that the department and many of your members opposite always said would happen.

We have maintained, and we still maintain, that there is an offsetting increase in economic activity as a result of lowering taxes. It creates a stimulus effect in the economy. And we continue to argue that had you done that again this year you would not have seen the kind of losses that you maintain always happen.

We think another 2 per cent reduction in the provincial sales tax would have been prudent, would have been possible. And we believe that that would have resulted in maybe 30, or maybe even a little bit more, \$40, we'll say, million of lost revenue.

But I'll give you one example of where you could have made up that 30 or \$40 million — the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement. That agreement alone . . . I don't know, what is your estimate, Mr. Speaker, what is the Department of Finance's estimate of what that policy alone costs. We have never been able to . . . The Finance minister is holding his hand up in a goose-egg.

Well I was visiting yesterday, Mr. Speaker, with a construction company in town here yesterday. I'm not going to give the construction company's name because I don't think they'd want me to. But I was visiting with them here yesterday, and if anybody wants — well there's some people over there doubting it — if anybody wants to come with me after I'm finished my speech, I'll take you out and we'll talk to the guy. I'll take you out to the company where I was at yesterday and we'll talk to him . . .

An Hon. Member: — He's just one.

Mr. Boyd: — Just one company. They were a construction company here in Regina, located right here in the heart of Regina.

And he told me, and he told me, he told me, Mr. Speaker, he told me that on one project that they bid on last year — a Crown Construction Tendered Agreement — they bid it two ways: they bid it as a non-union company and they bid it as a union company. And they also said, he said it was a four and a half million dollar project; I think it was the Wakaw water project, I think that was what he said it was — four and a half million dollar project.

And he tells me that on that project, on that project, he was only able to bid it as a unionized contract with any hope of getting it. But he bid it as a non-unionized contractor too to show the differences in that cost structure. And he said he was only able to get bids from two sub-contractors — I think it was carpentry and plumbing, if I recall — that he could only get the contracts from two of those . . . sub-contracts from two of those different sub-contractors, different trades. Of about 20 trades in that total project, there'd be about 20 trades involved in it, but only 2 of them would bid with them in a non-unionized fashion.

It was \$258,000 lower he could have bid, and that is only 2 out of 20 . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's phoney.

Mr. Boyd: — No, it's not phoney. The member from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well what you are saying, what you are saying, member from Regina, is that this man, this man with 30 years experience here in Saskatchewan in the construction industry, is not telling us the truth.

The fact of the matter is, is that he went out on his own as a business person, as an entrepreneur here in Saskatchewan, and wanted to find out what the differences were. And he said out of two, out of two sub-contractors, two tenders that he could have got from sub-contractors, two trades companies, he was able to, would have been able to, save on that project \$258,000.

And the member says well he couldn't get it because it had to

bid as a union contract. Why don't we open it up then I would say to you? If you're so confident, if you're so confident that there is no difference in costs, if you're so confident that there is no difference in costs, open it up and let's see whether you are correct. Put your money where your mouth is. You're wrong and you know you're wrong. You're wrong and you know you're wrong and this contractor can prove it to you.

Mr. Speaker, he said to us yesterday . . . and I have no reason to disbelieve this man, I'd never met the guy before in my life, never had occasion to meet him, never had occasion to meet him. We went and talked to him yesterday about a number of things. Asking for support for the Saskatchewan Party was one of them, and we got that, but he also provided us with some information about those kind of things.

And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it's just one example, it is just one example of how this government could have reduced the provincial sales tax — getting back to my original point — by 2 per cent. That was an area that they could have plucked 30 million, \$40 million out of, to provide a tax reduction to the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm sure people in this province would have thought that would have been a step in the right direction. It would have helped start and continue to address what we believe is one of the primary barriers to growth here in Saskatchewan and that is the tax rates.

Another area of problem for business owners here in Saskatchewan is the regulations problem that we have in Saskatchewan. And I remember a couple of throne speeches ago, Mr. Speaker, and you'll remember this as well, that this government promised in throne speeches of the past to reduce the regulatory problems that businesses are having here in Saskatchewan by, I think it was 25 per cent if memory serves. Have you reduced it at all? In fact it's gone up.

There's more red tape and regulation placed before businesses in Saskatchewan today than we have ever seen in the past, in spite of the fact, in spite of the fact that this government opposite promised to start reducing the amount of regulation and business red tape that business owners all over this province have to go through. And I'd be interested what the member from Regina, speaking from her seat back there, has to say about this. In spite of the promises that they've made we haven't seen any progress in this area at all.

And that's disturbing, Mr. Speaker, because I think one of the things that people expect from governments, they expect from governments is to keep the promises that they've made. Business owners in this province expected this government to hold true to their word to reduce business regulation. And have we done that? Have we done that? In your department, Madam Minister, have you reduced any regulation at all? Tell me one. Tell me one. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that member to produce one example within her department of less regulations. Hasn't happened, hasn't happened, and we know it, and business owners all over Saskatchewan know it.

Now the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, were encouraging me to speak about debt here in Saskatchewan and I'll be happy to speak about debt. Yes, we have a significant debt here in Saskatchewan. The former Finance minister, former Finance minister sitting over here, from Regina, at one time in this

legislature a few years back admitted that of the \$15 billion of debt here in Saskatchewan that Saskatchewan taxpayers are faced with, about \$5 billion of that debt was brought together by NDP administrations of the past. He admitted that, he admitted that. He admitted that before this legislature.

(1515)

They like to suggest that all of the debt of Saskatchewan is all the result of the '80s. And the fact of the matter is, is those members all know opposite that that isn't true. And the Finance minister of a few Finance ministers ago — we've gone through a few of them — the Finance minister of the past has admitted that. And if they care to see within *Hansard*, we'll provide that information to the Assembly.

Because he did admit it. And he did finally, after persistent questioning from the opposition at one point. And the member from Rosetown-Biggar says he had a bad day. And I'm sure it was a bad day for him to have to make that admission — that part of the \$15 billion of debt that we have here in Saskatchewan was as a result of NDP administrations of the past.

Yes, we have a huge debt here in Saskatchewan. As we were going through the '80s there was unprecedented call for government to intervene in the economy, and they did that. There was an unprecedented call from agriculture to intervene in terms of problems in agriculture. There was an unprecedented call from home-owners across this province to intervene in terms of mortgage rates, if you remember, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-two per cent mortgage rates were in Saskatchewan at one point — twenty-two per cent.

And the fact of the matter is, is that governments all across Canada, all across the industrialized world, responded with interventionist tactics by flooding money into the economy to try and offset the downturn, in fact a global downturn in the economy.

Yes, they did that. Yes, they did that. And did they do it with the approval of the NDP at that time? Yes they did. Yes, they did. And in fact at that time, Mr. Speaker, you will recall, you will recall just as every other person in Saskatchewan recalls, that every time there was a budget presented in this Assembly during the 1980s and early '90s, every single time, members opposite stood up and said, it's inadequate; you're not putting enough money into agriculture; you're not putting enough money into education; you're not putting enough money into health.

They have unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have one of the most convenient memories I've ever seen. They totally want to absolve themselves of any responsibility when it comes to these things.

The member from Regina knows full well that that's what happened during that time frame. And we'll produce speeches that he made, through *Hansard*, in this legislature to prove what we are saying if we have to. Because they are being . . . they are not being honest with the people of Saskatchewan if they suggest to them that they are not partially responsible for the debts that were run up in this province.

Because all through that time frame, all through that time frame every single one of you, every single one of you were making speeches across this province. Every single one of you were making speeches to this province, Mr. Speaker, including, including a number of people, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly. Every single one of them were making speeches across this province saying that we're not spending enough in health; we're not spending enough in education; we're not spending enough in agriculture; we're not spending enough in terms of social services; we're not spending enough in terms of highways; we're not spending enough in terms of economic development. That's were the kind of speeches that they were making.

And then after 1991, after 1991, what happened? They forgot about it all. They forgot all about those speeches. They forgot all about their call on the treasury of the day at that time. They forgot all about all of the things they were saying. The member from Rosetown-Biggar, the member from Rosetown-Biggar used to go across this province and scream his head off calling for more spending for education. More spending for education.

And what happened? Oh, here we go. And the member from Rose . . . from Regina . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, oh but, when it comes to laying blame today, who do they want to lay the blame at the feet of?

An Hon. Member: — You.

Mr. Boyd: — Me, exactly. Was I a member at that time? If you're not going to take any responsibility, why are you asking me to take any responsibility?

