

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of the Saskatchewan disenfranchised widows group. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended whereby benefits and pensions are reinstated to disenfranchised widows and whereby all revoked pensions are reimbursed to them retroactively with interest to April 17, 1985.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the two cities of Melfort and Saskatoon.

I so present.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today on behalf of the disenfranchised widows of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended whereby benefits and pensions are reinstated to disenfranchised widows and whereby all revoked pensions are reimbursed to them retroactively with interest to April 17, 1985.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Manor, Oxbow, Glen Ewen and Carievale areas of my constituency.

I so present.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present to do with the farm crisis in Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to demand that the federal government work with Saskatchewan to put in place a farm aid package that provides real relief to those who need it and that the provincial government develop a long-term farm safety net program as it promised to do when it cancelled GRIP against the wishes of the farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are from the communities of Saltcoats and Whitewood.

I so present.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present petitions, reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have the Workers' Compensation Board Act amended whereby benefits and pensions are reinstated to disenfranchised widows and whereby all revoked pensions are reimbursed to them retroactively with interest to April 17, 1985.

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

And Mr. Speaker, the petition I'm presenting today is signed by individuals from the city of Saskatoon.

I so present.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of individuals concerned about the intrusion of Social Services into parental rights. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a review process with respect to family intervention to ensure the rights of responsible families are not being violated.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Melfort.

I so present.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present petitions on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan and the farmers within our province concerned about the agriculture crisis that they're facing. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to demand that the federal government work with Saskatchewan to put in place a farm aid package that provides real relief to those who need it and that the provincial government develop a long-term farm safety net program as it promised to do when it cancelled GRIP against the wishes of farmers.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Cudworth, Humboldt, Carmel, Aberdeen, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I bring a petition on behalf of people from the communities of Gull Lake, Maple Creek, Tompkins, and Swift Current. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe

highway system that meets their needs.

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

Thank you.

**Mr. McLane:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to rise again today in the House to present a petition on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so that Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the good folks in a number of communities including Lucky Lake, Dinsmore, Beechy, Rosetown, Macrorie, Outlook, Delisle, Birsay, and Demaine, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens who are concerned about the state of our highways and the need to put more priorities towards maintaining and constructing them.

The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

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

Those who've signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from communities of Eston, Elrose, Coleville, Kerrobert, and Kindersley.

I so present.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues here today in bringing forward petitions in regards to the terrible state of our highways in Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call on federal and provincial governments to dedicate a significantly greater portion of the fuel tax revenues toward road maintenance and construction so Saskatchewan residents may have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed these petitions are from the Climax, Frontier, Orkney, Val Marie, Shaunavon areas of the province.

I so present.

**Ms. Haverstock:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm most certainly pleased once again to rise on behalf of a lot of concerned people in the province. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide essential funding and ensure the delivery of scientifically proven, diagnostic assessment and programming for children with learning disabilities in order that they have access to an education that meets their needs and allows them to reach their full potential.

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

All the people who have signed this petition today, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here this morning from the administrator of the village of Lancer a petition, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately start work on the rebuilding of our secondary highway system to provide safe driving on what are becoming known as pothole roads, to enter into negotiations with SARM and SUMA for a long-term plan of rural road restoration reflecting the future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as the new trucking regulations changes safety factors on these roads.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these folks of course all come from the community of Lancer and there are a couple here from Abbey as well. And I'm happy to present it on their behalf today.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Clerk:** — According to order the petitions presented at the last sitting have been reviewed and found to be in order. Pursuant to rule 12(7) these petitions are hereby received.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my extreme pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 27 grade 8 students seated in the west gallery.

I was able to bump into them for a few moments after a meeting and before I went into my office, and shook a few hands there, Mr. Speaker. They are an interesting group who I'm told will be asked questions later. And I'm sure they'll have a lot of questions to ask me when I meet with them. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. René Pelletier, and I'd ask members to join in giving them a warm welcome.

They also have smiles and waved a bit at my seatmate, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, and I think that's because a number of their lives were touched in their

kindergarten years by a wonderful teacher, Mr. Speaker. Please join with me in a warm welcome to the Pilot Butte students.

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

**Ms. Murray:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly with my seatmate, the member from Regina Wascana Plains, I extend a very warm welcome to the fine group of grade 8 students sitting opposite. But also, Mr. Speaker, I have the great pleasure of introducing, sitting in the east gallery, a group of 33 grade 9 to 12 students. These students come to us from Sherwood High, but that's Sherwood in North Dakota — our good neighbours to the south.

These students are members of the science club and I understand that they all have achieved very high grade averages. So we're delighted that they've taken time from their busy schedule to join us here in the gallery, and I would ask all my colleagues to join in extending a warm welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Humboldt Broncos Win Division Title

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Humboldt Broncos were the winners of the SJHL (Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League) north final this weekend defeating the Melfort Mustangs four to three. The Broncos completed a four-game sweep of the Mustangs in the best of seven Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League north division final.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Melfort did finish 20 points ahead of Humboldt in the regular season, but the playoffs reflected a much different picture as the Broncos outplayed and outscored the rival Mustangs. The north division title is the first for Humboldt since 1991. The Broncos will play the winner of the south division final between Estevan and Notre Dame.

Mr. Speaker, it is evident that being underdogs doesn't bother the Humboldt Broncos as long as they keep winning. So congratulations, Humboldt Broncos, and good luck in the next series.

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

##### Government Support for Agriculture and Food Industry

**Mr. Langford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 1999-2000 budget shows the government's commitment to agriculture. To remain competitive in today's market, we have increased agriculture and developments by \$3.5 million, bringing the total investment to \$17 million.

Programs including the quality assurance program, the field worker program, rangeland service in east central region, the short-term hog loan program, the prairie diagnostic service, and the green certificate program will receive additional funding. There will be a lower crop insurance premium for 1999 and agriculture and food grants for 10 major organizations.

By supporting agriculture and the food industry, we believe the result will be economic growth and development which will benefit everyone.

Congratulations to the Finance minister for recognizing the importance of agriculture and rural Saskatchewan in this budget. Thank you.

##### Raising Money for Hurricane Mitch Survivors

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, it is an obvious fact that the lessons we learn early stay with us the longest — the multiplication tables, the major rivers of Europe, the date of the Magna Carta. We learned them in grade school, and they stick with us.

We learn other things in school as well, not just facts. I want to congratulate a group of kids who attend Lakeview School in my constituency who are learning that the world extends far beyond their neighbourhood. They are learning that they are indeed blessed to live in Canada, and most importantly, that we who live here have a duty to help those who are not so lucky.

They are putting this knowledge into action, that they will not forget as they mature. The students of grade 5 and 6 at Lakeview are raising money for the survivors of Hurricane Mitch in Central America. So far they have raised over \$1,100 which they will donate to Save the Children Canada, which will distribute the money where it is needed. The children raised the money under the direction of Marguerite Denis, the teacher who has organized the student drive for 12 years.

The students have also learned about Canadian efforts to raise the quality of life for children around the world. These Lakeview children hope that the money that they have raised will contribute to their ultimate goal and ours as well, which is the ultimate eradication of child poverty throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

##### Health Care in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to rise today on behalf of my constituents from the town of Kerrobert. Last week my colleague from Cannington and I attended a health care meeting in Kerrobert. There were over 70 people in attendance at the meeting, Mr. Speaker, and I feel . . . We have the names of each and every one of them, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be happy to present that if need be.

I feel it is my duty as elected Member of the Legislative Assembly to inform the government on how out of touch they are with the people of rural Saskatchewan. The people at the meeting were outraged at the calamity the NDP (New Democratic Party) have created in health care.

I am here to let the members opposite know that every single person I spoke to at the meeting that night is concerned about what the government has done to the state of health care in this province. They are overwhelmed by the fact that their hospital

may be shut down rather than listening to the NDP's failed rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard over the past few months the Minister of Health claim that there are no signs of two-tiered health care in Saskatchewan. Well, Madam Minister, if you look a little closer you would find out that the town of Kerrobert runs their own clinic completely funded by the people of Kerrobert, Plenty, and the surrounding municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the government starts listening to the people of rural Saskatchewan and come clean with their plans for the future of rural hospitals.

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

#### Swift Current Children's Choir

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Usually I get up and talk about all the good economy activity that is occurring in Swift Current. But today I want to bring to your attention the efforts of a group of highly talented, an in-tune, group of children in Swift Current who are trying to get out of Saskatchewan.

These kids, the Swift Current Children's Choir, conducted by Marcia McClean and accompanied by Kathryn Scott, are raising money to finance a trip to Ottawa to participate in the Unisong Festival, a five-day cultural event in our nation's capital. This group was chosen to represent our province at this event.

They have held several events in town to promote their tour. Most recently a banquet and silent auction on March 20, which I attended and had a great time.

This is a new group in Swift Current, just in their second year, but they are enthusiastic, determined, and they know how to carry a tune and sing in harmony — something some of the people in the Assembly might think about learning.

I wish them well in their fundraising and in their participation once they arrive in Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Maintenance of Highways

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say I don't like Mondays, not because I don't enjoy my job and it's not because there's anything I like better than joining this House in serious deliberation of the people's priorities. No, the reason I don't like Mondays is because it means getting in my vehicle and driving to Regina. I, like so many other residents of Saskatchewan, must get in my vehicle and hope against hope that I'll make it to work without being swallowed alive by another road pothole.

One of my constituents summed it up nicely in a piece of philosophical prose, Mr. Speaker. And I quote:

Now the Minister of Highways assures us there's nothing

so dear  
As good highways, I hear;  
But the fear came upon me as my car bottomed out  
That spending \$120 million less than inflation was nothing  
to tout.

So I thought, are the NDP in cahoots with front-end shops  
perhaps?

No, there must be another answer, I thought long and hard;  
And as a plane flew overhead, the answer came:  
Of course! the NDP don't drive.

Now those potholes, Mr. Premier, are something to see  
And I've reason to believe they're multiplying, indeed;  
Yes, Mr. Premier, year after year there seem to be more  
holes to dodge  
By we Romanow roadies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Wanuskewin Dance Troupe Invited to Italy

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since July of 1997 the Wanuskewin Dance Troupe has provided championship dancers and music for both First Nations and non-First Nations audiences alike. I am pleased to say the troupe displays a high calibre of Saskatchewan talent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this exceptional troupe has been invited to perform in northern and central Italy. They arrived in Rome on March 25th and received national television coverage. They have since gone on a six-day tour which includes Pavia, Bergamo, Rome, and Milan.

I would like to congratulate the Wanuskewin Dance Troupe for revitalizing and honouring First Nations culture here and abroad, and I wish them every success on their Italian tour.

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

#### Southey Marlins Win Provincial A Finals

**Mr. Flavel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, talking about bragging rights, let me start. In Last Mountain-Touchwood we have so many great hockey teams that we end up playing each other in the provincial finals. That's right, the Strasbourg Maroons under the direction of coach Garth Frizzell and the Southey Marlins with Warren Fry coaching played against each other in the finals in of the provincial senior A championship. The Southey Marlins beat the Strasbourg Maroons in a tight, well-played series to determine the provincial A championship.

The final game was played last Saturday night before a full and loud house in Southey. And the hometown edge obviously helped out as Southey won the game 6 to 3. I want to congratulate the Marlins and their coach Warren Fry for bringing the title to Southey, and I also congratulate the players from Strasbourg and coach Garth Frizzell for a splendid effort.

The lesson to learn from this, Mr. Speaker, is that it takes a team from Last Mountain-Touchwood to beat a team from Last Mountain-Touchwood, a claim no other member in this

Assembly can make. Thank you.

#### New Doctor in Melville

**Mr. Kasperski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Third Party has been busy telling anyone who'd listen about what is wrong with this province. He's been so busy, Mr. Speaker, that he's forgotten his manners and missed a chance to welcome a very valuable new member to the city of Melville in his constituency. Let me help him out.

Dr. Abdalla Kenshil has recently arrived in Melville to begin his job as chief surgeon at St. Peter's Hospital. Dr. Kenshil comes to us from Blackpool in England, where he had been practising and doing research. He studied medicine in his native Tripoli, in England and Montreal.

His specialty, Mr. Speaker, is gastroenterology, and he will be performing general surgery for the North Valley Health District, as well as sharing his specialized medicine with his colleagues. As St. Peter's manager Terri Hodges says and I quote, his arrival will "enhance all health services and make it easier for patients and doctors alike."

Dr. Kenshil is married with five children who will be joining him at the end of this school year, and this is a added bonus to this city and this school district.

I am pleased with the arrival of this new health professional and I welcome him and his family to Canada and to Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Advertising of Budget Details

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, it must have been a tough weekend. It must have been tough to find a single person in Saskatchewan, outside of your office staff, who really approves of your budget. But try as we might, we couldn't find anyone to give your budget a passing grade — that is with the notable exception of your newest member of the NDP fan club, Liberal leader Jim Melenchuk.

Mr. Minister, in a desperate attempt to win support of the budget for your high tax policy that's continuing to chase people out of the province, you've launched a massive propaganda campaign with full page ads like this in newspapers, television, radio, and an endless supply of propaganda.

Mr. Minister, how much money are you spending on this propaganda?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first part of the member's question, I want to tell the member that I was all over the province this weekend — in my own riding in Saskatoon, in Moose Jaw, and this morning in Regina and Swift Current — and I found support for the budget all over the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — And the member may not think that we should tell the people of the province what is in their budget — and it's their budget, Mr. Speaker — but I think we should be telling them. And when the member says we're not telling them, I want to know what part of this advertising the member does not agree with.

Is it the part that says better health care? Is it the part that says lower taxes? Or is it the part that says less debt? Because the message of this budget, Mr. Speaker, is better health care, lower taxes, less debt. That's the direction we're going in; that's the direction we're going to keep going in, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP are spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars on a propaganda campaign to sell a disastrous budget. How many MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) would that money buy? How many CAT (computerized axial tomography) scans? How many X-rays, or ambulance trips? How many new nursing positions?

Mr. Minister, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) president Sinc Harrison called the budget a black day for Saskatchewan. University of Saskatchewan president Peter McKinnon, the NDP Economic Development minister's husband says, the budget is disastrous for the University of Saskatchewan.