And you were supporting the call for more spending. You were supporting the call for more spending. And the member sitting behind you was; and the member sitting behind her was. Every single last one of you in the NDP Party were calling for increased spending.

You people, you people . . . Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we grow tired of that kind of thing. You did a pretty good job, you did a pretty good job of trying to absolve themselves, Mr. Speaker, of any responsibility in this area, but there are many people across Saskatchewan who remember the speeches that you made, Mr. Member from Rosetown-Biggar, Mr. Member from Regina . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I know — order! — the hon. member for Kindersley is an experienced debater in the House and he knows that the rules of the House require debate to be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The rules are the rules and they apply all the time. And the hon. member recognizes fully well, I know, that he's to direct his debate through the Chair and I encourage him to do that in the spirit of proper parliamentary debate in the House.

Mr. Boyd: — I will undertake to try and do that, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for reminding me of that. The fact of the matter is here in Saskatchewan, that there are many of us who remember the 1980s. Memories of that are long within our memories. The people of Saskatchewan will remember it, yes. There was lots of problems in the '80s. There was lots of debt run up in the '80s. There was lots of debt run up in the '70s and before that.

And the member from Regina . . . What's that member's seat over there, the Finance minister of the day? The Finance minister of the day, the fellow that appears to be sleeping over there. He said in this Assembly, he said — Regina Dewdney, Regina Dewdney, the member that appears to be sleeping over there — he said to the people of Saskatchewan yes, there was a debt of about \$5 billion when we took over the administration in 1991 . . . or pardon me, when the Devine administration took over in 1982, there was about a \$5 billion, there was about a \$5 billion debt here in Saskatchewan.

And all through the '80s while there was debt being run up, do any of you remember the speeches you made? Do any of you remember them? Mr. Speaker, I would ask this Assembly if any of the members opposite remember the speeches that they made back in those days when they were saying, spend more, spend more, spend more, spend more, spend more.

There was only one member, if I recall, at that time that was saying any different and it was Ralph Goodale. It was. And I have no problem admitting it was Ralph Goodale, because at the time, at the time I have to admit that I agreed in large measure with Ralph Goodale on that point. Ralph Goodale had a good point at that time.

Unfortunately it was only for political expediency. It had very little to do with what he believed. It had a lot to do with political expediency and absolutely nothing to do with what he believed, because he went from there, he went from those days, he went trotting off down to Ottawa, went trotting off down to Ottawa to be a principal secretary to the Prime Minister at that time, where they were having massive deficits, and supported it at that level.

So while he was saying one thing in Saskatchewan he sure as heck was saying something different when he got to Ottawa. And the fact of the matter is, is this fellow over here, Rosetown-Biggan, Mr. Speaker, is saying we give away things to the friends. That was the other famous rallying call of the NDP opposite all through the days when there were things happening. Well who's been getting it these days, Mr. Member, and Mr. Speaker? Who's been getting it these days? Who's been getting a patronage these days? Who's been getting the largesse of the government these days? Who's been up to the trough lately? Who got the latest cheque from you guys? Who wound up with \$300,000 courtesy of the taxpayers?

Who wound up, who wound up as the man in charge of the SHIN project here in Saskatchewan? Who wound up with the member . . . who wound up with the SHIN project? Even in spite of the fact that there was applicants that were far more qualified, you went and found, dug old Nystuen out of the woodwork . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm sorry if I'm not pronouncing his name properly. Nystuen then . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Whatever. You went and dug him up out of some NDP hole and you found him and you put him into a place that he is no more qualified for than Jack Messer was qualified to run SaskPower in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, what people across Saskatchewan are asking for from their government in budgets these days have been illustrated in the newspapers of late. They've been asking for the budget of this province to be balanced, yes. One of the other

priorities that people have in this province today are tax relief. They don't believe that the government went anywhere near far enough in terms of tax relief. They don't believe that the government put enough money into education, or they don't believe they put enough money into health care or highways.

You have to be responsible in terms of your call for money, for increased amounts into those areas. We think in the Saskatchewan Party we have been responsible in calls for those areas. Every time we have called for increased spending we have identified areas where we think it could come from, every single occasion. We think that that is being responsible. We think it is different than the oppositions of the past. We think it is different than the oppositions of the past that just simply called for more, more, more, more.

And every time someone said where are you going to get it from, they said things like GigaText — \$7 million . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 5 million was it? — 5, 7 whatever the figure was; 5 to \$7 million. We'll use the higher estimate . . .

An Hon. Member: — What do you care?

Mr. Boyd: — I care a lot about it. I care a lot about it, Mr. Speaker. I think all members of this legislature should care a lot about it. It was a bungled deal, GigaText was. It was an ill-fated attempt to try and translate French language into English law here in Saskatchewan. It was a huge mess, it was a huge mess and it should never have started. But it is exactly the same kind of mess that this government finds itself into today.

What happened in this Channel Lake thing, Mr. Speaker, could have financed a few things here in Saskatchewan. We're not going to say it's going to finance a \$300 million increase in highways or anything else like that, because that would be irresponsible. Because this deal has only lost \$5 million, by the government's estimates, all the way up to \$15 million by Jack Messer's estimates. But the fact of the matter is, is we should be just as concerned about the losses in Channel Lake as we were in the losses of GigaText.

And you people over there take great pride, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly's members on that side of the House take great pride in trying to want to ram down the throats of Saskatchewan people to try and remind them of GigaText.

Well you should take just as much pride, members opposite, of talking about Channel Lake and the misadventure in that respect. Because the people of Saskatchewan lost money then and they're losing money today. And every time one of you opposite wants to get up and talk about GigaText, or the debt, we want you to talk about Channel Lake and Jack Messer. Because it's just as important to the taxpayers of this province now as it was then.

We were involved in some very, very serious problems in the 1980s, yes, but we've got a serious problem here now, Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s. We got a SaskPower board that has been neutered by the Premier of this province. We've got a SaskPower former president that was involved in all kinds of activities that weren't under the authorization of the board, did not have the authorization of the minister — although that's

coming into question these days, although that's coming into question.

The other day down in Crown Corporations Committee, Jack Messer said . . . he had a little tell-all confession down there. He said yes, the member from Rosetown-Biggar knew what was going on; and yes, the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) knew what was going on; and yes, the member from Cumberland knew what was going on; and yes, the entire board knew what was going on; and yes, the minister responsible for CIC knew what was going on; and yes, the Premier of Saskatchewan was informed of all of this.

We have to ask, why is this government being reluctant, why is this government being reluctant in talking about these issues? Why is this government not wanting to have a public inquiry? Why is this government, why is this government not wanting to turn over documents? You know very well, member for Regina . . . Northeast — I can never think of his constituency — Regina Northeast is a lawyer here in Saskatchewan. As a lawyer here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that member would know full well that when you get to court you have to have relevant documents presented in advance.

The prosecution provides all of the information that the other . . . the defence asks for so that they can have weeks and sometimes months to prepare. And these people opposite want to turn over the documents, they want you to turn over the documents on that one day and then they want you to go straight into asking questions about it. My prediction is, is they're going to bring in a wheelbarrel practically full of stuff, and they're going to dump it out on our doorstep, and they're going to say to us, okay you've got a few minutes to prepare, let's go ask questions about this.

An Hon. Member: — Well they didn't read the contract. They don't think we have to either.

(1530)

Mr. Boyd: — That's a good point. That's a good point. But I think anyone in Saskatchewan that has any, even a minuscule amount of fairness, a minuscule amount of fairness would realize that that is not right; that that is not appropriate; that is not what open and accountable government, as they have promised would be, is all about; that is not how a legislature should work.

We should have opportunity to review all of the information. We should have opportunity to have legal counsel. Not some NDP legal counsel that the member, the chairperson of this committee drags in at the last minute and then fails to provide information about the background or anything else; oh, it slipped her memory. As I said, there's a lot of people having memory problems around here these days, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that that is unfortunate, because just as it was unfortunate, just as it was unfortunate with GigaText, it's unfortunate today. Just as it was unfortunate then, it's unfortunate today. And every one of you opposite should be ashamed of yourselves for trying to withhold information from that committee.

Every single document should be turned over. Every single witness that we ask for that we believe is relevant should be brought before that committee and subpoenaed if necessary and asked to testify under oath.

Because if we're going to get to the bottom of this, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to get to the bottom of this and try and correct that, this problem, try and correct the GigaTexts of the past, yes, and try and protect the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan in respect to Channel Lake today, if we're going to try and do that, if you are truly sincere over there, Mr. Speaker, if you're truly sincere about it, you'll provide that information as soon as possible; and you'll delay if necessary, you'll delay if necessary — we're not asking for that at this point, but we may — we may ask for delay if necessary to review that information, to go over that. We're not asking for that now but we may.

Because we want to have proper time to prepare for this committee because we think it's important for the taxpayers of this province, Mr. Speaker. We think it's important because there's money that has been lost. And it's not my money, it's not the members opposite's money; it's the taxpayers of this province's money.

You have a sworn duty, you have a sworn duty and a responsibility as members of Executive Council and cabinet and members of this legislature, as we all do, to try and protect the interests of this province and the people of this province and the taxpayers of this province. And I have seen anything but cooperation from the members opposite.

When we ask for witnesses . . . And I don't think there's anyone in Saskatchewan any longer that doesn't believe that we are right in our call. If this was an investigation, if this was an investigation, a murder investigation, Mr. Speaker, do you think we couldn't call any witness we wanted if we were the prosecution? Do you think we couldn't call any witness we thought was relevant? Of course we could. Of course we could.

There's a huge difference, yes, between a murder investigation and this, and I'll be the first to admit that. But there is a fundamental premiss that we should be able to call before that Assembly, before that committee, anybody that we feel is relevant. And this government should not be moving to block that testimony.

And the Chair, Mr. Speaker, speaks from her seat and says they are not. We have seen anything but an unbiased Chair. And I would ask that member . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. Now I think the hon. member will recognize the use of unparliamentary reference to a member of the Assembly in capacity as a presiding officer of a committee, and I'll ask that he withdraw that remark.

Mr. Boyd: — I would want to withdraw that remark unconditionally, Mr. Speaker.

We have some concerns about how that committee is working, Mr. Speaker. We have concerns as members of the legislature. We have concerns about ordinary citizens in Saskatchewan and

we have concerns about taxpayers here in Saskatchewan. And I think those concerns are shared by people all over this province.

And if the polling indicates anything here in Saskatchewan, it indicates that people across, right across political lines, right across political lines also believe that there are concerns with this investigation. They believe that there are concerns, yes.

We're going to get to the bottom of this one way or the other. We're going to call members opposite, including the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, to that committee, and the Premier of this province and the member from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. This is their answer to it: you can ask questions in question period. He's going to testify in question period he says, Mr. Speaker.

Well unfortunately we don't think that that's good enough, nor do the people of Saskatchewan think that's good enough. If anyone wants to take, for example, and review, if anybody in Saskatchewan wants to take and review the questions and the answers in question period over the last few years, can anyone make any connection between the questions and the answers provided by that minister over there, Mr. Speaker. Because I don't think there's any connection.

We asked whether Jack Messer was receiving any kind of information or support from SaskPower, and unfortunately the minister gets up and gets into some rant about the 1980s. How possibly could we get into that? The people of Saskatchewan want to know a little bit about this now, sir. The people of Saskatchewan have a right to know. They have a right to know what went on in this situation, and we're going to continue, we're going to continue to ask the questions in spite of any kind of efforts of this government, through their committee, is wanting to . . .

I think, Mr. Speaker, I would offer some advice. I would offer some advice to the members opposite. I think that the Chair of that committee should be acting in the same kind of impartiality that the Speaker of this Assembly acts in. We ask for and we demand, we ask for and we demand the same kind of impartiality that the Speaker of this Assembly displays. We think that that's what this calls for. We're not even sure you should be sitting in caucus any longer because we have some legitimate concerns about the impartiality in this committee.

We're not even sure you should be speaking to the members of your party any longer, Mr. Speaker. There is concerns about impartiality on this issue and as . . . I hear that member cackling from her seat but people across Saskatchewan aren't laughing. People across Saskatchewan aren't laughing any longer, Mr. Speaker, because they have concerns about that.

I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that anyone has made any kind of sexist remark in this regard. I don't believe anybody's made any kind of sexist remark. But I believe that the members of this committee, that committee Chair, Mr. Speaker, has to be impartial. And I think everybody in Saskatchewan believes that. If we are to read the editorials here in Saskatchewan, the editorialists of Saskatchewan believe it as well.

The editorialists . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the member from Regina Elphinstone is suggesting from his seat about what

should happen to members opposite over here. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there's going to be spankings handed out all right. There's going to be spankings in the next election. There's going to be spankings in the next election campaign here in Saskatchewan, and I think a bunch of members opposite are going to get them. And the one holding up something over there is probably one that's going to get the worst.

Well we've probably gone a long ways from the budget discussion, Mr. Speaker, and I'll bring it back. I'll bring it back to that discussion now by saying I think that the government has wrong priorities in a number of areas. I think they've been wrong in terms of the management of the Crown corporations. I think they've been wrong in terms of the management of the Department of Finance in a number of areas. I think they're wrong in terms of their direction in terms of the Department of Highways, the Department of Agriculture, and Department of Health, and Education, just to give you a few examples, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I believe that I certainly won't be supporting this budget, and I think that the people of Saskatchewan have some problems with this budget. And I would ask that all members of this legislature listen to their constituents these days and vote with their hearts and their heads, rather than voting with their NDP card.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And first of all, I would like to also thank the hon. member for Carrot River for allowing me to speak now. I think it's particularly generous of this member to allow me to speak in view of him just being told by the hon. member for Kindersley that his time with us is so limited.

Well the budget, Mr. Speaker. What do I think of the hundred and fifty million new profits from the Crowns. Well members opposite have told us that we should be so happy we have such profitable Crown corporations. They tell us we should be proud that we are getting a fair return on those Crown corporations.

I ask members opposite, where do those profits come from? They came out of our hides, and everybody knows that. It's easy to have profits when you've gouged the people. You now say, look at all this money we made for you. You not only made the money for us, you made the money out of us.

Have our utility rates become a source of hidden taxation? I think most of the people of Saskatchewan have long since arrived at that conclusion. Well we are told, we are told, Mr. Speaker, that we should not be concerned about high utility rates because they are so low. And I congratulate, I congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for being so forthright with the people of Saskatchewan in telling us just how low they are. And I would refer you to page 53.

You know the Minister of Finance — and I have to apologize to him. I know I have often accused him of giving smarmy non-answers. I've often accused him of being a smart Alec with a big mouth who rarely gives an answer that illuminates anything. But here, here I was wrong. He has told us on page 53 of *Investing in People*, the budget address, he's told us that we

have the highest power rates in western Canada and among the highest power rates in the entire nation. So there we have it.

Now I congratulate the Minister of Finance for being so honest to point out to us that SaskPower gouges us harder than any other power corporation in the entire of western Canada, and here it is, his figures, not mine. And I know that the Minister of Finance, being an honourable man, will never again subject us to those ridiculous statements about our utility rates being so low.

An Hon. Member: — Pass that over here. I want to see this.

Mr. Hillson: — Fifty-three. Now what are these high power utility rates for, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. The hon. member from North Battleford has recently risen to his feet. I know at the beginning of speeches, members — order — I know at the beginning of speeches, members wish to help. All members have an opportunity to join this debate; some have already.

(1545)

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now why does SaskPower, why does SaskPower need higher rates in Saskatchewan than rates charged power consumers in Manitoba, in Quebec, in Alberta, in British Columbia? Does it have anything to do with Guyana? Does it have anything to do with George Hill? Does it have anything to do with Jack Messer?

Mr. Speaker, we know we're being gouged — here are the figures. The Minister of Finance says we're being gouged. He tells us we should be thrilled at being gouged because we're getting all these marvellous, marvellous profits that he and his friends can re-invest around the world and we can watch them sink slowly into the muck and mire of Channel Lake.

However there's other good news in the budget. We have 88 million new in health expenses. Whoops! But let's look at the figures. Well it turns out that the 88 million is not based on last year's expenditures at all; the 88 million is based on an estimate. Last year's expenditures are in fact 39 million below the budget figure today — not 88. So there went over half of the so-called increase.

Now so what else? On top of that, Mr. Speaker, what we find is that there is the new doctors' agreement; there is the new Saskatchewan Health Information Network; and there are the existing deficits of most of our 32 health districts. On these three items alone I have more than eaten up the 39 million; we're already behind last year's expenditures, not ahead. We are told that municipalities get more money, but when we check the figures, they actually get less than spent money last year.

We are told by these people who are continually blaming Ottawa for all of their failures, all of their lack of concern, all of their lack of vision, all of their lack of commitment, we are told that Ottawa this year will pay equalization of \$310 million. Now last year it was 30 million. How did it get increased by over 300 per cent?

Interestingly enough, the federal government itself forecasts 106 million in equalization for this province. So I have to question how solid that figure will turn out to be.