University Students' Union president Sean Junor, the NDP Associate Health minister's own son, says the budget turns its back on students.

Mr. Speaker, it's too bad the NDP has to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a propaganda campaign when they can't even convince members of their own family of the wisdom of the budget.

Mr. Minister, will you stop this blatant waste of taxpayers' money and stop these ads?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, what these ads do is inform the people of the province about the budget, and the message in these ads is the message of the budget: better health care, lower taxes, less debt. That's what we need, Mr. Speaker, which is a far cry from what is offered by the opposition.

But I want to say to the member opposite who's saying that we're spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on advertising, Mr. Speaker, that I don't have the bills and invoices yet, I believe the budget for post-budget communications including publications and advertising will be in the range, Mr. Speaker, of about \$120,000.

And I want to make this point, Mr. Speaker, that when the leader of the Tory party Elwin Hermanson gets up and says that a \$100 million tax cut is pathetic, when he says the \$100 million tax cut that's contained in this budget for PST (provincial sales tax) and 30 million on income tax is too small, how come they're worried about 120,000, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess we, unlike the NDP, do worry about \$120,000 because for ordinary Saskatchewan families that's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Friday's budget really didn't learn a thing about this province having the second highest taxes in the whole of the country. Young people will continue to leave the province; our retirees will continue to leave the province; our corporations and business people will leave the province, thanks to the NDP.

Mr. Minister, in today's *Globe and Mail* there's an article that talks and looks at the momentum of the economies in the province, and guess where we finish — dead last. Mr. Minister, when are you going to understand that you have to put some money in the people's pockets and not in your own if this economy is going to get going.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the member's question. The member seems concerned about taxes. And I would say to the people of the province, never listen to what the Tories say. Just look at what they do, Mr. Speaker.

We have cut the PST by three points in two years, from 9 per cent to 6 per cent. And they say it's not enough. But you know what they did when they were in office, Mr. Speaker? They didn't cut the PST. They expanded the PST. And they put the PST on restaurant meals; then they put it on children's clothing; then they put it on used cars; then they put it on reading materials. And then they harmonized it with the GST (goods and services tax).

And they come in this Legislative Assembly and talk about what they would do in the area of taxation, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. I think people remember the 1980s and people remember what was happening when they were in power. And they remember the debt, the \$15 billion debt left behind by the Tories, Mr. Speaker.

We've been there, we've done that, we've had enough of them.

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

### Charity Foundations

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, the Saskatchewan Party has uncovered another one of these NDP charity foundations. This one involves former NDP MLA (member of the Legislative Assembly) Bob Lyons. That's the same Bob Lyons who went to court in January to try to keep his expense records covered up. From 1987 to 1991, the West Side Community Education Foundation took in over \$121,000 from Bob Lyons' MLA expense allowances.

This is another NDP-run charity foundation. In fact a number of the directors were also directors of the Regina Community Development Foundation, and the member for Regina Northeast was acting as the solicitor for this foundation while he was an MLA.

Mr. Premier, where did all the money go that flowed through this NDP charity foundation? Did any of it go to the NDP?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to answer the questions on behalf of the government in my capacity as the Deputy House Leader.

I was interested to hear the member talk about cover-ups. I think the biggest cover-up that we've seen in Saskatchewan history, Mr. Speaker, is the cover-up that occurred in the 1980s in Saskatchewan when that member and his party — the Saskatchewan Tory Party — Mr. Speaker, perpetrated a cover-up the likes of which we've never seen and as a result of which we have a number of . . . we have a number of former members of this House, a number of former members of that party, spending time behind cover in bars or behind bars, Mr. Speaker, such as Lorne McLaren, who was sentenced to three and a half years in prison; such as Michael Hopfner, who was sentenced to 18 months in prison, such as John Gerich who was sentenced to two years in prison, Mr. Speaker.

So when the member mentions cover-up, Mr. Speaker, it's very strange that this is coming from the Saskatchewan Tory Party.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, last week one of the answers to the question suggested that there wasn't a shred of evidence. I'm wondering whether or not evidence has already been shredded because there doesn't seem to be any answers from the ministers opposite.

This NDP charity foundation took in huge sums of taxpayers' money — over \$121,000. But they didn't see fit to keep proper financial records. They didn't file their first financial return until June 1992. And that return included only unaudited statements for the years 1989 and 1990. Total revenue on those statements was about \$76,000. That leaves \$45,000 unaccounted for.

Mr. Premier, where did the money go? Where is the missing \$45,000? Did any of this money go to the NDP?

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that this member opposite, a member of the Sask-a-Tory party which has its genesis in the Conservative Tory Party of the 1980s, talks about taxpayers' money. One of the real questions that people in Saskatchewan have is where is the taxpayers' money? Why did you run up a debt of \$15 billion? How is it that you can expect the Government of Saskatchewan to fund properly services and programs, given such a massive debt which we're paying off at the rate of \$2 million a year? How is that possible, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, when the Sask-a-Tories, when the Sask-a-Tories figure, the people of Saskatchewan shudder. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, it's not just \$45,000 that's missing. There's a whole house missing.

In 1988 Bob Lyons bought a house and started running his constituency office out of that house. And by the looks of it, he was using his MLA expense accounts to pay the mortgage. In 1989 he decided that wasn't such a good idea. He sold the house to this NDP charity foundation and the NDP charity foundation made the mortgage payments using Bob Lyons' expense allowances. This house was eventually sold to another couple in 1992 and the assets were supposed to go back to the Crown. Where did the proceeds from this sale go, Mr. Premier? Where did the money go? Did it go back to the Crown like it was suppose to, or did any of it go to the NDP?

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, if there's a house missing somewhere then I would hope that the member would file a missing house report with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police). And be sure to give them a description of the house, the colour, and the make, and what have you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this member, this member, this member indicated a few days ago in a statement to the press that we want the RCMP to delve into all of those documents to check into whether or not those actions are appropriate. Well, Mr. Speaker, he has the opportunity to present those documents to the RCMP so that they can review those documents, Mr. Speaker. I would assume, I would assume, Mr. Speaker, that given the Saskatchewan Tory experience in matters of criminality he knows how the process works. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Negotiations with Health Care Workers

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, amidst all the NDP backslapping about the budget that keeps taxes high and continues to force people and businesses out of this province, the Department of Finance official actually provided some candid information. They indicated the Health budget contains \$63 million to settle the NDP's contract dispute with Saskatchewan nurses.

But, Madam Minister, nurses' union president, Rosalee Longmoore says \$63 million isn't enough. In fact, Longmoore told CBC Radio (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) that it will take a lot more than \$63 million to keep health providers working in this system. Madam Minister, Saskatchewan is one week away from the nurses' strike and the NDP government appears to be out of answers.

Madam Minister, what are you doing to avoid a province-wide nurses' strike that would cripple the entire health care system?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well if we left it up to the Tory Party, the Saskatchewan Party, I think we would have seen a budget in health care that mimicked inflation of some 1 per cent or about \$18 million. So if \$63 million isn't enough to settle contracts, then I could assure you

that \$18 million would have been far away from settling those collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, we have, if I understand it from the employer, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) they've reached a tentative agreement. SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) is still negotiating with the Health Sciences Association, SEIU (Service Employees' International Union), the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, along with SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union).

I'm optimistic that the employer, SAHO, and the various unions will be able to arrive at a mutually agreed to collective agreement that's fair to the people who provide services in our health system, fair to the people who are served by our health system, and fair to the taxpayers.

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

#### Highway Maintenance

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has neglected the roads of this province for far too long. While the Premier and cabinet ministers jet around this province, taxpayers are forced to drive on Canada's worst highways.

In a 22-mile stretch of highway from Orkney to Climax, a local resident counted the potholes on the road. He counted 238 potholes in 22 miles — that's not including the small ones. That's almost 10 potholes per mile, Mr. Speaker. West of Climax, someone counted 110 potholes in an 8-mile stretch. That's outrageous; it's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

With this many unmarked potholes, isn't the minister worried about the safety of our motorists? My question to the Minister of Highways: Madam Minister, aren't you concerned that someone travelling at night is going to land in one of these huge craters, wreck their vehicle, or worse, are they putting their families' lives at risk?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to have the opportunity to answer the questions raised by the member opposite. I'm just wondering what kind of discussions go on in the Liberal caucus when his leader, Jim Melenchuk, says it's not a bad budget.

I think that we made a 10-year commitment of \$2.5 billion over 10 years. We're approximately a third of the way through that 10-year period. We've increased the budget to approximately a third of that total amount and we will fulfil that commitment.

I would be more concerned, Mr. Speaker, when their Liberal cousins in Ottawa contribute nothing, nada, to our roads. I'd be more concerned about highway robbery, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reality is when you're flying an executive jet, you seldom hit a pothole at 10,000 feet. So it's no wonder highways are not a priority with that NDP government.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Chris Gryde of Climax knows first-hand of the NDP's inability to make highways a priority. While driving along Highway 37 to visit his mother in Shaunavon, he hit a pothole in the middle of the road and did serious damage to his vehicle — luckily for him, it was only the vehicle and not the children riding with him.

Mr. Speaker, the hole was so big and deep that the impact broke Mr. Gryde's wheel in half. And it sheared it in half, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine this, seeing . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The hon. member will be aware that he's not permitted to use exhibits in . . . Order, order. Order. I'll ask that one of the pages will remove the exhibit from the Chambers to the Clerk's office.

Order. Order. I'll ask for the co-operation of the House on both sides, from all hon. members. And I'll ask the hon. member to go now directly to his question, or I'll recognize another member.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister. Will you stand here today and apologize to Mr. Gryde, his brother, two daughters for putting their life in danger? And will you pay the 280 bucks that he had to pay to get that wheel replaced?

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind the comments of the Liberal leader, I'm wondering if the exhibit in the House today is evidence that the wheels are falling off the Liberal machine.

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, we have a ten-year commitment to the highways in this province. Despite — despite — a record forest fire season, despite putting in money for the farm aid program, despite low commodity prices, we have still increased our spending on highways, and we will continue to do that in a sustainable and responsible way, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Mr. Speaker, the Grydes write to us in the letter about the NDP's fuel tax. I'm going to quote from it:

The current government solution seems to be to take the revenue from fuel taxes in our area, and instead of putting it back into the highways, where it's initially supposed to go, it has been directed to other areas. This process would have been fine to me if the highway system was up to snuff and excess dollars remain. But this is not the case. They prefer to populate our highways with red warning flags or, as one local referred to them, NDP election signs.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP spends only \$235 million on our roads while they collect \$370 million in fuel taxes. Now you can call that highway robbery.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that her government is bilking motorists every time they visit the pump and yet still putting their lives in danger?

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should know better than to talk about dedicated taxes. He's says there's a shortfall to the road budget compared to the fuel tax. All right, we only take in \$700 million in E&H (education and health) tax but we spend two . . . we spend almost 3 billion on education and health. Now where do you think that comes from? Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know.

The biggest pothole in this province is the \$12 billion debt that remains from taking off the fuel tax, from selling off the road machinery; and I want to see from the Liberal Party a copy of the letter that they've written to their federal cousins asking for a national highways program. We're the only industrial country in the world that doesn't have a national program, Mr. Speaker. It's a disgrace.

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

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's about time you start talking about what you're doing, what your government is doing. Mr. Speaker, this government is so far behind in road repair that they're foot-dragging is going to cost taxpayers millions more down the road.

A couple of years ago the NDP promised to spend two and a half billion dollars over ten years, as she mentioned, but like the rest of their promises they broke that one as well. In the first year, their commitment to highways fell short 38 million; in the second year, it was short 21 million; and in the third year it fell down by 16 million. So for three years they fell short by 75 million.

Can the minister tell us how far 75 million would have gone to improving highway safety for families, for ambulances, for school buses in this province?

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Speaker, we will continue to increase spending on highways as we can afford it in a sustainable manner.

We will continue to ask the federal government for assistance in that. They have deregulated the rail systems, made changes in the grain transportation system that has caused increasing pressure on our roads. We have more roads per capita and more roads than all the rest of the country put together, and not one cent of help from the federal government — your cousins in Ottawa — Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Compliance with The Non-Profit Corporations Act**

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Minister, your department is in charge of The Non-Profit Corporations Act. It is now very clear that a number of non-profit corporations set up with NDP MLAs were not complying with that Act. Everyone of the corporations referred



to in the last few days was struck from the corporate registry for failing to file financial statements. These are non-profit corporations set up by NDP MLAs receiving taxpayers' money from NDP MLAs. Don't you think they should comply with the law?

Mr. Minister, I ask you, what actions have you initiated against these foundations for failing to comply with The Non-Profit Corporations Act?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's question. Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that if the member has concerns she should take them to the appropriate place. If the member herself is unaware of the process that's involved, then please consult with any of your other members in the Saskatchewan Tory party. Perhaps the member in front of you who is well-known . . . or versed in these things, given his association with the former Tories in Saskatchewan.

The member also talks about compliance with the law, Mr. Speaker. We hope that when the time comes that she will also give approval to a law that we're looking to put into place, Mr. Speaker, which is called respect for constituents.

And we would hope that in the future that she would comply with a law such as that, that is opposed to in the middle of the night — in the middle of the night, Mr. Speaker — turning her back on the people that helped elect her, turning around and joining some other group, Mr. Speaker, solely because it meets your own particular purposes as opposed to living up . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order! Order, order. Next question.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every person in Saskatchewan will know that the appropriate person to answer this question and be accountable for it is the Minister of Justice.

And so I once again ask the Minister of Justice to stand and answer the following question. It seems as though the Minister of Social Services doesn't understand your own Act, Mr. Minister. So let me read it to you. Section 147 says a corporation that fails to file its annual returns is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction for a fine of up to \$5,000.

Mr. Minister, every one of these NDP charity foundations was struck from the registry for failing to file financial returns. And we know they continue to operate after they stopped.

The Regina Community Development Foundation was busy giving its money to an NDP scholarship. Bob Lyons' foundation took in over \$45,000 that's unaccounted for.