But the one thing I am confident of is that hon. members opposite will now for ever cease and desist blaming Ottawa for all their failures and all their shortcomings when they see that \$310 million equalization from Ottawa and they realize that the new National Child Benefit Program comes from the federal government, and they will no longer blame the federal government for the money they have lost on their ill-found adventures.

But, Mr. Speaker, I didn't rise today to make a political speech. I do wish to address this House on what I consider to be the most serious public issue that will face this province in the next generation. And by that I mean aboriginal participation in the economy and life of this province.

And that keys into the issue of taxation of aboriginals. And may I say at the outset that payment of sales tax by aboriginals is an issue that we are going to have to address. But in all of the issues concerning and surrounding aboriginal participation in our economy, it is frankly one of the more minor ones. There are far more serious ones we are going to have to address.

The real issue facing us is that in the next few decades there will be a dramatic increase in the percentage of our population which is of native background, particularly among the younger years and in those entering the workforce and work age.

Education, job training, and job opportunities for our young people in general, and our aboriginal young people in particular, will be a key challenge facing this province. And if we do not rise to it, quite frankly and bluntly, the future of this province is bleak. If the aboriginal population rises to the levels projected without at the same time becoming more active in our economy, then it will become increasingly difficult for us to sustain the infrastructure necessary for a modern economy and a modern society.

Mr. Speaker, the frieze above the main entrance to the legislature depicts justice. And on either side of justice are shown, on the one side what was described in the days when this legislature was constructed as the white man, and on the other side the red man. Rather archaic and out-of-date terminology, but the intentions are none the less modern and valid.

It was intended to depict that this legislature would dispense justice and fairness to all members of the Saskatchewan community, both native and non-native. And that, I submit, is the key challenge that will face this province in the next generation or two, and indeed the future of our province demands that we rise to that challenge.

Now specifically on the issue of the taxation of aboriginal people. The Saskatchewan Party adopted two resolutions at its founding policy convention. The first said they were going to abolish the provincial sales tax, and the second said they were going to charge it to aboriginals.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the utter nonsense and contradiction of these

two resolutions left me sad and embarrassed for my former colleagues. Each resolution put the lie to the other. If the Saskatchewan Party is serious about abolishing the provincial sales tax, then the party has to be lying when it says it will charge Indians.

And by the same token, if charging aboriginals the sales tax is a key priority of the Saskatchewan Party, then obviously that party is lying when they say they're going to abolish the sales tax.

In short, the situation the Saskatchewan Party has placed themselves in is that by their own admission the Saskatchewan Party is lying in its platform. The only question is when they're lying. Are they lying about abolishing the sales tax or are they lying about charging it to aboriginals? They cannot do both.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, these resolutions made me embarrassed for my former colleagues. I know them as decent people. The contradiction in these two resolutions, I assume, passed right over the heads of the former Tories but I suspect the former Liberals were painfully aware of just how nonsensical and contradictory the two resolutions are.

Furthermore and on a serious note, I wish to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party's call for tax on off-reserve sales and not for some agreement as to what would happen on reserve would become a serious problem for this province if enacted. You are aware, Mr. Speaker, that we are in the process now of setting up urban reserves across the province. If we force native people to pay the sales tax but have no agreement with our first nations for the charging of that sales tax on on-reserve, then we will have tax havens springing up all over our province.

We already, Mr. Speaker, have urban reserves in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and North Battleford. There are more urban reserves planned. What would happen to commercial districts of those towns and cities if a mall on an urban reserve does not charge sales tax? Clearly it would devastate those business districts. It would make it impossible for merchants in the off-reserve area to compete.

So obviously we have to have an agreement which includes first nations people, rather than parading around this province letting on that we can ram something down their throat to show them once and for all who's boss. That will not work. It will destroy this province.

However, Mr. Speaker, that does not dispose of the issue. I believe we must come together to discuss the issue of native taxation for a number of reasons. My sense is that the present tax holidays enjoyed by first nations people . . . and here I must emphasize that half of our aboriginal population has no tax exemption. And I guess I have of course in that sense been wrong in using words like aboriginal and native because that implies that all aboriginals have a tax exemption. They do not. Only first nations do. And I think it is also important to point out in that regard that the tax exemption is certainly not universal. First nations people also pay many taxes. There are only a few which they do not pay.

But I still have to come back and say my sense is that the

present tax holidays are unfortunately becoming a source of racial disharmony. The future of our province demands that our various communities come together in respect and harmony. The fact that some people, by virtue not of their race but of their legal classification, are exempt from certain taxes is becoming an increasing source of tension between our communities.

Furthermore, the expansion of our aboriginal population as projected can only mean that it will become increasingly difficult for us to afford the schools, the hospitals, the roads, and the other services that we all, native and non-native, so desperately want and need. The burden on those who do not enjoy any tax exemption will become increasingly onerous and be increasingly resented.

Mr. Speaker, I see an unfortunate crisis looming. If a future government, for example my friends in the Saskatchewan Party who tell me they're going to be government very shortly, if they are right and they do become that government and they decide to put aboriginals in their place and to show them once and for all who is boss by enacting provincial sales tax on first nations people, I think that we are asking for trouble.

On the other hand, if the government refuses to discuss this issue to find a mutually acceptable compromise, then those citizens of our province who enjoy no tax abatement are going to become increasingly resentful, and I fear that they will direct their resentment against their native neighbours.

(1600)

We need mutual respect, we need to come together as a people to build this province. For both social and economic reasons, the future health of this province demands that we address this issue quietly, unemotionally, and with goodwill and respect on both sides.

Mr. Speaker, threat will not work. Mr. Speaker, attempting to gain votes by playing on the resentments or prejudices of a small minority will not work. Ignoring this issue will not work. We share this land. We share a love for this land. We have a common destiny. And I ask that we deal with this issue so that we will strengthen our bonds of citizenship and friendship together.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those conclude my remarks, except for me to say that whatever gains are in this budget are by and large accomplished through sleight of hand, flimflam, and gouging utility rates. We see that there is some slight reduction in the personal income tax. Unfortunately most Saskatchewan residents will find that slight reduction in income tax more than burned up in their increased utility rates.

The NDP obviously hopes that that reduction in personal income tax will leave the populous of this province numb with gratitude and impel them, on the next election day, to stream to the polls to thank them for some small mercies. That is if they can still pay the light and phone bill and drive on our roads.

Well I'm not sure it's working, Mr. Speaker. The phone calls I'm getting are from people who know that the increases in utility rates have little or nothing to do with the cost of service. People no longer believe that the reason for increases in utility

rates are because this is what it costs to generate the service. If they did, they would accept it. But they know that's not the case.

They know when they read the newspaper about record profits, they know when they read the newspaper that the government is thinking of sinking another 30 million in a country they haven't heard of before — they know where that's coming from. And so to be told that they should be so happy that out of their hides have come these dramatic profits in our Crowns, well I'm just not as sure that they're as grateful as the NDP think they ought to be.

So I congratulate the minister for some slight tax relief; I congratulate the minister for his sleight of hand in taking back that tax relief tenfold times over in utility rate increases. And I congratulate the minister for at least having the integrity to tell us that all that talk about our low utility rates is so much hooley. He's now published a document saying it's nonsense; he's now published a document saying that in fact he has the highest power rates in western Canada.

And I apologize, I apologize to the minister for saying that his answers are smarmy and impossible to understand because here is an answer that is possible to understand — we are being gouged with our utility rates. That's the message of the budget and these utility rates. They're going to Guyana; they're going to Jack Messer; they're going to Channel Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. Before I comment on a budget that I thought was very good, delivered by the member for Saskatoon Mount Royal, I want to tell the House a little bit of what I heard today. I know I listened to the member from Kindersley spouting off about everything.

I thought that he would have learned by now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the 1980s when his party was in power. I believe it was 1982 to 1991 when that party spent \$1 billion a year more than what they were taking in. But in listening to him in his speech today about this budget, another balanced budget, the fifth balanced budget in a row, Mr. Speaker, he hadn't changed. His attitude is exactly the same. It's a spend, spend, spend attitude. This government on this side of the House never does enough.

The people of Saskatchewan will not accept that, Mr. Speaker. They know that integrity, they know that common sense is what they want, and that's what they're going to stick with, Mr. Speaker. So I was a little surprised in the member from Kindersley, expecting I guess something more from him. But I guess it's the same old story.

One of the reasons I think we heard a lot of chirping from the newer than newer Conservative Party and the Liberal Party this afternoon I think is because of the headlines in today's paper, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the *Leader-Post* and Leader Services, Leader-Star Services were . . . On Monday they did the Channel Lake affair and they were asking people about it. And on Tuesday they did

the opposition's performance in which they compared the Liberals and the Conservatives. And Wednesday they did the reaction to the budget that we're speaking on today.

And on both . . . on all of those occasions we heard the members from the other side of the House speak up and talk about the headlines in the paper. But today for some reason, Mr. Speaker, they haven't mentioned a word about the headlines in the newspaper. And I can't understand why until I looked at it.

Well this is what it says, "NDP ahead among voters." And it says here . . . I know they're going to chirp, Mr. Speaker. And this bothers them a little bit because they thought they were really gaining here and they were really impressing the Saskatchewan people. But they keep forgetting that Saskatchewan people want integrity and common sense, not what they're getting from the members across.

Fifty-seven per cent, Mr. Speaker, said that they would vote for the New Democrats, 21 per cent said that they would vote for the Saskatchewan Party or the newer than new Conservative Party, and 21 per cent said that they would vote for the Liberals. Well even if you add those up, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't equal to the support that the people have for the New Democratic Party. And why do they support us? Because of integrity, Mr. Speaker, and common sense — accountability.

And we hear from the other side, complaints. That's all we ever hear. And I know John F. Kennedy said in 1964 that one-fifth, one-fifth of all the people are against everything all of the time. And that's what he said, Mr. Speaker, and that's why those two parties are at 20 per cent of the polls. It just makes perfect sense, because they're against everything all of the time.

I want to talk about integrity just for a moment . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, we'll get to that a little later, the member from North Battleford and his remarks. But first I want to talk a little bit about integrity and why we are at 50 per cent in the polls, Mr. Speaker.

On March 9, this government on this side of the House issued the throne speech, or delivered the throne speech. And in it it gave the plan to the Saskatchewan people, as we understand their priorities. So it's not really our plan, but it's listening to the people and it's the people's plan, Mr. Speaker.

And what they said to us is we should be investing in jobs. And they said to us we should be investing in education. And they said to us we should be investing in health care, social welfare reform, transportation, safe communities. But we should be doing this, Mr. Speaker, we should be doing all of these things with fiscal integrity.

So I want to take a moment now to explain how the budget fits in to the plan that was delivered on March 9, the throne speech. So let's deal with investing in jobs and economic growth for a minute.

First of all, we have to understand that there are more people working in Saskatchewan today than at any time in our history. There are more full-time jobs, more jobs for women and more jobs for young people today than any other time in our history.

And if I go back and I look at that new Conservative Party and its policies, here it says: "eliminate preferential hiring policies aimed at women and minorities." That's the new policy by the Saskatchewan Party . . . or the Tory Party. Just the opposite of what this government is doing.

This year when we said we were going to invest in jobs and economic growth, the budget answered to that by doubling the support for Regional Economic Development Authorities. It also introduced community-based economic development agencies. Five million dollars in investment in the northern development fund; the expansion of the spruce budworm spraying program to protect the forestry industry and the jobs there.

And this is very important to me and in my constituency in the Hudson Bay area where the spruce is being eaten by the spruce budworm. This government has taken action and is going to add \$1.2 million to protect the forest industry.

An expanded recycling program to protect the environment while creating jobs at SARCAN, jobs for some of the people that are in most need.

We are going to encourage investment and innovation as well, Mr. Speaker. We're implementing tax incentives to encourage research and development.

The film employment tax credit to spur growth in that industry. Our own people will be working.

Improvements to tax rebates for livestock and horticultural facilities, and increased investment in research and development in the agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to strengthen the transportation system; enhance training and skills development.

And as Mr. Peter McCann, president of Ag-West Biotech stated, "It's certainly very good news. The tax credit will encourage people to invest in more resources in ag-biotech and it will be a major attraction for people looking to invest in Saskatchewan."

So how did the budget then deal with investing in education and training? — the second point of our throne speech, our plan, our map, so that we move to the light at the end of that tunnel.

Well when we're investing in education, the budget address said this:

. . . a growing economy requires skilled knowledgeable workers . . .

This budget makes a major investment in our children and our future and we will do even more as our financial situation . . . improve.

By investing in our young people we will build the skills and academic excellence they need to fulfil their potential for satisfying and prosperous lives, (right here, right here) here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — We're putting money into universities, Mr. Speaker — 200 million in funding for Saskatchewan universities. Operating grants to federated colleges are up 9 million; capital investments up 66 per cent.

How about student aid? We heard from the students and the students said we need help. And we gave them help. Bursary plan to give students help without adding to their debts in the future — up to \$3,230 per student with more for students with children, increased support for students with children, and tax relief for interest paid on student loans.

We also put more money into kindergarten and grade 12 education, Mr. Speaker. And as Don Wells said, the university — that's the University of Regina president — he was very grateful after hearing the provincial budget will pump \$19.5 million more into post-secondary education this year. This budget is the most positive I've seen for university in 30 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1615)

Mr. Renaud: — And investing in health care, that was part of our plan in the throne speech.

Mr. Renaud: — It was, it was part of our plan and direction, and the budget confirms that. And it said in the budget address, our commitment to health is stronger today than every before.

An Hon. Member: — What about the federal Liberals then?

Mr. Renaud: — Well they don't put anything in, but we're going to get into that in a minute. Yes, the federal Liberals, I think now they put 17 cents . . .

An Hon. Member: — Thirteen cents.

Mr. Renaud: — Pardon me, 13 cents on every dollar into health care. You know what it used to be? It used to be 50 cents of every dollar that we spent on health care in Saskatchewan, 50 cents came from the federal government. Today 13 cents comes from the federal government.

And the member from North Battleford was sitting there saying, don't blame the federal government. You can't blame them any more because they are so good, because they're our Liberal brothers and sisters in Ottawa and you can't blame them.

Why are they only giving us 13 cents, Mr. Speaker, 13 cents on every dollar for health care rather than the 50 cents that they used to? He didn't explain that at all.

But I want to say about what some of the things the budget is doing in health care, even though the federal government have left us alone. They've left us with no federal dollars and we have to back-fill all of that. But we're still going to do some things, Mr. Speaker.

And I know in my constituency that we have a renal dialysis centre that's going to be located in the Tisdale hospital. And

rural people will have that service. And in Yorkton, there's going to be one in Yorkton as well, Mr. Speaker.

And there's going to be a new MRI unit in Regina and a CT scanner in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. And those are some of the things that we're doing in health care, even though the federal government has said no to our request for more funding.

Part of our plan, Mr. Speaker, that we delivered on March 9 in our throne speech was investing in highways and transportation. And the budget confirmed that as well. The budget in Highways is going to be up 10 per cent to \$219 million — highest for many, many years. The commitment of \$2.5 billion over 10 years is what we've committed to roads, highways and transportation in the province of Saskatchewan.

What has the federal government done there, in transportation? We have at least a strategy and a plan. The federal government has no plan, they have no strategy, and they have no funding. Nothing for highways, nothing for health. Mr. Speaker. We're left on our own, but we'll succeed.

But why the member from North Battleford says, don't blame the federal Liberals, I don't know, I don't know. They continue to take as much out of this province as they ever have. But do they put it back? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

And how about investing in children and families. The budget said this: the values that led to medicare also underlie our other social programs. Saskatchewan people continue to lead the way with new solutions to child and family poverty. Our significant new investment parallels a bold, innovative approach to meeting the needs of children.

And I want to talk a little bit about that, Mr. Speaker, as well, because that's also part of our plan, the Saskatchewan people's plan. It's not just our plan — it's the plan of the people of Saskatchewan.

But the budget called or allowed money for three new programs to help people with lower than adequate income from falling to dependency on social welfare. The employment supplement will encourage low income parents to increase their employment by providing a supplement to help with child-related work expenses. Applications will be taken by telephone and it is expected that 15,000 low income families in Saskatchewan will be able to stay at work with this help.

The Saskatchewan Child Benefit will assist parents with the cost of raising children and it will assist lower income families to remain in the workforce by providing for children's basic needs. As the funding for the National Child Benefit incentive increases, funding for the Saskatchewan Child Benefit will decrease. No application will be required, as eligibility will be determined by income reported to Revenue Canada.

And finally, the family health benefit. People who receive either the employment supplement and/or the Saskatchewan Child Benefit initiative will receive health benefits that will ensure that health-related needs do not force low income families onto the welfare system, Mr. Speaker.