Mr. Minister, what actions have you taken against these NDP foundations? Or are you looking the other way because they involve NDP MLAs?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I sure hope that the member will take her last comment and make that outside the House, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that in my experience that if companies are no longer filing financial reports, it may be

because those companies are no longer in operation.

Whatever the case, Mr. Speaker, I note that your leader in the Sask-a-Tory party has said that he's taken all of this information, provided all of this information to the RCMP so that they can review it. And I hope that you do the same.

And again, if you're not clear on the process, any of the former Tories would be able to fill you in as to how the criminal process works, Mr. Member.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 236 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1999

**Mr. Goohsen:** — I give notice of first reading of Bill No. 236, 1999, An Act to amend The Highway Traffic Act, Mr. Speaker.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Kowalsky:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to supply an accurate answer in a timely fashion to this question no. 20.

**The Speaker:** — The answer for item no. 1 is provided.

## 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.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to continue on from the brief comments that I was able to give on Friday, after the presentation of the budget. And actually, initially I was concerned about the fact that the budget was being delivered on a Friday, but I found it most useful to be able to take that time to go back to my constituency and find out what the people in the area were thinking of the budget. And it was indeed a very interesting number of conversations that I was able to have.

Mr. Speaker, it was surprising to me that one of the greatest issues that was raised over the weekend with people that I visited with was not an issue that really came out of this budget at all — other than its lack of being addressed — but really wondering what is going to happen if our competitive advantage continues to erode.

Mr. Speaker, people in my constituency are very aware of what's happening in the rest of the world, and in particular,

they're worried about what is happening under the so-called general topic of the brain drain. Mr. Speaker, on the weekend people were talking a great deal about their concern about what was going to happen if our position competitively was going to keep falling behind.

I noticed over the weekend Diane Francis had a column that spoke of the issue from a national perspective and not from a provincial one. And she talked about how much of an effect the American economy is having on attracting some of our young people, some of our entrepreneurs to that economy. It seems that in the United States right now, over 800,000 people that were born in Canada are living in the United States — 800,000. I was quite surprised, Mr. Speaker.

It was also indicated that the amount of Canadian students taking university classes in the United States is gone up about fourfold over the last few short years. And from a national perspective, that's very concerning because those people are coming from our country and they're going and making their economic futures in the United States to the south of us. And when that happens, we lose a great deal of human potential from our economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, that same concern was being expressed in Melfort and Tisdale about what's happening compared to our neighbouring province to the west. You know, Mr. Speaker, we're . . . my constituency is more on the easterly side of the province, and so sometimes you begin to think that maybe you're a little bit isolated from the draw from Calgary and Alberta. And I have, for some time, personally felt the pain of having family members that found it more attractive economically to take up their residency in our neighbour to the west. And good for them. But increasingly, I'm concerned about the fact that the tables are tilting even further in terms of what I would call the Alberta advantage.

Now there are many people that still live here, a million people, many of whom choose to live in Saskatchewan, and I think that that's an important thing to take note of. Certainly there are advantages for living in Saskatchewan: it's the friendliness of the people; it's the determination to eke out a living. For many of our people, they have to be involved where their business or their farm or their corporation is and that's in Saskatchewan.

Every day I'm amazed when I hear stories of generosity and selflessness, of compassion and caring that people in Saskatchewan have exhibited more often than not in every constituency of this province from one end to the other. And certainly those type of psychological and human qualities that this province has is indeed a great advantage and it's why most of us continue to want to make this province our home.

But increasingly that sense of home . . . home-based Saskatchewan feelings are being eroded by the realities of a competitive world. Mr. Speaker, it used to be that when you graduated from high school, perhaps went to university, more often than not you returned to your home community, perhaps to the farm, to a business related to your community; that a high percentage of our graduating people would return to their local communities. Over the years that has eroded and many rural . . . in rural Saskatchewan have found it more attractive to build their futures in the major cities.

But now increasingly, Mr. Speaker, our young people are graduating from our universities and they are faced with the fact that their assets that they've acquired through 14, 16 years of hard work, their degree and the knowledge that they have from that is the asset that they have. And increasingly, they're making decisions about where they're going to employ that asset.

Unfortunately, many of these young people are coming out of university with student loans and financial responsibilities and they are forced to go to places where the economy is growing, where the net return on their investment is going to be maximized and, too often than not, they're going to our neighbour to the west.

And, Mr. Speaker, it always surprises me when I and my wife go to visit our children in Calgary that we run into more people, more young people, in Calgary that are from Melfort that we seem to be running into in Melfort itself. More of my children or children's classmates I think — I'm sure — are working in Calgary than are working anywhere around our neighbourhood.

And so this trend is very disturbing. And, I think, as a province it is academic if we choose not to ignore it; we must deal with it. We simply cannot ignore it any longer. And one of the concerns that I've had out of this budget is the fact that again we haven't addressed this issue seriously.

Mr. Day, the Alberta Finance minister, announced in his budget this spring that in the year 2002 he's going to make a major shift away from a linked tax system — linked to the federal income tax system — to one that's uncoupled and is at a flat tax rate of 11 per cent, and at the same time doubling the basic person exemption so that people that are less fortunate than others will not pay any tax at all. And I understand that that will remove over 70,000 people from paying any tax whatsoever in the province to the west.

So they're dealing with the issue of people that are less fortunate, and they're also making their tax regime very attractive to the professionals and the people — the business leaders — that are creating the wealth in this country.

And so, Mr. Speaker, while the Finance minister promised us some vague study over the next year, nothing was done to signal the direction of this government in terms of the issue facing us from the competitiveness in the neighbouring province. This morning on the radio I heard the Finance minister say that while he's considering uncoupling the provincial tax from the federal tax, he pretty much dismissed out of hand the idea of a flat tax and that system.

So we're still going to end up with a pretty onerous system, albeit that it might be unlinked from the federal. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that that is certainly an area that has to be addressed.

The other area that is of concern is I'm hearing increasingly that it's not just our young people that are leaving but people that are coming to the end of their careers, either in a professional career or a business career. When they liquidate their assets or retire from the firm or the business and profession that they've been employed with, they too are considering leaving this

province and taking up residency in the province to the west. So while it's a tragedy to be losing our young people, it's also serious when we start losing those seniors who can see that their net personal welfare is going to be better off, when all things are taken into account, by retiring in the province to the west.

And, Mr. Speaker, you don't have to be really swift financially to figure out that if we're going to lose our taxpayers, how in the world are we going to possibly keep up with the increased demands for expenditures.

And while this government reacted very quickly to increase expenditures a great deal — I believe over 21 departments received increased budgets this year — there is no sustainable plan that I can see from this government that addresses the issue of how we retain taxpayers to stay in Saskatchewan and how we're going to broaden the tax base by encouraging business to expand their operations.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened over the last number of years has been a very simple process. What has happened is this government has reached deep into taxpayers' pockets in this province and it extracted a heavy price. In the fiscal year '91-92, the tax revenue to the government was 2.1 billion, Mr. Speaker. In this fiscal year, '99-2000, the tax revenue is going to be \$3 billion.

Now that's irrespective of the minister saying we've reduced taxes, we've decreased the percentages somewhat. The actual numbers say there's \$900 million more coming out of Saskatchewan taxpayers' pockets in this fiscal year than what was coming out in '91-92. That's just straight out of the *Estimates*, Mr. Speaker, and that is a problem for us.

You know what we've ended up doing is changing our priorities from building an economy to one where we end up having the economy gradually erode on us, so that what's happening is a further interesting fact, Mr. Speaker. In the fiscal year 1997-98, the equalization transfer from Ottawa — which is separate and distinct from the health transfers — was \$8.2 million, that's all; \$8 million is all that we were entitled to in that fiscal year by way of the equalization formula.

(1430)

In this fiscal year, '99-2000, where the budget is under consideration, it's shot up to \$479 million, Mr. Speaker. That \$470 million more than it was just two short years ago. And the reason for that welfare transfer, if you like, is because this government has let our economy stagnate. And what we're having then is a whole increase of our dependency on the largess of our neighbouring province. And I think that that is the concern that we have to have and we have to deal with those issues in a fundamental way.

The other area that has to be of concern for the government is the absolute dollar values of corporate income tax coming in. Now has the rate gone down? No, but the amount collected has gone from 188 million last year to . . . I'm sorry, has gone down from 231 million in '96-97 down to 188 million last year. Now if the rate hasn't changed, it means that corporations aren't doing as well. And when they're not doing as well, they're not creating the jobs, the opportunities for our young people to stay

here. And so we end up with a situation that our job statistics are eroding and we are losing jobs — almost 5,000 of them last year — where even Newfoundland created over 6,000 jobs last year.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we always hear the government say well things are worse in Saskatchewan. Well they are, perhaps, because we've mismanaged the economy. But you know, agricultural prices and commodity prices were the same prices in Alberta as they were in Saskatchewan last year. We talk about a terrible slump in oil prices, while the Alberta economy is a lot more dependent on oil prices than Saskatchewan's is and many of those same comparisons occur, that are happening in our province.

And you know what? While we lost almost 5,000 jobs last year, Alberta — in the midst of the same low oil prices and agricultural commodity prices that Saskatchewan has experienced — in Alberta last year there were 38,600 jobs created, 38,600 in one year. That's more than the NDP's target for this whole decade — in one year.

Next year, the Alberta budget is projecting 30,000 further jobs in that economy in one year; and we're hoping against hope that we will make the 30,000 commitment that the government laid out in 1991. Mr. Speaker, where the jobs are is where the people are going to go to fill those jobs and increasingly they're Saskatchewan kids. And Mr. Speaker, we've simply got to see an end to that.

Mr. Speaker, it's not an easy, it's not an easy thing to do and it's not going to be quick, that's true, but we have to make the commitment and signal the strong direction of where we're going to head in terms of making economic development happen in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I note again that the Department of Economic Development received an increase. Well I'm not sure for what, because really if you got rid of the department altogether and just put that money into lower taxes for businesses, you'd probably create more jobs than the cocktail party circuit that the minister embarked on last fall to glad-hand and network, I think was the buzz word, where money was being just wasted doing those sorts of things.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we deal with those issues or we're not going to change the way things are.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we've often said that what has to happen in Saskatchewan is that we have to change the way that we look at budgets. We've got to stop looking at the General Revenue Fund, Liquor and Gaming, and the Crown sector as three separate and distinct entities. You know, the liquor cabinet has been pillaged this year. Money that normally accrues into that is gone. And now the next thing is we've got the Crowns sitting over there that have been forced to contribute an extra \$25 million in order to come up with a razor-thin \$8 million budget.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what's happened is we're putting ourselves into a very precarious financial situation where we've been depending on Liquor and Gaming revenue, money that comes out of people's weaknesses if you like for gambling and

addiction, and end up counting on that money as well as massive transfers from the Crowns after they've raised their prices in order to keep things together because we haven't dealt with the fundamental underpinning of the economy. That means we have to expand the tax base in order to create more opportunities and more taxpayers in this province. Mr. Speaker, that is a fundamental issue that I hope people will address and talk about in the debate surrounding the budget speech.

Mr. Speaker, the government has embarked on, I believe the minister said it would be at least, a \$125,000 propaganda campaign. You know, and I've had people phone me at home and said, can they do that? Did you listen to those ads? And I hadn't at that point listened to the radio ads. And, Mr. Speaker, they said as far as they were concerned they were blatantly too partisan and blatantly were propaganda, and they were offended by it.

And I didn't hear the ads till I was driving in to Regina this morning from my home and listened to them. And, Mr. Speaker, I found them over the edge as well in terms of the way they were saying it.

And what they did say though is they said if you want to have . . . you need to have lower taxes and the economy's got to grow. But what they didn't say is that if you want that to happen you should probably support the Saskatchewan Party platform because that's where it's going to happen, Mr. Speaker. So at least they could have finished the ad up and made sure that they understood what was in it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that I found interesting is the comments over the weekend that were attributed to individuals across the province. And I would like to quote from a few of them that were quoted in the Saturday's *Leader-Post*. And I think it is really interesting. There was an article talking under the headline "Budget fails, say taxpayers." And there were a number of people who were quoted in that article.

A Mr. Murray Gleim, who is a professional who indicates that he earns about \$45,000, he said:

"I've been pleased with the last few budgets, but I'm a little disappointed with this one because I expected more in tax cuts."

And that's very similar to the kinds of comments I heard in Melfort over the weekend.

A Chad Penny, 26, a middle-income earner, said he and his live-in fiancée make a combined total somewhere in the 60 to \$70,000 range. And he too said he was concerned, and I quote, and he says:

"If there is no significant change in health and highways, I will definitely be looking for a change in government."

Mr. Speaker, he added he wasn't overly impressed with the 1 per cent reduction in the provincial sales tax. He said, he would rather have seen reductions in personal income tax, Mr. Speaker. And he goes on to say:

"Personal income tax is what hits hard. It's an ugly amount

of money you have to kick out every year. And the government wonders why people our age are always taking off to Alberta."

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly the point. Here's a young individual, 26 years of age, who is already realizing the fact that they are under tremendous disadvantage by staying in Saskatchewan and it simply has to change because these people are very mobile, and particularly at a time when we're losing jobs in this province and Alberta is creating 38,000 of them.

A Mr. Mike Lamb, who's on social assistance agreed. "The tax cut people did get — the drop in the PST — won't do much, he said." So here's an individual on assistance who's supposed to be the person that this is all helping, he's saying it isn't going to help much at all.

A lawyer, Aaron Fox, a high-income earner who makes more than \$60,000 a year, welcomed the PST cut but he too wanted a reduction in personal income tax. Quote:

"We lose people in business either who live here who don't want to come here in the first place because of the high rate of tax you have to pay in Saskatchewan. Secondly, it discourages people from increasing productivity and working harder."

Another individual who comes from the low-income category, Leslie Hudie, 29. She says she's a single parent who lives off of \$1,100 a month while raising two school-age children. And she says, and I quote:

"For those that are in need of a break right now, they got no break. Friday was just another day."