Now that's our way of doing things. It's not a bus ticket from

Saskatchewan to Alberta or from Saskatchewan to Manitoba as the Conservative governments in those provinces do. No, this is a New Democratic way of doing things based on that plan and based on the path that the people of Saskatchewan and we together have determined is necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — It was a very good budget. And a part of the budget of course and part of the Saskatchewan people's plans and why they believe in the New Democratic government is because of our balanced approach. We've always said that with surpluses we're going to take one-third of those, or approximately, and enhance services — like the help for children and families.

And we're going to take one-third of that, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to lower taxes. And we continue to do that. And in this budget we were able to lower the income tax by 2 per cent. Now I know the opposition members will say, well you should have done more. And we would have liked to have done more, and we will over time.

But the Saskatchewan people know that the plan is a sustainable plan and that you can only cut taxes as you can afford them. And so they're pleased that there was at least this help. And we were certainly happy that we could provide the lower taxes as well.

And paying down debt, Mr. Speaker. One-third of the surpluses, as you know, we have always said that would go to pay down our debt because the debt is what's really heavy on our shoulders as a government, on our shoulders as a people of Saskatchewan, and certainly on our children's shoulders.

And why is that, Mr. Speaker? Because the larger the debt, the larger or more interest that you have to pay, taking monies from needed programs like health and social services and education and just throwing it away into interest.

And so we've said that we have to pay down that debt. The debt was created of course by the previous administration, and many of them sit over there now and they chirp and they would spend more and they would cut the taxes more. And no, they don't call themselves Tories because they want to hide for a little while, I think, behind maybe some other name, you know, and sort of maybe pop out of the woodwork at the right time. I don't know if there is a right time for them, Mr. Speaker, but I think that's their plan.

But anyway, we're going to continue to lower that debt, Mr. Speaker. And in fact by the year 2002, we are expected to reduce that \$14.3 billion debt that was there in 1991 to about 10.9 billion in the year 2002, which will mean a lot less interest for the people of Saskatchewan. A lot more then can be spent on services like improving roads, health, and education. So that's still part of our plan, Mr. Speaker, and this budget certainly addresses that as well.

I want to speak just a moment about the one-time leader of the Liberal Party who actually spoke on the budget yesterday, the member from Saskatoon Greystone. She spoke on the budget yesterday. And I was reading this article not too long ago and it

says, "Haverstock politician, but one with soul" and I thought that . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Rulings in the legislature have been consistent that proper names of sitting members are not to be used. And I ask the hon. member for Carrot River to proceed on with his speech without using proper names of members.

Mr. Renaud: — Well anyway, the member from Saskatoon Greystone talked about the budget. And I was expecting that she also would have learned about, you know, about the debt that the province has and the tough decisions that we have to make; and that the budget actually is starting on the right track, and it's balanced; and we're taking a little bit less taxes from the people of Saskatchewan, lowering the taxes; and we're increasing services as best we can; and we're lowering the debt, you know.

But no, it wasn't like that at all. It was the spend more right now; it was cut the taxes more right now; it was pay down the debt — all right now. But how could you do that? That's impossible because if you do all that, you're actually going to increase the debt. And if you increase the debt, you've increased the interest that you're going to pay on that debt, and therefore you can't provide the services that you would have wanted to, and/or you're going to have to . . . well I guess it'd be just like the Devine years, and I don't think none of us want that.

And it was interesting when . . . it was really interesting when I was listening to that speech, I was thinking about the Liberals and about leaders and how many leaders they had. And actually I came across a little story that I have to tell you because it's kind of interesting.

One day this man spotted a lamp by the roadside and he picked it up and he rubbed it vigorously and a genie appeared. And the genie said, I'll grant you your fondest wish, the genie said. And the man thought for a moment and then said, I want a spectacular job, a job that no man has ever succeeded — or a woman — has ever succeeded at. Poof, said the genie, you're the Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party.

So it was kind of a little interesting story I thought, and I thought I would share that with you. But I just want to say a little bit about why the polls are saying that the NDP are at 57 per cent and the opposition parties at 20. Again, common sense and responsibility and integrity.

When the Minister of Finance delivered the budget, the opposition members have the opportunity then to speak to the budget. And I listened, and I took my pen and I wrote down the comments from both the representative of the new Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. And this is the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes the old Liberal Party. Well the newer, newer Conservative Party, the Saskatchewan Party, this is what they said. No meaningful tax cuts in this budget. They say more for health care. They say don't close the Plains Health Centre. They said more for highways; they said more for rural roads; they said more for farmers. They said more for education and they want . . . there was less taxes, I guess — yes, less taxes.

So I listened to that for a moment and then I listened to the Liberals. And they got up and said virtually the same thing. This was not a good enough tax reduction. They want more for health; they want more for highways; they want more money for education. Again they said for the second time, less taxes and more for infrastructure.

So that's what I heard from the two official . . . or the two opposition parties right after the budget speech. And I thought for a minute, and I thought to myself, what are the Saskatchewan people thinking right now when a year the government present a budget and they understand that this government has integrity, common sense, and balance, and that they're trying to do their best with what they have.

And the other party gets up and says, oh but we want more right now. We want less taxes right now. You know, the people understand, Mr. Speaker, that that's impossible. So I think that's why the polls are indicating what they are today.

(1630)

The newspaper too, this is the *Star-Phoenix*, just after the budget was presented had this, and I'll quote. It says, the headline is "Budget critics lacking in bite." And it says this:

In focusing on the minute details of the budget, bickering about Cline's trade-offs on various pressure groups, exhortations for more money and criticising the size of the personal tax reduction, the opposition appeared at a loss to come up with anything more than a knee-jerk reaction.

Today's NDP budget contained very little for Saskatchewan families to be happy about, lamely offered Rod Gantefoer of the Saskatchewan Party. It contains no meaningful tax relief. It's built on faulty economic assumptions, and once again reaffirms Saskatchewan status as a have-not province.

Although Gantefoer had plenty of negative things to say about Cline's spending choices, his party couldn't offer anything better. The lack of anything resembling a coherent economic map from his party for the province's economy, didn't deter Gantefoer from criticizing the size of the tax cut or grants to municipalities.

The reaction from the Liberal's Jack Hillson was little better. He said not enough money was allotted to highway twinning, education, and health care, all areas the Liberals have promised to provide with extra funding along with tax cuts for Saskatchewan residents should they get elected.

Well isn't that interesting, Mr. Speaker? It's never enough for the Liberals, it's never enough for the Conservatives, but the people of Saskatchewan know what integrity and common sense is all about.

What today's article in the paper also tells me, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of Saskatchewan do not appreciate a party that as part of its policy has what they say, MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) recall. Well, MLA recall. From the same people, Mr. Speaker, that moved across the floor to form some kind of a new party under a new name, without going to the

people in a by-election. The very same people that said that, are now asking for recall. And the people of Saskatchewan know that that's not right.

Integrity and common sense, that's what it's all about, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we're looking forward, us on this side of the House, to the next election whenever it might come, a year or two down the road.

And do you know what we do, Mr. Speaker? At least that's what I do in my constituency. I have a big map on the wall of all the ridings, all the constituencies in Saskatchewan. And I take a little colouring pen, and for the seats that are going to be NDP, I colour them orange . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, orange colour.

And do you know what happened to Canora-Pelly? I coloured that one orange. And do you know what happened to Kelvington? I coloured that one orange too. And what happened to Saltcoats? I coloured that one orange too. I coloured all the little seats orange, Mr. Speaker.

Because, you see, the people of Saskatchewan want integrity; they want common sense. They want people that when they run for them, don't jump around to other parties, don't move around all over. And this is what they want, Mr. Speaker.

So I am going to vote with integrity and common sense and I will support the budget, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to stand in this Assembly this afternoon and make a few comments in regards to the recent budget that's been just brought forward by the Minister of Finance and presented to the province of Saskatchewan, a budget that I find really lacking in substance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When you take a look at this budget, when you look at it with any depth at all, and certainly when you look at and talk to the groups around this province who have been following this budget with interest, who are looking for something real and something meaningful, the budget has a lot to be desired. It presents a lot to be desired.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on one hand we can say, well yes the government did present another balanced budget. But take a look at how the budget is balanced. Take a look at whether or not the budget really is truly balanced or just a means of juggling the books, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And when I look at the budget today, and I looked through the budget presentation, I looked through the numbers, I looked through the estimates. Mr. Deputy Speaker, take a careful look. And you have to ask yourself, can the minister in his right mind stand up and say he's really presented a balanced budget? Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the minister didn't have access to millions of dollars of profits through Crown corporations, would he have been able to present a balanced budget to this Assembly or to the people of this province?