A Regina university student, Kate Bissell, 43, was equally unimpressed, and I quote:

"There was nothing about alleviating financial stress for students. This was a budget for the middle-class people. Marginalized people were left out. It was a real let down."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see that in an article because it pretty much summed up and reflected what I was hearing in my constituency over the weekend — a great deal of concern in every area of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, over the next number of days in this budget speech, my caucus colleagues will be talking in more detail about their individual areas of expertise and responsibility — of health, and agriculture, and roads, and social services — and all of the areas of concern that people have in the province, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not going to attempt in my address to cover all of those topics because they will certainly do it in a very admirable way.

What I wanted to do, Mr. Speaker, is to outline the concern about the fact that all of the issues that my colleagues will raise in terms of the concerns about funding for education and health and highways and all of those other issues, because we're failing to deal with the underpinnings of the economy, because we're failing to deal with the level of taxation and competitiveness not just between here and Alberta but between

Canada and the United States; because we're failing to deal with the issue surrounding the transportability of capital and talent and investment; because we're failing to deal with creating and growing the economy so there's more taxpayers willing to share the load; because we're failing to deal with those issues, Mr. Speaker, we are going to fail to deal with the issues of the funding for all the services the people of this province are going to continue to need into the future.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say how disappointed I was, how disappointed people of this province were with the budget, how concerned we are about the drain that's going to continue to erode this province's economic future and viability into the future.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move a motion if I may, and the motion moved by myself and seconded by the hon. member from Saltcoats reads as follows:

That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted:

Recognizes the very modest tax relief set out in the provincial budget but regrets that the government continues to impose the second largest tax burden in all of Canada and has failed to set out a plan for future tax relief, and continues to ignore the detrimental impact Saskatchewan's high tax burden has on our economy which has the worst job creation record in the country. And further regrets that the lack of action on significant tax reduction will result in more of our youth leaving the province in search of opportunity and more of our entrepreneurs and seniors leaving in search of a lower tax burden.

Mr. Speaker, this motion I think sums up the concern that I heard over the weekend for people. It sums up the concern that people have over the future of this province. It sums up the disappointment that people feel about this government's lack of understanding in realizing that these are the fundamental issues that have to be addressed if this economy is going to change. It sums up the feeling of despair and desperation that people are feeling. And it sums up how we have to deal with the concern that people are facing.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this budget is a goodbye budget. It's saying goodbye to our children; it's saying goodbye to our seniors. And what I heard over the weekend is the people of Saskatchewan are going to say goodbye to this government.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — The motion is out of order. It needs to have a seconder, and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order. And there is not to be debate after the motion has been presented. So the Chair heard the hon. member give notice of his motion, but would require the motion to be properly moved in order to be entered into debate.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Saltcoats:

That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted:

Recognizes the very modest tax relief set out in the provincial budget but regrets that the government continues to impose the second-largest tax burden in all of Canada and has failed to set out a plan for future tax relief and continues to ignore the detrimental impact Saskatchewan's high tax burden has on our economy, which has the worst job creation record in the country. And further regrets that the lack of action on significant tax reduction will result in more of our youth leaving the province in search of opportunity, and more of our entrepreneurs and seniors leaving in search of a lower tax burden.

I so move.

(1445)

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear the Tories saying, we were ready for the question; of course they would be. Why on earth would they want to debate such a great budget as was presented in this legislature on Friday.

The member for Melfort-Tisdale said, this is a good-bye budget. And he is dead right. This is a good-bye budget because there is no good blood between those of us on the government side and those in the Sask-a-Tory side. No good blood at all.

This is a good-bye Sask-a-Tory budget, and I am delighted to be standing up in full support of a 1 per cent PST cut, of \$195 million more, Mr. Speaker, for health care — the largest by any measure, increase in the Department of Health budget in Saskatchewan year over year. The largest, any way you want to measure it, any time in Saskatchewan's history — \$195 million to address the concerns that my colleagues on the government side of the House, the Minister of Finance who went all around the province broadly consulting with the people of Saskatchewan saying, we're delighted.

The Minister of Finance laid out the situations, said, here we are. We've delivered five balanced surplus budgets, Mr. Speaker. We're in position to deliver a sixth. And that's what happened on Friday — number six balanced surplus budget.

We have been paying down debt, the Tory debt at a record pace, Mr. Speaker, paying it down, their debt. We have been reducing taxes in every single year since we balanced the budget in 1995, six years ago. Every single year a component of tax reduction. And, Mr. Speaker, as importantly the people in my constituency, Regina Coronation Park, and I know all around the province were saying, don't forget the program expenditures.

Health, not surprisingly, was one of the issues that came up time after time after time. In Saskatchewan, the home of medicare, where we started, the Government of Saskatchewan funded medicare for five long years, a hundred percent out of the treasury of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We started it and then the federal government joined in in 1967 and made it a national program, a national program for all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we are so proud on this side of the House of that record, medicare being our gift to Canada — incredibly proud of that, and justifiably so. But so are the people of Saskatchewan. Because though it was the predecessor of this government if you like, that brought in medicare that many years ago, just like that was our predecessor's, the people of Saskatchewan know who it was that funded medicare.

Because there's no free lunch as everyone knows, except maybe the Sask-a-Tories — they're always looking for a free lunch. There's no free lunch, Mr. Speaker. Health care must be paid for out of taxes, out of revenue that the government collects. Every time any of us see a doctor or go to a hospital, to an emergency service, or go for an operation, be it a cataract operation or to repair a broken limb or worse — every time any of that happens money has to change hands.

Doctors have to be paid, hospitals have to be kept in operation, nurses have to be maintained, all of the support staff in health care have to be paid. And it's all paid from taxpayers — no secret about that. It's not . . . it never has been specifically any individual MLA or any individual minister who foots the bills. It's the taxpayers that do it and they're very, very proud of our health care system in the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the consultation about the budget, taxpayers were saying things like waiting lists are too long. Everybody's heard that. Waiting lists are too long. Well what happened, Mr. Speaker, \$14 million goes into addressing the length of waiting lists.

The Minister of Health requested a review of the situation and asked for a report. How can we address the waiting list, because people are telling me it's a problem. How can we deal with the problem? And it's not just money, but as you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the budget debate so I have to largely stick to money issues in the budget debate.

But we've taken steps. The Minister of Health received the report, accepted the report, and has implemented steps that . . . recommendations that were recommended in that report to the Minister of Health. I'm delighted to tell you that I anticipate that situation improving shortly.

But while we're talking about waiting, one of the things that the Sask-a-Tories have done, Mr. Speaker, time after time, is they bring up a horror story regarding emergency services or regarding health care services.

Well we get very concerned when we hear that maybe somebody has to wait too long for an emergency service. Well that means then when we're concerned, Mr. Speaker, we should address it. It seems to me a good way to address it is through the budget. Because after all, that's what we do on this government side is set broad policy and then provide the health care experts with the funds so that they can deliver on the wellness, on the health needs of the people of the province.

That's why this year, 1.9 billion — with a “b” — billion dollars, the largest expenditure by far ever in Saskatchewan on health care, \$1.9 billion for health. And if anyone thinks I'm not proud of that, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where they've been for the last 5 minutes and I don't know where they're planning to be

for the next 5 minutes, because I am so proud of our health care system and I am so proud of our Premier and our Minister of Health and our . . . Minister of Health, our Minister of Finance, all of my colleagues for our being so solid respecting health care and the needs of the people of the province.

We are determined there will be shorter waiting times for surgery. There's also additional money for better cancer treatment. There's additional money for women's health issues. There's a 12 per cent increase in funding for the district health boards, Mr. Speaker — 12 per cent increase in one year. Unprecedented. Unprecedented.

Are we proud of our health care system? You bet. And that's why I don't blame the Sask-a-Tories for saying we were ready to vote on the budget.

I suspect that if they had to vote on the budget, if I hadn't stood up or no member of the government side had stood up, they're be in a real pickle. They would have had to find themselves saying, gee, our job is to oppose but how in the blazes can we oppose an additional 11.4 per cent funding for health care; a tax cut; a record amount of money being spent in education, a record amount of money being spent in education in Saskatchewan; the Highways budget being up; \$14 million more, Mr. Speaker, on the national leading program, the Child Benefit Program, started right here in Saskatchewan, now a national program — that being one of our second gifts, if you like, to all Canadians — the national child protection program. \$14 million more takes our share of the funding to \$67 million.

This, incidentally, is a program . . . I guess we could hardly take credit for the program if it had been in place when the former government was there. But I want to point out that despite the fact that they left the budget worse than bare — they left the province virtually unmanageable — despite that fact, Mr. Speaker, since we formed government, we set up the child action plan funded 100 per cent from Saskatchewan taxpayers' money, and that child protection program, benefit program, has grown every single year. Every budget we present it has grown to the point where today it's \$67 million worth of benefits to Saskatchewan families, to the children of our great province.

And if you don't think I'm not proud of that, there's not much point in my carrying on. I couldn't be more proud than I am right now. This is such a delightful budget. It is so good to see six straight balanced budgets.

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

**Mr. Trew:** — I have to feel a little bit sorry for the Sask-a-Tories. You know it doesn't hardly matter what the issue is, they're on the wrong side of it. It doesn't matter what enlightened facts they bring out, it's nonsense.

I'll tell you, they've got . . . I mean people wonder . . . occasionally they'll correct me and say, no it's not the Sask-a-Tories, it's the Saskatchewan Party. And I'll say, oh, is that why the Sask-a-Tories have the exact same — to a person — staff in their caucus office that the Tories had? Is that why they have the exact same office, provincial office, in exact same building on Victoria Avenue? Of course it's the Tories.

And of course they're ready to vote on the budget. They want to get through this, they don't want to give anybody a chance to tout a 1 cent cut in the PST and the increase in health funding, and all of the other good things that come with the budget.

Mr. Speaker, in education and training we're spending \$550 million this year in this budget to improve our K to 12 schools — \$550 million. That's a half a billion plus 50 million. Half a billion dollars plus \$50 million goes into K to 12 education right here in Saskatchewan.

(1500)

And the only regret that I know that we have on this side of the House is that there isn't another 550 million to be spent on that. Young people are the very future of our province; they deserve the very, very finest education that we can possibly provide for them. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that day in, day out, there are teachers and other professionals in the school system that just go to the wall, go far beyond the call of duty to help these students — the very future of not only Saskatchewan but the future of the world — to see that they get the proper education and the proper grounding and the proper benefits that they so richly deserve.

So 550 million for K to 12 in this budget. And nearly \$300 million for post-secondary education — \$300 million in post-secondary education. It's an amazing, amazing feat. It's amazing that having inherited so few years ago a \$1.1 billion annual shortfall, that we were able, all the people of Saskatchewan but the leadership came from the Premier, from our Minister of Finance, the leadership came — they put together the budget that led us from those Devine Tory deficits, \$1.1 billion a year in a very short period of time, Mr. Speaker, into surplus budgets.

And what does a surplus budget do? It certainly doesn't immediately help anybody's pocket, but it certainly helps get the bankers from New York and Zurich and Hong Kong out of our pocket and out of the taxpayers' pockets because every time we're able to generate a surplus, we're also able to pay off some debt. And every time we pay off some debt or the mortgage, interest payments will go down. And we have been ratcheting down interest payments ever since we were able to balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, if we weren't spending \$2 million a day financing the Tory debt — \$2 million a day — this \$550 million for K to 12 and nearly 300 million for post-secondary could be virtually doubled. Virtually doubled but for the debt they left us.

Mr. Speaker, what else is happening in education? We've got a total of \$206 million being used for training and employment programs — \$206 million in an area that the federal government has sort of taken the football and just handed it off to the province and said, here you run with it.

And it's a bit of a double-edged sword, Mr. Speaker. The good news is we can run programs better than the federal government can at the provincial level; the bad news is it costs a bit of money to do that. But \$206 million for training and education, I think, is certainly a clear indication of where our hearts are. You can do an awful lot of training for \$206 million. You can

do a lot of work experience programs for that too.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about education and I compare this with the member for Canora-Pelly who the . . . I want to read from *Yorkton This Week & Enterprise* that it says, "Liberals meet with school board." Obviously this is a little bit old, Mr. Speaker, and I quote from the article:

Krawetz, the Liberal Education critic, said the anticipated decrease in federal transfer payments reflects an increase in prosperity in this province.

That's what he said as a Liberal.

For example (he said), this year the province reaped a windfall in unexpected revenue.

That's what he said as a Liberal, Mr. Speaker, on education. Isn't that quite amazing? It doesn't much matter what the Sask-a-Tory said when he was a Liberal; the truth of this budget is we've got the highest payment ever in . . . highest amount of money ever going into education and training. Over a billion dollars. Over a billion dollars. The largest amount ever.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to health care because, as you know, I've very proud of what we've done here. We put in \$195 million, new money, into health care this year; \$195 million additional to last year to get better nursing home and health facilities. We put money in to get more home care and more community services. We put money in for medical equipment so that our hospitals and labs will be Year 2000 ready. We put in \$50 million in that alone, Mr. Speaker. We put in money for fair, improved working conditions for nurses and other health professionals.

I've read a fairly lengthy list, Mr. Speaker, of things in health care that we're doing; A hundred and ninety-five million dollars is going to go an awful long way and 11 per cent increase in the Health department budget, in the health budget in Saskatchewan in one year is going to go a long ways in addressing that list of concerns, Mr. Speaker.

And not to for a minute lose sight of reducing the waiting list for surgeries, and addressing . . . I want to choose my words fairly carefully here, Mr. Speaker, because I don't want to say that there is never, ever a problem in an emergency department. By the very nature of emergency department, it accepts us when we are at our sickest, when we are most desperately in need of immediate care. Therefore it's in all of our interest to have an adequately funded, adequately staffed emergency department; that in an ideal world you get into the emergency department and within three minutes would see a doctor.

But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that my family hasn't had a whole lot of personal experience with an emergency department for a number of years until three weeks ago when in an — it wasn't terribly serious but now my wife is going to get mad at me because it's her elbow that's broken, Mr. Speaker — in a curling game my wife slipped on the ice, fell, finished the curling game, was determined it was only a sprain so we went home and went to bed and of course she had no sleep that night. And at 6:30 she woke me up and she says, no it's just too much pain; I think there's something wrong, she said, so we should go

to the emergency department . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Melfort-Tisdale says what's this got to do with the budget?

What is it that you say . . . what is it that you say about health care? Oh, that's right, I forgot, you're the party of freeze the budget on health care; a five-year freeze on health care, five-year freeze. That would mean no 195 million that we included in this year's budget. No. What's the Sask-a-Tory answer? Zap, you're frozen, zap you're frozen, zap you're frozen. Wow!

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

**Mr. Trew:** — And you're absolutely right when you said this is a good-bye budget.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order, order, order. Now hon. members will recognize that it is most appropriate of course to direct the debate through the Chair, and that when we start directing comments to hon. members on opposite sides of the House then the debate becomes less than productive. I think we've just seen evidence of that. I'll ask the co-operation of all hon. members on both sides of the House.

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's the Tory's answer to health care? Zap! You're frozen. That's their response. Zap, Mr. Speaker. By what the Tory platform is, the Saskatchewan Health budget would not have increased, Mr. Speaker, by \$195 million this year — an 11.4 per cent increase in our Health budget this year alone. Great news for Saskatchewan.

Now, as I was describing a visit to the emergency department . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Why? Because \$195 million, some of that money is going to be used, Mr. Speaker, to make certain, to make absolutely certain to the extent that's humanly possible, that every Saskatchewan citizen receives the kind of care that my wife recently did.

We got to the Pasqua emergency department, Mr. Speaker, sometime about 20 minutes to 7 o'clock on a Saturday morning and if the Sask-a-Tory stories, their horror stories, were the normal course of events, Mr. Speaker, you would expect maybe we'd wait half an hour, an hour, two hours before we got any help.

Well, Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, I wanted to know what is the situation in health in the emergency department so I looked at my watch when we went in. We registered and you know how long it took until my wife saw a doctor? Three minutes, Mr. Speaker, from the time we walked in the door until she saw a doctor — three minutes, three minutes. It was almost that quick.

The member from Saltcoats says, Mr. Speaker, must have met you in the parking lot. It almost felt that quick and I think that's about the only way that the service could have been any quicker.

And just so that we have a little bit of an understanding about the emergency department, Mr. Speaker, there was five other people in there. There was a person with a cut on the arm, had

gotten into the wrong end of an altercation with a broken bottle. And there was a number of other things going on in that emergency department at exactly the same time. But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the service was great.

Then yesterday we had our second opportunity to visit the emergency department. This time, Mr. Speaker, it was my granddaughter, running a fever. Fortunately, it doesn't seem to have been a whole lot . . . well in fact, fortunately it seems to have been less serious than the broken elbow. But after consulting with the family doctor, the family doctor suggested to my daughter to take my granddaughter to the emergency department.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it was less than a half an hour from the time they were in, had seen the doctor — my granddaughter had been thoroughly checked, thoroughly checked — and a prescription written, and they were on their way to get the prescription filled. And hopefully my granddaughter is going to get over the tonsil problem and the ear infection. I have every confidence in it.

But, Mr. Speaker, the point I wanted to make there is that the emergency department works. I am astounded at the numbers of people that have come up to me and said, gosh, you know, I was expecting all kinds of problems. I'm thinking of one person I met the other day, met at the Regina and District Labour Council meeting. And this person said, gee, you know, my . . . I'm going to change the relationship just a little bit because . . . just to protect them. I didn't ask, so if I say "aunt," well it might not be aunt; it might be uncle or mother or grandmother.

But this person said, my aunt was diagnosed with cancer on January 4 and so we kind of expected there would be some problems. Two weeks later, the surgery took place. And, Mr. Speaker, they told the family that five years ago, six years ago, that would have been the end of it. But now the testing equipment is so much more sophisticated that they weren't positive, or they suspected they hadn't got entirely all of the cancer, so there was a couple of courses of chemotherapy.

(1515)

And of course they're expecting the outcome from all of this to be just perfect. I know our thoughts are with my friend's aunt in this. But he was telling me, he said, you know I expect that we'd have some trouble, but not one minute of trouble from start right through the entire process to when I saw him, not last Saturday but the Saturday before at the Regina and District Labour Council meeting, Mr. Speaker.

I could talk about another friend of mine who went to see his family GP (general practitioner) on a Wednesday. And it was eight days later from the time he'd saw his GP till he'd seen a specialist and been in the hospitals for tests and had his report back. Fortunately the report was a good one.

Mr. Speaker, health horror stories. Again I don't want to understate the horror stories because from time to time when you're dealing with 35,000 — 35,000 Saskatchewan people every day . . . And that's what our health department, our health services do. They deal with 35,000 people every single day. Surely to goodness, out of 35,000 transactions, one of them



isn't going to be as perfect as you would hope.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the horror stories are largely a figment of the Tories' — Sask-a-Tories' — imagination. Largely a figment of their imagination. Again I want to say, I don't want to pretend that there can never be anything goes south on us.

And I know that the women and the men that work in the health industry throughout Saskatchewan put their absolute best efforts forward day in, day out, night in, night out. And, Mr. Speaker, they deserve our support. They deserve the support of the Sask Party and the Liberals and the governing New Democrats. They deserve our support for the 35,000 people that they see every single day in not the best of situations. I mean, nobody ever went to the hospital because they're too healthy. Nobody ever went to the hospital because they didn't need help.

I mean, in crisis situations these women and these men put forward just phenomenally good efforts on our behalf every single day, and I take my hat off to them, Mr. Speaker. They're very valued, very necessary and very, very much appreciated.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what did we do on taxes in this budget? Well we've lowered the education and health tax, E & H tax, from 7 per cent to 6 per cent. It's the lowest it's been in 12 years, right here in Saskatchewan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I talked about taxes having gone down this year, but what we forget is that last year there was a 4 per cent, 2 points off, the income tax, last year. What happened the year before — 2 cents off the E&H tax. So 2 cents off of it two years ago, another cent off it this year — that's 3 cent reduction on top of, Mr. Speaker . . . I recall very vividly when we formed government in very late 1991, when the Tories had run out their five-year mandate and then still took one more day. They remained in power for five years and one day. I recall so vividly that we had to . . . one of the first things we had to do was recall this legislature and pass the budget for the year that had three months left in it.

Why did we have to do that, Mr. Speaker? Because the Tories ran and hid. They prorogued the legislature in June of that year without having passed the budget. It is an amazingly sorrowful time . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker, suggested that might happen again this time. You know, member for Saltcoats, you won't live long enough to see a New Democrat government in Saskatchewan run like that. You will never live so long and my wish is that you live a thousand years. So just so it's perfectly clear, I'm not wishing you any bad luck on your longevity, but you will not live long enough to see an NDP government duck and not pass its budget. You can take that to the bank with you. You can take it anywhere you want.

We're not the Tories. The people passed their judgment on you in 1991. They passed judgment on you in 1991 — pardon me, I know in 1991, Mr. Speaker, the member for Saltcoats was a Tory. I know that after that he became a Liberal, and now he's back as a Tory. Yes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Consistent, he says. Well you can explain that one; I'm not going to even go there, not even going to go into that flip-flop area.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud that we have again delivered a

significant tax cut. It would be nice if the tax cut had been 2 cents this year or 3 cents. It would be nice. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Every tax cut we've delivered . . . starting in 1995, every single year we've delivered a tax cut. And every single year, Mr. Speaker, it's been sustainable. Every single year. You can take that to the bank with you too. Every year when the taxes go down, they'll stay down with a New Democratic government.

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Mr. Speaker, I was starting to explain, when we formed government in early 1991, one of the last things that the Tories had done was harmonized the provincial sales tax with the federal GST. Harmonized — sounds really nice, sounds really innocent.

But do you know what harmonization does, Mr. Speaker? What it does is it takes everything that's GST payable, GST being the federal tax, and that includes health products; it includes education products; it includes children's clothing; it includes services.

It's income tax time and I venture to say that a significant number of Saskatchewan people take their income tax to a person or a firm to prepare their income tax form. Well for that service of tax preparation we pay GST. Under the Tory plan we'd have also paid PST on that — lawyer services, all services. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you took your vehicle in for an oil change you would pay, under their plan, provincial sales tax on the labour for that oil change or on the labour for whatever you get done with your vehicle or your tractor or whatever.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did on forming government, even knowing how bad the deficit was, even knowing how terrible it was, was we deharmonized. And I remember the debate vividly, the discussion very vividly. I'll give you a summary of it, Mr. Speaker. There were a very small minority of people that said, well we should at least consider just leaving the PST harmonized because we can always blame that on Grant Devine and the Tories.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was never . . . seldom as proud of my colleagues as I was at that moment when we said no, as desperate as it is, as desperate as the situation is here in Saskatchewan, we cannot simply tax the poorest people, disproportionately high, because of the mess that the Tories left us. We can't do that, Mr. Speaker.

So two years ago we reduced the PST by two points to 7; this year we've reduced it by another penny to 6 cents. Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted with that record, and as the Minister of Finance said, both in his budget speech and again earlier today in question period, there will be more.

Mr. Speaker, I should . . . I would be remiss if I didn't talk a little bit about debt. In debt, paying down the debt, we promised to pay debt down to reduce the mortgage of our children's future. And you know, Mr. Speaker, we've done just that. We've had — as I mentioned earlier — six straight balanced budgets. Not one, not two, not three, not four, not five — six; six straight balanced budgets.

Compare that with the Tory record. In fact I would like to compare a lot with the Tory record. I see their platform, Mr. Speaker, election platform presented October 31, 1998 and it's called *The Way Up*.

Mr. Speaker, you go through this platform. It's just an amazing, amazing piece of fiction. Mr. Speaker, *The Way Up* — the Tory platform — is a virtual carbon copy of the Tory platform of 1982. Remember. We all remember, Mr. Speaker, Grant Devine who said:

You know Saskatchewan's got so much going for it, you can afford to mismanage it and still break even.

He also said things, such great words of wisdom as: give 'er snooze, Bruce; and don't say whoa in a mudhole — and then he left us in a mudhole. He left us there in the mudhole.

Mr. Speaker, *The Way Up* is way out — way out. *The Way Up* is such an amazing, amazing piece of fiction — unsustainable, unsupportable, and it just doesn't add up. But that doesn't surprise anybody in Saskatchewan because everybody in Saskatchewan understands exactly who they are — exactly who those Tories are.

So is it any surprise that they would bring the Tory staff to them when they ran up the new corporate name — if I can describe it that — the new flag of convenience. Is it any problem, any surprise rather, that the new Tories would have the old Tory staff; that the new Tories have the old Tories' office; that the new Tories have the old Tory headquarters, that the new Tories have the same old Tory bagmen would be no surprise at all. No surprise at all. So why would we be surprised when the platform is the same old platform.

Mr. Speaker, I want to . . . I've got something here about the platform and I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the Leader-Star News, February 27, 1998. "Sask. Party unveils ideas for legislation," it says, Mr. Speaker. Thursday . . . Okay, well I won't try and paraphrase too much. I'll quote:

The Saskatchewan Party delivered an "alternative Throne Speech" Thursday to try and position itself as a clear alternative to the "tired, arrogant and out-of-touch NDP."

Saskatchewan Party Leader Ken Krawetz promised government by his party would deliver meaningful tax cuts . . .

And the article goes on. Amongst other wondrous things that this article says —and I'll go back to the article for this — it says:

Another bill called for the elimination of the Crown tendering agreement.

Stronger balanced budget legislation would eliminate deficit budgeting except in extreme circumstances like natural disasters. Any other deficit budgets would result in members being docked pay.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this comes from the Sask-a-Tories. I'll make a comment but I want to read this final paragraph of this. The

article goes on:

When reporters pointed out that many of the 30 bills sound familiar, Krawetz said if a problem isn't fixed, it makes sense to keep lobbying for the solution.

When pointed out that many of these solutions sounded like the same old solutions, I mean even the reporters recognized Grant Devine, 1982. Even the reporters recognized the tired, worn-out Tory clichés. Even the reporters are finally getting around to calling those people exactly what they are, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, this budget . . . I don't want to stray too far from this budget, Mr. Speaker, because any time you've got 195 million additional dollars bringing the total for health care to over \$1.9 billion, just about . . . just about \$100 million shy of \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker. But \$1.9 billion — biggest expenditure ever in health care in this province, an 11.4 per cent increase this year over last. Shows where our commitment is.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when New Democrats stand up and say, we will deliver the best health care that is affordable by the taxpayers, you know we mean we will do our very best to deliver the very best health care affordable by the taxpayers.

(1530)

We've got the books balanced; we're now in a position of investing significant sums in people, and it's the taxpayers' money that's being invested. But as I pointed out earlier, the taxpayers said that health care is their biggest concern. So what would you do in a budget? You would put the biggest single expenditure increase into the area that people identified as their biggest concern, Mr. Speaker — health care: 11.4 per cent this year more over last year. An amazing, an amazing record in this budget.

And we can do it, Mr. Speaker, because it's balanced budgets. Balanced budgets: something that the Tories are great at talking about, but what was their record in office? Zero-for-nine . . . actually . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I hear zero-for-nine, but it was zero-for-eight, Mr. Speaker. It was zero-for-eight.

Why? Because they didn't have the courage to stay here in this legislature, stand up, and pass their last budget. Instead, they fled. They fled — fled this legislature, Mr. Speaker — prorogued the legislature. Why? Because they were going to lose a non-confidence vote. That's why. No secret to that at all. I was there. I was there in opposition. That was a sinking ship and the rats couldn't get away fast enough, Mr. Speaker — a sinking ship.

And now they have the audacity to come and try and say we should strengthen our balanced budget legislation. Mr. Speaker, this government straightened up their mess — straightened up their mess from \$1.1 billion annual deficit, from a record of nearly . . . a total of nearly \$15 billion, total dead-weight debt that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan had to pay for. Fifteen billion total debt — we've shrunk that to 11.4 billion, paying off the extra with surpluses, with some strategic selling-off of some assets, Mr. Speaker.

We've had a remarkable record, and we introduced our first

balanced budget, 1995 . . . '94-'95. And we have delivered this our sixth straight surplus budget. If they're concerned about surplus budgets, they should be less concerned about passing some new Act, and more concerned about just vacating this place.

Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? New Democrats are the ones that not only talk the talk, we walk the walk; we deliver balanced surplus budgets, six for six.