If the Minister of Finance did not have the federal government

that he could look to and had sent him a welfare cheque for almost \$300 million, would he have presented a balanced budget to this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker? No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Minister of Finance would not have had assets to sell such as the Husky Oil upgrader, their shares in the Husky Oil upgrader, would he have been able to present a balance budget to this Legislative Assembly? I doubt it.

And you know, when you start looking at the numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to note, when you start looking at those numbers very carefully, and you recognize if it wasn't for the welfare cheque from that Liberal government in Ottawa, if it wasn't for the fact that this government has picked the pockets of every Saskatchewan taxpayer through Crown corporations, through rate increases, and ongoing rate increases in utility rate hikes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it wasn't for the fact, when you look at the fact that they had assets, and like last year they had the assets and chemicals that they were able to sell off, this year they have Husky Oil upgrader, you have to ask yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's left? What will they have next year?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at this budget it's actually a very hollow document. In fact, ask the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) what he thought of this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ask the president of SARM what he thought of this budget.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even the Deputy Premier knows what the president of SARM thought of this budget, because his comments about the Premier and the Premier's promise and what SARM delegates had asked of this provincial government, at their convention just recently held in the province in the city of Regina, they asked us, this government, to indeed make a firm commitment to road construction in the province of Saskatchewan.

Why do they need that commitment? Mr. Deputy Speaker, they need that commitment because for one, while the Minister of Highways may brag about a few more million dollars available in her budget to her to use in the maintenance and construction of roads and upgrading of roads in the province of Saskatchewan, the fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this province is still lacking in real, meaningful commitment to highway construction and maintenance in this province.

And we all know what's happening to our roads. And while the federal government was willing to come across with a welfare cheque to bail the Minister of Finance out, the facts are that that welfare cheque still doesn't cover what they've offloaded onto the province of Saskatchewan. And as a result of that, the offload, the people of Saskatchewan have been asked to dig deeper.

I guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at it very carefully, the offload by the federal government just followed suit the offload by the province onto the local tax base through . . . whether it's through education, whether it's through municipal government, whatever means, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The people of this province have been asked to dig very deep.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier is right when he thanks

the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. He's right when he thanks them for having dug deep to help bring forward a balanced budget. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's be careful when we talk about a balanced budget. Because it's very easy to present, on the general revenue pool of government spending, a balance when you can shift or when you can draw from another avenue of government expenditures, of government revenue such as the Crown corporations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at this balanced budget, it reminds me of the budget that was presented to the B.C. (British Columbia) legislature, I believe it was about a year ago when the Premier at the time, the current Premier, Mr. Clark, went to the people of B.C. and said their first balanced budget in decades, in years, had been presented. They presented what was supposedly a balanced budget; they went to the electorate.

No sooner were they elected — and interestingly enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at it, they were elected with fewer votes and plurality than the opposition Liberals receive — but they barely got elected, and all of a sudden, whoops, we made a mistake. We missed reading the numbers. We didn't read them very careful.

And I'm afraid that's where the Minister of Finance is going to be today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I hear the minister, I hear the Deputy Premier chirping from his seat and I really welcome his comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because when you look at the budget speech that has been presented here by the Minister of Finance, we're going to have to ask ourselves, and I guess the Minister of Finance is probably going to be . . . probably has crossed his fingers already hoping he doesn't have the same mistake and face the same problems that the minister in B.C. is facing when they all of a sudden were re-elected and found that they were short . . . had a major shortfall.

Because we take a careful look at this budget, and what's this budget based on? In many cases it's based on a lot of numbers that you really have to question, especially when you look at oil revenue. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, oil plays a major role in this province. And here again, I would have to suggest and I would . . . Well I'm fearful of giving a lot of accolades. If there are any to be given to the Minister of Finance and to the Premier, I commend the Premier for having a little bit of foresight when he was elected in 1991.

Despite what he was saying they would do when he was in opposition and how he was going to tax the oil companies, the multinational companies that are major contributors to the tax base of this province, despite what they were saying in opposition, they had enough foresight to recognize that some of the agreements arrived at in the energy sector during the 1980s were certainly agreements that they began to realize would be fruitful and maybe they should work together with the energy companies.

And as a result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of that, over the past number of years this government has benefited from some very fine economic means that have arrived at and finances that have been arrived at in this province as a result of strong economic activity in the oil patch.

And, Mr. Speaker, certainly in my area of the province the oil

patch plays a major role in the economy of our communities. Mr. Speaker, as we look at communities like Kipling and Moosomin and Wapella, just to name a few and certainly Kennedy, right in the locale where I live, Mr. Speaker, we have seen major economic activity in our communities as a result of an economic boom in the oil industry and in the oil patch.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people in our area are certainly pleased to see that the government has finally recognized and has been willing to recognize that it's better to work with the oil companies rather than work against them. As a result of working with them, Mr. Speaker, we do have a number of companies that have set up at least small offices in our communities rather than operating totally out of Calgary. And yet the major offices continue to reside in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, I believe when you look at this budget very closely you will see that there are certainly some figures that are lacking and we have to look down the road. And when we talk about balanced budgets . . . and as I indicated earlier, it's interesting to note how the government likes to choose its numbers. It likes to pick and choose but it forgets in many cases that aren't — many cases, Mr. Speaker, where they like to forget about some of the problems that we're having in our economy.

My colleague, the member from Kindersley, talked today of some of the problems and the challenges that may face this province even this year in the agricultural sector. And agriculture, Mr. Speaker, plays a major role in this province.

In fact if you were to some of the meetings that I've been at recently in our area, Mr. Speaker, there are residents in many communities who are very concerned about what may take place in the agricultural sector of this area. Residents that have talked to me and are very concerned about the fact that young people, the younger generation, are leaving the farms because the bottom line is just so fine that there's nothing left and there's no way for them to really continue to make a living and continue to reside on the farm and live in a province where the tax burden is so heavy — a tax burden that has been passed on to them by the Deputy Premier, by the Minister of Finance.

An Hon. Member: — By the Tories.

Mr. Toth: — And the Deputy Premier says, by the Tories. Well I don't see where it's the fault of the Tories. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note the finances and the number picking that the Deputy Premier talks about. Because you know, Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague, the member from Kindersley, also reminded us today of where we were back in 1982 when the government changed, and the fact that . . . and that's what I'm talking about, false finances. It's fine to talk about general revenue pools. What about the Crown corporations pool?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, one area that this government fails to acknowledge — failed to acknowledge even in 1982; would not acknowledge in 1991; continues not to acknowledge — is unfunded pension liabilities. Last spring when the auditor presented his report, he pointed out the fact that that unfunded pension liability had grown again in the province of Saskatchewan.

(1645)

And if you were to take a look back to 1991, Mr. Speaker, you would see the unfunded pension liability in this province up until last spring had grown by over \$700 million, and my guess is we're probably going to see it over 8 or close to \$900 million by the time this audited statement comes out from the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Speaker, the problem with passing that on is, down the road somebody has to deal with that. And for the Deputy Premier to say here, the Minister of Finance to sit here today and say he's balanced the books, when on the one hand we've got debt in the Crowns, on the other hand we've got an unfunded pension liability that continues to grow, is not really being totally honest with the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are becoming much more wiser and that's what I'm finding out. The people of Saskatchewan want to see the overall picture. They're beginning to realize, when the auditor talks about not just the general revenue pool, but he brings into account the Crown corporations pool, plus the unfunded pension liability, that there is a total financial picture when you've got those three together. If you present one, you're not really being honest.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why it's important to present the total picture. And while the government likes to brag about . . . and likes to pin most of the debt at the feet of the former government of Grant Devine, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note when you go and you start going through the numbers, you start . . . Go back even to 1982. Out of the 20, almost \$22 billion deficit that the Provincial Auditor was pointing out, the NDP can certainly take gratitude in the fact that they have a share in almost half of that — almost half of that total debt, Mr. Speaker.

Take a close look at it. Will you take a look at the Crown corporations? Take a look at the unfunded pension liability and certainly the debt that has grown because of some difficult times through the '80s. We've had some good times in the last few years, Mr. Speaker, but have we really reduced the debt? No we haven't.

What is the Finance minister thankful for? He's thankful that the people of Saskatchewan were willing to eat higher utility rate fees, increases. He was pleased to see that the people of Saskatchewan are willing to accept that. And I'm sure he's pleased, like most taxpayers are, with the increase in property taxes that we have had to face in the province of Saskatchewan since 1991. And one of the areas that most people are really pleased in in my area is the educational tax component of that, of that property tax.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, you may even be a little aware of that as well. I'm not exactly sure, but I think you are a home-owner and have an idea of what we're talking about, and I think all the members across the way understand what I'm talking about when I talk about property tax increases.