What was the Blakeney record in the '70s? — 11 for 11. What was the Tory record in the '80s? Eight deficit budgets — eight deficit budgets . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now the member for Saltcoats wants to re-fight the 1982 election. Why would you want to re-fight '82? You won — you won. Why would you want to re-fight 1982.

I know you think those were great days, Mr. Speaker, the member for Saltcoats thinks those were great days. And they were the beginning of great problems that unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, my children may be going to see the end of it, maybe not. It might wind up being my grandchildren that finally get us completely rid of the debt that those Tories left us from starting in 1982, ending in 1991, where they were unceremoniously booted from office, Mr. Speaker. But richly deserved, I might say, very richly deserved.

Mr. Speaker, the Tories don't want to talk about this budget because they don't want to talk about our record in government, about not just our record in government, about the record of Saskatchewan people. And what's the record say? It says from 1992 to 1997, little Saskatchewan led the nation in economic growth. Little Saskatchewan led the nation in that five-year period, in economic growth.

Retail sales — retail sales, Mr. Speaker, were up in Saskatchewan at a faster rate year after year after year after year, at a higher rate than Alberta, which the members opposite are son fond of, or Tory Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, job growth has been very strong here. We've got a record number of people working. I wish it was better — I wish it was better, I really do. And it will be better, because this budget helps continue to allow people to have the confidence to spend the money they have. It continues to give businesses the confidence knowing that they're not going to be in a province that is so deep in a pit that they can never get out.

Mr. Speaker, we met our job growth target of 30,000 jobs, creating 30,000 jobs and the job growth is — let me just catch this — job growth of 3,000 in 1999. That's what we're projecting for this year. And an average of 5,200 per year to 2003. Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite are guffawing at that but I just want to hold up . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . scoffing, scoffing.

I want to hold up the council of Canada economic forecast. In it, Mr. Speaker, it confirms Saskatchewan's growth is on a good target. These targets will be met. I know that the member for Saltcoats hasn't read it, Mr. Speaker, but I wish he would. I'd invite him to in fact have a look at what the good folks in the economic conference of Canada have to say about little old Saskatchewan.

We have a million people here that work tirelessly, that work diligently, that love their province. A million people — most of us love our province. Most of us choose to stay here. Many of us frankly wouldn't stay here even, even . . . Many of us would stay here even if there was a fraction of truth, Mr. Speaker, to the doom and gloom that the Tories are spreading daily.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to talk about economic growth., just one area that's very close to my heart, that really kind of nails it home for me. In 1986 when I first ran, there was lots of office space available in Regina. We had already four and a half years of Grant Devine Tory government. Things were heading south on us, so to speak. Lots of space to choose from in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

In 1991 there was even more. We had had nine years, nine sorry Tory years. There was lots of office space that we could rent either for a constituency office or . . . This may come as a surprise to you in the Saskatchewan Party but June this year is four years since the last election, okay.

Now just keep in your chair. We're looking for campaign rooms in Regina Coronation Park and we're looking for it in June. Why? Because June's four years. The election may not be in June, it may be in October, or it may be June next year, or maybe June next year, but I wouldn't hold my breath on that, member for Saltcoats. I wouldn't hold my breath on that.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995 . . . in 1991 there was lots of space, but in 1995 election it was starting to dwindle a little bit. Well I spoke with my campaign manager three hours and 15 minutes ago; my campaign manager tells me there's one space, and do you know what? Not even in my constituency; it's across the street, one space, close to suitable. One space just across the street on the east side of Albert. I shouldn't get so specific because you never know, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals or the Sask-a-Tories might actually have enough money to rent a space. They might rent it out from under me and there we'd be.

Mr. Speaker, the point is you look at the economy. You look at the office space situation in Regina. It is tightening each year now and it's getting to the point to where very soon I expect we're going to see some significant new office space being constructed out of necessity. I know we've certainly seen a lot of office space upgraded, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am, as I've said, very, very proud of our budget. We've balanced the budget, we've paid down debt, and we've introduced tax relief. Contrast that with the sorry Tory record, or the sorry Tory hollow promises. Contrast it, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you every one who does that, this is, as the member for Melfort-Tisdale said, Mr. Speaker, this is a good-bye budget. It's good-bye Sask-a-Tories.

Another way I've hear it, another way I've heard it said, somebody was telling me over the weekend, they said, gee . . . I can't even use my name I don't think. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, this person said to the member for Regina Coronation Park, gee, this looks like an election budget. You know what, Mr. Speaker, I said, you're right, it is an election budget. We reduced the PST by 1 cent this year. We increased the Health budget by \$195 million this year. We increased the Education budget. We increased the Highways budget.

But you know what? Last year's was an election budget too. Last year we reduced income tax by 4 per cent — 2 points — 4 per cent. Last year we increased our Health budget. Last year we increased our Education budget. Last year we increased the Highways budget. Last year we increased the Child Benefit Program as we did this year. That was an election budget last year.

And you know what? What about the year before? The year before was an election budget — 2 cents reduction in the PST the year before, 2 cents, Mr. Speaker. And what did we do that year? We backfilled every penny that the federal Liberals withdrew in funding from health care and social programs. Every penny they withdrew, we ponied up that penny and more — and more.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a wondrous time in Saskatchewan. It's a great time to be in the government benches. It's a great time to be a New Democrat in Saskatchewan. We are seeing the results of a million people working together and it's fabulous. We've got economic growth. We've got debt being bought down. We've got the most balanced budgets in a row of any province in all of Canada — six, the most anywhere.

We have got responsible government that listens to the people, that asks for not just a report on what's the problem — in the case of health I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, the problem being long waiting lists or waiting lists that are longer than we would like. We didn't just say tell us how bad the problem is — no. The Minister of Health says tell me how bad the problem is and tell me how we can fix it. And that's what we're doing with this budget, Mr. Speaker — \$195 million, 11.4 per cent increase to Health, 11.4 per cent.

I say it so many times partly because it sounds so wonderful, Mr. Speaker. It's such a significant investment in the well-being of the people of our province. Add to that the children's benefit program — \$14 million new money this year over last takes the money up to \$67 million.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be prouder of this budget. I don't know how better to say it. And I think there's a significant number of people that are starting to come to the view that maybe the best way for me to say it is to take my place here and go out and knock on some doors in my constituency, as I have been doing for some time now. But I know that people would like to see me at their doorstep and I look forward to meeting many of my constituents in the coming weeks and months. And I very much look forward to letting people know what's in this election budget, same as I let people know what was in last year's election budget and the year before's election budget.

(1545)

Before I do take my place, Mr. Speaker, I want to say: they are all election budgets for us, but for the simple reason that as New Democrats, we care. There's a reason that every one of my colleagues decided to run, decided to seek office. It's because of a profound commitment to their constituents and to their province. Because of that profound commitment, Mr. Speaker, we care; we don't try and save up for an election year so we can do a real zinger of a budget. Every single year we try and identify what are the areas that are the most concern to the

people, recognize that we have to have a balanced budget — it's not a bottomless pit of money; it has to be balanced — but within the confines of a balanced surplus budget, what can we do to make life better for our neighbours, our friends, our constituents, our families, our province, our future.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that this budget passes every single test. It is a huge pleasure and an honour for me to have led the government side — after the minister of Finance — but to have led the government side in talking about this, the budget.

I will be supporting it, Mr. Speaker, very, very proudly. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to make a few points with respect to new budget initiatives of the Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing.

Over the last number of years municipal governments, housing authorities, and the cultural sector have supported the provincial government with the difficult task of improving the fiscal status of our province. And they've done that, Mr. Speaker — as my colleague from Regina Coronation Park has just said in his remarks — they've done it because they love this province and they have confidence in the long-term future of this province and the quality of life that we work together to make here.

Our communities, our housing authorities, and our cultural organizations have made those sacrifices to allow us to convert the deficit into a small annual surplus, Mr. Speaker. Our communities and associations know that we are wrestling with the legacy of debt. Everyone knows that we make annual interest payments of \$725 million a year. That's \$725 million or \$2 million a day that we could be spending in this province on our health care system, on our roads, on infrastructure, on social housing, and on cultural development.

But wrestling with debt cannot be our only focus and I'm extremely pleased that this government has responded in this budget to demonstrated needs in the sectors served by my department. We have responded to the need for a municipal infrastructure support, for social housing assistance, and for support to our developing cultural sector. These are priorities that have suffered some pressure while government repaired our fiscal house.

But we announced last week in the budget, \$10 million in new money annually — not just one time, but annually — to support the development and renewal of infrastructure for our municipalities. This represents an 18 per cent increase over last year's amount. The \$10 million will represent the province's portion for a provincial-municipal infrastructure program to be cost shared on a 50/50 basis by the province and municipalities.

The program will result in \$20 million of new municipal infrastructure spending annually which will create approximately 400 seasonal construction jobs. The investment builds on the \$3 million increase in the rural revenue sharing pool last year.

The \$10 million will be allocated in proportion to the relative sizes of the provincial population represented by each type of municipality. Urban municipalities will receive about 7.5 million, rural municipalities will receive 2 million, and northern municipalities will receive \$500,000.

My officials will consult with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), SARM, and the New North, on details about project eligibility criteria and the establishment of joint review committees. And I understand that these discussions have already begun.

The opposition will say it's not enough, and they are right. We are challenging the federal government to ante up with this program. We need this to be a tri-level program. A one-third portion from the federal government would turn this program into a \$30 million annual investment in Saskatchewan's infrastructure. That would be \$30 million to develop our roads and bridges, to renew and extend water and sewer systems, to support waste disposal sites, transfer the disabled, and other municipal and transportation services.

What we have asked for from the federal government, Mr. Speaker, is a continuation or a third phase of the two phases of the infrastructure program that are now just winding down, where it was a tripartite situation with each level of government, including the federal, putting in one-third of the amount. But in the federal budget a few weeks ago a renewal of that program was absent. So we decided to go ahead at this time without them, but hopefully that they would see fit to take part.

In fact when you think about the portion of the country's farm aid program that we are footing and the damage that the federal government has done to our rail and road systems with the changes to the transportation system, it is the least the federal government could do.

We, in this budget, have built on programs previously put in place to strengthen our communities. We will take another step forward with the grants in lieu of taxes program with a budget of \$6.25 million in 1999-2000. That's twice the amount budgeted last year.

By the end of the four-year phase-in, the provincial government will be paying \$12.5 million annually to municipalities and school boards on the property that they own and manage through the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation anywhere where it's located in the province. These funds will indeed strengthen our communities, enhance local economies, and support our school and library systems.

Our budget for the RCMP police program has also increased to reflect a full year of funding. This year's budget includes more than \$4 million to support rural and small urban municipalities in adjusting to a new RCMP cost-distribution formula.

For northern Saskatchewan, the budget announced \$1 million to strengthen water and sewer infrastructure in northern communities. When one adds the \$500,000 from the conditional revenue sharing program, the total amount of provincial funds available for northern water and sewer infrastructure increases to \$1.5 million, Mr. Speaker. And since the \$500,000 available from the infrastructure program will be matched by the

Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account, a total of \$2 million will be available for northern sewer and water projects.

While initiatives for social housing were not announced in the budget, a number of initiatives will move forward this year due to good fiscal management in the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. We previously announced a total of 60 housing . . . these are brand new, single detached, family housing units, Mr. Speaker, for the North which will be constructed this spring — 60 new houses.

The rental market assistance program and the remote housing program will result in another 50 units being developed in the North in 1999. And partnerships with co-operatives will continue to provide home ownership opportunities to inner city families in major cities.

The department also expects that the Saskatchewan assisted living initiative will be introduced to more communities in 1991. And this is something, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation undertook on a pilot project basis two years ago. And it's designed to help seniors be independent in their own homes — which is where they want to be — longer. It involves just enhancing the services that are available in some of our existing seniors housing complexes, extended to, for instance on an optional basis, the availability of one hot meal a day cooked by someone else because older seniors who live alone sometimes tend to not make very nutritious meals for themselves.

It includes, in some cases, where we've actually made physical alterations and brought a number of duplexes that used to be so popular in rural towns in Saskatchewan — but they're single detached and they're not suitable once a person can't shovel their own snow and so on — moved them together physically; built onto them a common hallway and a common social area, a common bathroom for instance where people who use walkers and wheelchairs, who can do everything else independently but they maybe quite can't handle the bathtub, we put in a tub room, a common one with supervision to give them a little hand up. And it's been very well received, and it has enabled.

Yes, it's a common-sense approach to just giving seniors that little tiny bit of assistance that will help them to remain independent in their own homes longer. And we've expanded that program each and every year with the . . . And it saves a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, in the health system because we're keeping people who would formerly have been clients of the health system in nursing homes, keeping them not only out of the health system but feeling good about themselves and where they want to be — in their own homes.

The average age, Mr. Speaker, in our social housing seniors' portfolio right now — and of course we don't have the statistics on people who live in their own homes — but in our rental housing portfolio the average age of seniors is 86. And it used to be very big-time news when somebody reached their 100th birthday. Now we have — literally — we have dozens of people living independently in our social housing portfolio, with the small little aids that I have mentioned, that are over 100 years old, over a century old and still independent.

The quality of life in Saskatchewan communities will further be

improved in other ways, Mr. Speaker. We have in this year's budget a further \$100,000 investment to ensure that public libraries are connected to the Internet. The federal and provincial governments and the Saskatchewan Library Association — this is a tripartite partnership, Mr. Speaker — recently entered into a cost-shared agreement which will result in 300 new Internet sites at public libraries. We have a large number of our libraries, including the regional libraries which serve rural areas, that now offer access to the Internet and access to computers even though people might not have such access in their own home. But they can receive that service free now with assistance from their local library.

The additional \$100,000 brings the provincial commitment over a two-year period to \$800,000 and allows the province to obtain matching federal dollars. The program results in a \$1.6 million investment in our community library services. This program supports public access to today's technology. By placing Internet services in our public libraries we ensure that everyone has the opportunity to use the incredible communications and research tools available on the Internet.

The personnel in my department in the Provincial Library, Mr. Speaker, work very hard with the library system in Saskatchewan, and with the federal government to make this program happen. And I'm extremely proud of their accomplishment.

And it is our . . . this is our commitment, Mr. Speaker, as a progressive government, to the access to the information in the information age to everybody in the province. Not must people who live in cities, not just people who have the money to purchase their own computers, but a way to make these tools available to everyone.

I'm also extremely proud of our announcement for a new cultural industries development fund. This year we will invest \$200,000 in this exciting sector. Cultural industries include sound recording, book publishing, film and video, and commercial visual arts and crafts. These industries make a huge contribution to the cultural and economic development of our province, Mr. Speaker.

(1600)

Last year the province established annual funding of \$1 million for SaskFILM, (Saskatchewan Film and Video Development Corporation) and introduced an employment tax credit for the film and video industry. The industry responded to these initiatives with spectacular growth in total production volume, from approximately \$22 million in 1997 to over \$50 million in 1998, and they're projecting between 70 and \$80 million in this fiscal year upcoming, Mr. Speaker.

And these are very high quality jobs. And we also have a component in the tax credit to encourage this activity to take place in rural areas by having the tax credit be 5 per cent higher if the activity takes place out of an urban area. And that has resulted in some considerable activity in rural Saskatchewan.

The \$200,000 cultural industries fund is primarily intended to address financial priorities in other segments of the cultural industry sector. The funding is intended to support projects

designed to increase production capacity and promote self-reliance for sound recording, book publishing, and commercial visual arts and crafts.

The people in these industries have already had a number of interesting advances. And one is, Mr. Speaker, that the members might find of interest, is using the Internet as a sales tool. For example a recording artist traditionally making a CD (compact disc) or an album would need to have an agent to have a marketing force. So out of a \$20 CD the artist might end up getting a dollar. Now with CD-ROM they are able to market their product directly on the Internet. Potential clients can actually listen to a sampling of, if it's music for example, and the artist ends up getting \$15 out of the \$20 CD instead of \$1. So he can actually make a living. It doesn't have to go platinum any more because he doesn't have to sell a million to make a million dollars. He can make a good living selling much less because he gets to keep more of the proceeds. The artists get to keep more of the proceeds for themselves.

So we have . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — But of course being a Saskatchewan artist they would sell more anyway.

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Well yes, my colleague says being Saskatchewan artists they'll sell more anyway. But we do have so much creative talent in this province and we do have access through SaskTel to the finest communications network in the world, and we are providing more and more opportunities for the citizens of this province and the creative artists of this province to use these tools to their economic advantage. It's working very well, Mr. Speaker.

In the months to come, my department officials will work with representatives of the cultural industries' associations to determine the most effective method of distributing these funds. This is a case where this is not a cost, Mr. Speaker, this is an investment in the time and talent of people in Saskatchewan. In the months to come the province will also be responding to a report on the cultural industry's development strategy which they themselves, in the industry, have developed and made recommendations to us on how to develop the sector most productively.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of Saskatchewan have much to look forward to as we approach the new millennium. I want to take a moment to thank the many communities, cultural organizations, and housing authorities that have waited patiently and supported the government as we work together to repair our province's financial situation.

I just want to expand on the role of the housing authorities a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because there's so many things in this province that the examples of us working together and doing . . . approaching our challenges in absolutely unique ways that we don't understand sometimes that — and appreciate — that in other provinces, other parts of the country and the world that people are not even aware of this approach. And one is our system of housing authorities where the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation while they own the portfolio — and incidentally also took responsibility for the federal portion of the housing portfolio when the feds decided in 1993 to get out of housing —

the housing portfolio consists of approximately 35,000 housing units, province-wide, in communities of every size including family housing, northern housing, seniors' housing, and housing in places where there's no real housing market but there's still a need.

And it's managed not from the top down but by community volunteers who take sole responsibility on a volunteer basis for making the decisions for the management, the rentals, the maintenance, the renovation of the housing portfolio that's in their community, and they do a wonderful job. Just recently within the last couple of weeks they had a provincial conference here where they come together once a year — this year it happened to be in Regina — and they exchange ideas with each other about how better to manage the portfolio. And there is no other province in Canada that has this kind of a system where local volunteers take the responsibility. And we are the envy of the public housing bodies in the rest of this country and all over North America, in the sensitive way that our housing portfolio is managed by people taking responsibility in their own community. And they do a wonderful job and we're very grateful to them.

Another example of something that's entirely unique in our province that touches on my portfolio, Mr. Speaker, is the way the proceeds from the Western Canada Lottery Corporation are distributed to over 12,000 volunteer organizations in the province in the field of sport, recreation, and culture including multicultural activities. An example of this, Mr. Speaker, is a couple of years ago we had the national Canada seniors' games here in Saskatchewan, in Regina. And one of the Maritime provinces — could have been any province actually — had sent a representative to the games to find out how we organized them and so forth because they were thinking of making a bid for a future event.

And when they saw the sport . . . the system that we have in place funded by the lottery since 1971 for training coaches, for putting together facilities, for assisting community organizations in developing young people in these kind of activities, they were just astonished. They said they had absolutely nothing like that.

And recently I was privileged to attend, along with Saskatchewan's team of 300 young athletes, at the Canada Games in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. And I want to share with you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan would have been very impressed with our young people.

We have in our Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing a small core that we call the rec branch. They're the people who coordinate the bids for games, the training of coaches, the putting together of the teams that go to these events in the province, in western Canada, and so on.

And it's a difficult thing, coaching young people in that age group. They're exuberant and eager and so on. But I noticed at the opening ceremonies at Corner Brook, as the teams from the different provinces come in, you could just tell that some of the coaches had kind of said to their teams — there's mostly about groups of 300 young people; some of them looked . . . were kind of just sitting there and waving little flags and looking kind of glum — and their coach had probably told them, now you

just behave, you know, or else. You know how it is with . . . there are different ways of handling young people.

And some of the groups from some of the provinces were almost over-exuberant: you know, they were doing cartwheels . . . (inaudible) . . . and almost out of control. And the Saskatchewan people — not just at the opening ceremonies, Mr. Speaker — they were so wholesome and so enthusiastic, but just the right amount of enthusiasm.

And when they were out in the community . . . you know, I went for walks and into the stores and shops and so on and you could always pick out our athletes. Each province had different colour uniforms and so on. Ours were wearing apple green this year. And I saw them all over in the town, in the different venues in the town, in the athletes' village, in the shopping malls, and everywhere. And the people . . . they did the people of Saskatchewan proud, Mr. Speaker. They did us all proud with their very good behaviour. They were wonderful ambassadors for the people of this province.

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — That's one of the things that I wanted to share with you. When you hear, you know, negative things about young people, I think we have to focus on the positive and remember that we have very well-developed, very good and positive young people. And I couldn't help, Mr. Speaker, looking at that group of 300 young ambassadors from this province, many miles away from home, many miles away from their relatives and supervisors and so forth, that still did us proud by their behaviour. And I couldn't help but think that our future is in very good hands, Mr. Speaker.

We have all worked together to forge a path for growth and prosperity in our communities that will serve our children and grandchildren. That will be our legacy. And I think it will be a proud one.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our government's financial record and the agenda that we have developed which will strengthen our communities in the decade ahead. And for all these reasons and others that there's not enough time to expound upon today, I will be very pleased and proud to stand in my place and support the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to counter some of the comments that have been made today to do with the budget. But I did find a couple of bright spots and I should start by saying that here today.

When the PST is lowered by 1 per cent I think we can only commend that. That's the direction that we should be taking in this province, I think the problem being that it didn't go near far enough. One per cent is great in the PST but I would have certainly liked to see some relief when it comes to income tax.

We have many blue-collar workers out there that carry lunch

pails to work that could have used the break. We have every person in this province that pays income tax, could have used that break. The 1 per cent PST will help but it certainly won't start this economy rolling like we need it to roll as it is in Manitoba and Alberta, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I just might take a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we've heard a little rhetoric here this afternoon about how wonderful this budget is, what it's going to do for our province is probably minimal compared to this.

And it's the write-up, and I believe it's in the *Leader-Post*, Monday, March 29, and the headline is, "Manitoba economy appears to be on a roll." And I'm sorry to say that's not the same as in Saskatchewan, but I'd just like to make a couple of quotes out of here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they're talking about Manitoba.

The province has the lowest unemployment rate in the country and Winnipeg has among the lowest of the major cities, despite its poor ranking in the recent *Globe and Mail* story on the best places to work in Canada.

So there's a good and a bad with the city of Winnipeg, but the good is that it's the lowest unemployment rate in the country in Manitoba.

It goes on to say that:

"There's certainly truth to the unemployment numbers; the ranking things are inevitably partial," says (Mr.) Cameron, a University of Manitoba professor.

Goes on to say:

"For three years in a row Manitoba's economy has outperformed the national average . . ."

This same province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we compare Saskatchewan to, who has less of everything than Saskatchewan does, and yet the headline says, "Manitoba economy appears to be on a roll."

It also goes on to say that:

"The diversification of Manitoba's economy will help to stave off the negative effects of resource sector weakness," predicts Tim O'Neill, chief economist of the Bank of Montreal.

(1615)

Then I find that amazing, Mr. Speaker. What we hear the excuses across is that, well we blame the past government, we blame the federal government, and now we blame our own economy and agriculture for drawing us down. And yet Manitoba's got that same farm economy. They don't have potash, they don't have near the oil, they don't have near the resources we do in Saskatchewan; somehow they're on a roll.

And guess what? Number one, they're trying to lower their taxes in Manitoba. In Alberta that roll is steamrolling because they're really lowering their taxes. They're outdoing

Saskatchewan by leaps and bounds.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't seem to be able to learn in this province that lower taxes will get the economy of this province rolling. Not high taxes, not the second highest in the country, but lowering the taxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's the only thing that's going to help this economy get out of the doldrums in Saskatchewan and try and somewhat compete with our neighbours to the east and to the west.

It goes on to say here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is I believe from the Premier of Manitoba:

Things are so good that Premier Gary Filmon recently praised Ottawa for essentially giving Manitoba less money.

Now isn't that a contradiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for what the Minister of Economic Development made a couple of years ago when she said, we don't want to get off . . . do any better in this province because we've have to go off the dole; we'd get less assistance from Ottawa.

It's an amazing comment for a minister to make of a government, that we want to stay on the welfare roll so we don't want to do any better in this province. Amazing. When our neighbouring Premier said, wouldn't it be great to get off the dole?

He goes on to say:

"Our strong revenue growth has resulted in reduced equalization payments from the federal government and I think that's a good thing."

Well I do too. I wish the Minister of Economic Development shared our concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk about this budget and agriculture and it probably won't take long. Because in this budget there was absolutely nothing for agriculture. Nothing for our farmers in Saskatchewan.

And for some strange reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hundred and forty million dollars of farm aid was taken out of the '98-99 budget. Now I don't know if that was to play games come election year now, so we could add a little more to the goody pot for those special interest groups and once again neglect agriculture. That's probably what it must be. But it definitely didn't put anything in this for agriculture. Absolutely nothing.

We go to the farm aid package which we all know, the member for Indian Head over there who is a farmer and knows as well as I do that the farm aid package is inadequate; it's conglomerated with details. Even now we hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that accountants are saying, the same accountants that may have to charge 800 to a thousand dollars to administer this program for the farmer, figure it out for him, are saying, we don't even want to touch it because it's so detailed that even we can't understand the program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we talk about crop insurance, I notice in the budget for this year, \$5 million less for crop insurance. Now



isn't that funny. The Minister of Agriculture has said we're reducing the premiums. What he neglected to say is at the same time they're reducing the coverage. And at the same time you're going to reduce the number of people in crop insurance, because it was close to a useless program before, if you reduce the coverage, it becomes a neutral program that will do absolutely nothing for the farming community.

Administration costs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a pet peeve of mine — one of the few things that was raised in the agriculture budget. Administration costs have gone up.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you might have seen this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, *Western Producer*, March 25, '99, part of the AIDA (Agricultural Insurance Disaster Assistance) program. And this is federal government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I thought you might find it interesting.

It's an ad for claims officers. I think they're asking for 30 claims officers to come out and deal with the farmers who naturally don't understand the program because it's about 25 pages of bureaucratic nightmare. They also go on here, after the 30 claims officers they want a manager of claims services.

And the wages, I thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be interesting to the farming community out there. For the claims officers they're offering \$38,809 to \$41,949. Now that may not sound like a big wage to many in the province. But to every one of our farmers out there that are struggling to survive, they would gladly take that wage at the end of the year, gladly pay taxes on it, and the part they take home would look very good compared to what they're taking home now, especially the ones that are worried about going under.

The wage offered for the manager of claims services is \$64,457 to \$69,765 per annum — another wage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that probably four or five farm families could live on. And we're wasting that money on a bureaucracy, on an already watered-down program that is bureaucratically driven, made up by bureaucrats in Ottawa who've probably never seen the east or the west end of a cow, have never been on a farm, and have no idea what kind of a program would be good for farmers. And this is what we see happening here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another thing that I think is lacking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in agriculture in this budget is once again, do we see a long-term strategy and a long-term program for agriculture in Saskatchewan? Since the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program was cancelled in 1992 I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta had it for another couple of years, we've been promised by this government that we will see a long-term plan, a long-term aid plan in case of emergencies. And we have saw nothing yet.

Once again there's absolutely nothing for agriculture. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what scares me the most is that this year has the potential to be far worse than last year. And are we going to be caught, or our farmers out there that are already in trouble, going to be caught under an AIDA program that is definitely insufficient to provide the funding help they may need this year?

Now remember, we took money out of crop insurance, so we're

not prepared there. There's going to be less money there. And you know, I guess what we could say if there's a big problem in crop insurance, well the government will bail them out. But I don't know how they plan on doing that when they only have an \$8 million surplus. That doesn't do much bailing out. And crop insurance is only one area that may need help, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Finance minister said in his comments when he was presenting the budget, and I found this really noticeable, that we are standing behind our farmers. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would think he'd be glad to be behind them because if he was in front of most of them right now he'd probably be ran over, because he's not a very popular camper out there in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to go on to talk about municipal government. And the Minister of Municipal Affairs just spoke and made some interesting comments, but I notice the one thing here I think municipal governments would kind of get a little chuckle out of because what we see is smoke and mirrors coming out of the minister once again.