And there isn't a person that doesn't complain to me, in my constituency, and say it's time we addressed our whole property tax base, and especially the fact that educational taxes and the

educational component is being put more and more at the feet of the property owner in this province. And that is something that a lot of people have a hard problem to bear.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus doesn't have a problem with putting more money into education. Our caucus doesn't have a problem with trying to make the funds available so that the young people of today can prepare themselves for the future and prepare themselves for the job opportunities tomorrow which, Mr. Speaker, I think if we took a careful look at since 1991, those job opportunities have changed significantly.

A gentleman that was speaking last night at the Full Gospel banquet that was held in the assembly talked about when he was growing up. And he talked about when he completed his high school education and his friend saying to him, there's not much point in just getting a Bachelor of Arts and Science degree; what are you going to do with that?

So he thought, well yes, what is he going to do? Maybe he's got to pinpoint something. So he decided he'd enter the field of education. And as he indicated, when he decided to enter that field and when he decided to get his education degree, Mr. Speaker, the fact was, when he got his education degree, there were a lot of jobs. The job opportunity field was excellent.

Well he applied in the city of Regina at the time and, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact of an impending marriage and it would be more convenient so his wife could get her education, and he was one of a number of applicants, and was fortunate to get a job and believed he had been led into this area.

The fact was, Mr. Speaker, in those days, going into education, the field of education, was a place where you knew there was a real opportunity to get a job. It isn't there today. When I have young people sitting across my desk and asking me if I can help them or if I've got any suggestions . . . They're one of 500 graduates at the University of Regina plus the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) — and the number of graduates coming out of there in a certain department; in this case it happened to be education — one of 500, and at that time there were only 200 jobs available. They're saying, what am I going to do? You know I've got student loans; I've spent four years or five years getting an education; and what are my job opportunities? And I think those are some of the questions that this government is going to have to answer as we go down the road.

It's not just a matter of presenting a balanced budget. It's a matter of beginning to address some of the real concerns that people have in the province of Saskatchewan: concerns like job opportunities — real job opportunities; concerns like access to quality health care; concerns like the access to education and even social services.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting. I met with some individuals this morning in the community of Moosomin but they come from the surrounding area. They're individuals . . . I believe each and every one of them are on social assistance at this time. And to their credit, the social assistance department in this province has put together a bit of a program trying to educate . . . and they've hired an individual to sit down with these young men and see if they can give them an opportunity to better prepare them to

maybe get into the job force and to prepare themselves for the job force.

Some of the problems they said they were having was, amounted to the fact that when they were in school they never were really educated as to how to apply for and prepare themselves for the job market and the availability to whatever job may be out there, whether it's a low income job, whether it's a minimum wage job or, Mr. Speaker, whatever the job might be.

The fact is, I believe . . . and as I was chatting with them, I wonder how many more people in this province as well have . . . are sitting even today, this afternoon, would like to be in the job force, would like to be in the employed, but find that they don't have all the strengths or all the assets available to them, or they haven't really been prepared to go out into the job market to sell themselves to an employer so that they can get employment — real and meaningful employment.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting chatting with them and with some of the comments they had. I think they brought some very positive comments forward about how we could better prepare people to meet the challenges of today. Or to meet the challenges of tomorrow. And I'm not exactly sure that the budget presented to this Assembly is really doing that. I'm not sure that the money that the minister has earmarked to education is really going to meet the challenge of preparing the young generation of today for the job market of tomorrow. Especially as we see the changes in the job opportunities and where the changes are going to come.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, I stand here this morning — or this afternoon — and as a MLA I'm not, I'm not necessarily one individual who totally believes that everyone, once they've completed their grade 12 education, all head off and go through the doors of learning into universities, whether it's here in Saskatchewan or whether they go out of this province.

Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? I say that because as I look around I see the job opportunities are not necessarily all geared to a university education. You may get . . . There's nothing wrong with a university education. There's nothing wrong with maybe going and getting a Bachelor of Arts, but I think, Mr. Speaker, more and more people are beginning to find that the real job opportunities are coming in the technical fields.

And I chatted with a gentleman just at a wildlife banquet a couple of weeks ago in Rocanville, a person who had his heart set on farming and had his heart set on maintaining the family farm and passing it on to his children like his dad has passed it on to him. But they arrived at a point in time where that just wasn't possible any more. High interest rates, high expenses, low income and low grain prices, low commodity prices, just put them in a position where it just was not feasible to maintain the family farm.

And he finally had to reluctantly decide that farming couldn't keep them going. He still wanted to maintain the farm, so I believe he's renting out his land and he went and he took a welder's course. And he said, the interesting comment he made to me, he said, I could go anywhere right now. With my welding certificate I could go anywhere. The job opportunities

are immense.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's important, when we look at putting money into education, that we don't just earmark it all for our major universities but we now start looking at the technical institutes such as SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and to giving young people the opportunity to expand their vision. And in many cases, Mr. Speaker, it's not just a matter of getting an education so that you can go and work for somebody. This gentleman that I just talked about, he's become his own employer really. He started his own business and he's contracting out his welding experience and expertise.

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to look beyond, as we do in agriculture, we need to look beyond just getting an education and expecting somebody else to prepare the jobs. I think the young people of today . . . and I believe we have young people with a lot of knowledge and young people with some very great ideas and terrific dreams who I believe in the future will show us that they have the ability to plan for the future.

And I believe there are a lot of young people who are not interested in just going to work for somebody any more, but are more interested in seeing what they can do for themselves, what they can create for themselves. The job opportunities — maybe the little company, whether it's just a small business that employs five to ten people or whether it becomes a business that may employ, who knows, 3,200 people.

I talked to a young gentleman in the city on Wednesday I believe it was, or on Tuesday, Mr. Speaker. It was very interesting. A person who unfortunately is, or fortunately for him, is probably about half my age, and I hate to admit that. But I look at the business he is now the manager and co-owner of and it's amazing. What it said to me, Mr. Speaker, is this young gentleman was not just interested in just going and working for somebody. He had a vision of being, and planning, and being the owner of, and in this case it happens to be a car dealership, one of the largest in Saskatchewan.

And I thought, and you sit in the office and, Mr. Speaker, to be very honest with you, you just feel good when you're talking to someone like that. Because they've got a vision and they're looking forward to how they can be not only participants in this province but how they can also provide . . . and as he indicated — I forget the number of employees he had — that he felt good about the fact that he was able to create employment for a number of people in this province.

However, Mr. Speaker, he brought a couple of points forward as well that I think that a lot of other people do as well. And things that when we look at this budget, the concerns he had is the tax structure in the province of Saskatchewan. He had concerns with the taxes, the high tax rate we have in this province, the amount of tax dollars that leave his business, that are taken out of his pocket, that are taken out of his ability to provide even more meaningful employment.

Mr. Speaker, in fact he said he loved this province and he invested in this province, but he would love to see the day when there is a fairer tax base in the province of Saskatchewan. He'd love to see the day when the rules are more equal and treat

people a lot more fairly, treat businesses more fairly so that they can provide the meaningful employment.

And this budget really doesn't do that, Mr. Speaker. When you look at this budget, Mr. Speaker, the government is going to brag about the increases they put into health care. And they're going to brag about the \$88 million — \$88.8 million I believe — that they put into health care, additional money into health care. And they're going to say this is what we're doing to provide more meaningful, accessible health care. And I hear the Minister of Health is now bragging from his seat about that \$88 million and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what I find interesting, that \$88 million is not going to address some of the problems.

We had a lady in . . . a couple in this Assembly, I believe yesterday, raising some real concerns about their access to health care. Take a look at the \$88 million, Mr. Speaker. Where's that \$88 million going? \$20 million into SHIN (Saskatchewan Health Information Network); \$20 million into setting up the computer so that they could provide employment for . . . and make sure that Mr. Nystuen — I don't know if I got the name — Nystuen has a job, an NDP patronage appointment, Mr. Speaker. Just another job created for an NDP employee or an NDP bagman, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that doesn't put one red cent into making sure that there is an operating table available at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon that you can put a patient on, and it's going to be standing there when the specialist goes to start his operation. It doesn't put another red cent into making a bed available to address the long waiting-lists we have for hip replacement or even for heart surgery, Mr. Speaker.

And when it . . . Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. There's lots to draw on because visiting at the hospitals you run into individuals who've been on waiting-lists, and I find that very interesting. In fact, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. It now being the time of adjournment, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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