She had made the statement that this year we're going to put \$4.1 million into policing costs. And I commend her for that. That's good. I think we were all happy to see that last year. But she's announced it as if this is new money compared to last year. Well last year was a million for three months. Now if my mathematics works right, four times that would be \$4 million. So we announced absolutely nothing new. We announced the same program over again that we had last year.

So I don't think that's going to impress too many municipalities out there that already knew what they were getting.

What we did see in the budget for this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is \$10 million for municipal government. Now let's see how that's watered down because I think we're seeing a little smoke and mirrors here again. And the minister today said seven and a half million for urban government, 2 million for rural municipalities, and a half a million — if I heard her right — for northern Saskatchewan. Well that's all well and good, but now that's cost shared, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now I am a farmer and I'm a past reeve, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and a number of farmers on that side are MLAs. Think about that. We're going to put money into rural municipal government — \$2 million, which is a drop in the bucket, isn't going to build many roads — but we won't do that unless they cost share.

Now how do they cost share? They cost share by raising their tax load because that government has cut municipal government to the bone since 1991. They have nowhere else. They have no extra money sitting there. They have one choice. To raise their share of the 2 million that's going to rural Saskatchewan for roads, they've got to put their mill rate up. The last thing that farmers in trouble out there in Saskatchewan need is their municipal taxes raised.

Now we can go on about that forever, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and see all the problems that's going to cause. But that's not the end of the it. What we saw . . . And one of the members here today

was bragging about all the money they put into education this year.

Well I believe if I'm reading the numbers right, they put about \$13 million more into education. That works out to about half of what the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) was asking for just to run the status quo. Just to stay exactly where they were, I believe they needed about \$22 million.

What does that tell us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for our farmers out there in Saskatchewan. It tells me one thing. Another . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Another tax hike.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — The member from Moosomin's right — another tax hike. Because the school divisions have no choice but to pass it on. How do they pass it on? They raise their mill rate; pass it on to the local farmer out there who's struggling to make ends meet.

Now he's not only already in trouble; now he's got more taxes to pay. And I don't think 1 per cent PST is going to anywhere counteract what the local taxes are going to jump out there when they have to do their budgets right away and wait for this budget to come through and see what it's really going to do for them. I think they're going to be totally, totally disappointed.

In fact, I think a comment made the other day by Sinclair Harrison, the president of SARM, who said it's a dark day for rural Saskatchewan. I think he would get a lot of support out in rural Saskatchewan for that comment. What also adds — and I'm sure the Minister of Municipal Government would agree with me — is that reassessment has already shifted the education tax, a good degree of it, from small communities to farmland. And that is also working through the system to jump our taxes out in rural Saskatchewan.

So it's just another one of those things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's costing thousands of dollars for our farmers out there, picking up a bigger part of the load. And the funny part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you think about it, is that out in my area, and I think many areas in this province, we have less kids out there that are going to school, because the population's dropping; we have less people to pick up the tab. And yet we're asking them to pay a bigger share of our education tax. Somewhere we've gone wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's no wonder that SARM continually lobbies to get education tax off the property.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to just talk for a minute on balanced budget. Because I talked about smoke and mirrors here before and I think, man, this is the winner of them all. Let's go back to last year's budget.

Now I'm not a mathematician but I don't think you have to be to take a look at these numbers and figure this out. Last year, if I read the numbers right, actually the government was short about \$350 million, if they count just what they took in in general revenue to what they spent. It looked to me like they'd spent about 350 million more than they took in.

They sold the upgrader. The balance of that money came in to cover them. There's a number of things — Liquor and Gaming

money, extra money they pulled out of there that wasn't budgeted. So really when you think about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a deficit budget. That's not a balanced budget. It's smoke and mirrors to tell the public . . . well, what? — this is the sixth budget we've balanced? Well you didn't balance last year's.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's take a look at this year's. Unless I'm not reading it right, we have another deficit budget, because we're taking about 200 million more out of Liquor and Gaming that will come in this year. Well, now how does that work? If you're spending more than you have coming in in general revenue at the end of it, you're not balancing your books. I mean, you can tell the public as many times as you want you're balancing the books. When it comes right down to it, you're not being honest with the public.

Tell them the way it is. We're running a deficit of at least a couple of hundred million dollars. What you're telling them is, we have a big surplus of \$8 million. Well that's going to go a long way if you go over budget again this year like you did last year — \$350 million. That would mean to me you'd be about another 342 million short.

So you can brag all you want around this province, but it's not going to fly. People are not going to believe you.

We had a rainy day fund in this province, liquor and gaming money. After this budget, what's going to be left in that? I believe \$89 million. Where did that money go from, disappear . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the Minister of Municipal Government says you don't need a rainy day fund. What do you need that for, we just spent that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You did.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they spent pretty well all the rainy day fund. Now they're admitting it. It was 400-and-some million and now it's pretty well gone. Now where did it go if you've been balancing the books? You haven't been balancing the books.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, this hasn't just happened this year. Go back about three years when we had the Cameco shares. And we used that to kind of bail . . . they used that to bail themselves out. Then I believe it was Wascana Energy. Now this year we're using the upgrader money.

And then we go on and in every speech over there we hear about this fantastic debt that was built up. Well let's talk about that. And I agree with them. There is a tremendous debt built up in the 80s in this province. Didn't start just then, though. There happened to be a little bit in the Blakeney era after we'd gone through the best times that this province had ever seen. There was a large, possibly — what? — 5 billion, 8 billion? We don't know. It's somewhere in there.

(1630)

Let's talk about the debt when you people came to power. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this government came to power — and I'm not talking about the debt they like to talk about now; I like to talk about the combined debt: unfunded pensions, every part of the debt, the Crowns, the revenue — everything added

together, when that government came to power, was \$17.5 billion. Do you know what it is today? Today it's \$18.5 billion. That's a billion dollars more than it was seven years ago when you people came to power.

What you do is you use the numbers that are convenient for the cause. And what you should do, what you should do is actually tell the public the truth. Smoke and mirrors doesn't do it. The people of Saskatchewan have paid the second highest taxes in this country, and I think they deserve to be told the exact truth out there of what is really going on with our economy, with the funds in this province, and smoke and mirrors doesn't do it.

Another myth that I think we heard in the budget the other day was the same one that we've been hearing thrown around quite a bit lately — it must be an election coming — 30,000 jobs. Now I believe if I remember right that was a promise made a number of years ago by that government over there. We're going to create 30,000 jobs, and it's an election year. So I guess the feeling over there was, we better tell the public once again we created them jobs. It doesn't matter whether we did it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just tell them. They'll believe us. That same old myth. Trust me. Well I don't think that one's going to fly.

January of last year to January of this year Saskatchewan lost 4,900 jobs. Now if you've created all these jobs how many did you lose then? Because if my figuring works out right you've might have created — I'll give you the benefit of the doubt — about 20, 21,000 jobs over that period. That looks to me to be 9 or 10,000 short. Once again, we have a little bit of problem with numbers over there.

It's very familiar to the problem they have in BC (British Columbia) and that happens to be also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an NDP government. They have a lot of problems out there. Every time they go to talk about their balanced budget it seems to get away on them.

See out in BC, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they also don't have a balanced budget. Except out there it sneaks out on them. I think they were going to have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a deficit of — what? — \$95 million? And then Mr. Clark now has finally come out with that it's closer to 500 million. There're some similarities between BC and Saskatchewan. In fact there's more and more all the time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to touch on just briefly on health care because I know my counterpart from Cannington and others will be talking on it. But I just wonder. We talk about we're putting in, I believe it was 1.72 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year. This year we're putting in \$1.9 billion. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's neglected . . . And I compliment the government for doing this. If we see it end up in health care, that's fine. But what they're neglecting to tell the public in Saskatchewan is — and I think a lot of the public already realize this — is that a good part of that is federal money. That's not all out of the government revenues of Saskatchewan.

I think we can thank Mr. Chrétien and the federal government. I think we can thank them very much for this because it's money badly needed in health care, but it's helping bail this government out of their mismanagement.

I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we see some of this money get out there. We're told that it's going to go for front-line workers, for nurses, other front-line workers, LPNs, (licensed practical nurse) and people like that.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out in my area I think the biggest problem is there's just not nurses here. We closed all these hospitals. The government closed — what? — 53 hospitals. You know, it was like the member said across there; he was talking about Saskatchewan Party today and saying, zap! Well, I would say zap over there to 53 hospitals.

Now what we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Associate Minister of Health saying, well she said, the Saskatchewan Party really is deceiving the public because it's not 36 hospitals that are going to close, it's more like 13 to 15. Well it might be around 14.

Well I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that 14 even is far too many hospitals to lose in rural Saskatchewan. I honestly believe . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — We won't have any left.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Yes, we won't have any left. Pretty soon we won't have to worry about you closing any more — you'll have closed them all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I honestly believe that 36 hospitals that they're talking about closing that's going around, I don't think that was supposed to leak out before the election. Because I remember in '91, I can never remember hearing one word about a hospital going to close after the election. Not one word out of those people's lips on the other side was about we'll close any hospital. So when I hear rumours about 36 more hospitals closing, it really scares me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because with this government, it always seems to come true when it's to losing things in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to speak for a moment — and I haven't seen anything and I hope some of the health care funding will end up for this — but the renal dialysis unit in Yorkton, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we have a unit, but because of lack of funding it isn't up and running full speed; it's only running part time. The people are there, they're trained to run it, but guess what? Through lack of funding they can only work part-time on the renal dialysis unit.

So in my area, the member for Canora's area, the member from Moosomin's area, all around that — Melville, the member for Melville's area, Mr. Deputy Speaker — we all have people who would go to Yorkton, use the Yorkton renal dialysis unit. But because of our two-tier health system in Saskatchewan, 20 out of the 28 right now have to drive to Regina.

Now something's wrong with this picture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we can afford to run the unit in Regina, why can't we transfer this money to Yorkton to the East Central Health District and run it out there? But no, because this government wants everything in the city of Regina and Saskatoon, that isn't even being considered. Well I hope when this new money for health care comes into being, that we see something addressing the issue with the renal dialysis in the East Central Health District.

I would also like to see too . . . and by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, speaking of the East Central Health District, I think they would like to see some of the money address the \$13 million debt they have out there — \$3 million deficit again this year built up because of the funding of this government and the cutbacks to the health districts. And then at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we turn around and blame the health boards for the decisions that are made out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another area that we keep getting complaints about, and the cost is rising, is ambulance costs. I think the member for Canora brought an issue the other day that . . . about transferring people from the city hospitals back out to our areas, which there's nothing wrong with; but when you're from rural Saskatchewan it's a cost that you pay that people in the cities don't have to pay. They have the luxury of not picking that up, and once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're talking two-tier health — whether you live in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan.

So it's an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I hope we can address. Some of the bills for ambulance costs, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and I'm sure it's been brought to your attention, you're an rural MLA — up to 1,000, \$1,100, I've had in my area. Ambulance rides into the city here, and that's just an example of some of the things we have to pay for that are taken for granted in the city of Regina.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, one of the members across in his speech earlier said that he's just amazed. This is just a fantastic budget, he's impressed. Well I looked around in the last couple of days in the paper, and everywhere else, checked in my constituency and I tried to find somebody out there that's really happy with this budget.

And I read, the chamber of commerce— are they happy with this budget? No. Taxpayers' association, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are they impressed with this budget? No. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, are they happy? No. SARM — “black day for rural Saskatchewan” — Sinclair Harrison, are they happy? No. The nurses even, all over Saskatchewan, are they happy what they saw in the budget? No. Farmers, farmers a good example, are the farmers happy? Absolutely not.

And then this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read a poll done by Leader-Star Services in the city here. And it's a poll where you phone in and actually it represents taxpayers of this province saying, are we happy, are we not with this budget? And the funny part was — and this was in the city of Regina, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but you could phone in from outside — 48 per cent said they liked the budget, but 52 per cent didn't. That's right here, heartland of NDP country, and you still don't like the budget.

Now I looked hard to find somebody that liked the budget. Well the members opposite are told they will like it or else, so I could understand that. But the Leader of the Third Party, it's amazing, Jim Melenchuk says this is a pretty good budget except we should sell some of the Crowns.

Now that's amazing coming out of the Leader of the Third Party. I mean you can't have it both ways. He's going to bring

in lots of legislation pertaining to the unions and now he's turned around and he selling the Crowns out from under them. I wonder how he's going to explain that to those people when he's looking for their vote in this election.

I also find it's really interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to the Associate Minister of Health's son. And he's speaking on behalf of university students, and he's not happy with the budget. And if that wasn't enough, the Minister of Economic Development's husband, president of the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) said he is not happy with the budget.

So you know what? There's about 40 members over there that seem to be happy with the budget, and Mr. Melenchuk is happy with the budget. That's less than 50 out of a million people that are impressed with this budget. I don't think I'd be going to the polls with that one, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another area that's really important out in the Saltcoats constituency and many other rural constituencies is highways. And the member from Moosomin, our highways critic, is going to talk in-depth on this.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard the minister for Carrot River when he was Highways minister make the big announcement, we're going to put 250 million a year into highways. And I find that an amazing comment, considering you put 208 million in — the government did — 218 million last year, I believe, and now this year we're putting in, what, 235.

Well once again, if I use my calculator, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd say, in the first three years that government is about \$80 million short of its commitment to highways. Now the minister, the Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of Finance said, well — I think I heard him right — he said, well we're catch her up in the last year. We'll fix her up in the tenth year.

Well once again, if my numbers work out right, he's going to need about \$600 million in the last year. I guess the thing that's going to save him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that government will be over here in opposition, if they survive the election at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will have to honour their commitment, and we'll honour it with a lot more than they had promised to put in originally because we know how bad highways are in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the members opposite would like me to go on — they're totally impressed with my speech — but because other members would like to speak, I'll leave it like that. But as you can see, I'm not impressed with the budget, and I know all my constituents are not impressed with the budget. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Ms. Lorje:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want this to be a quiet, calm, measured response to the budget. I am not in a particularly pugilistic mood today. So I am going to attempt as much as possible to ignore the cackling and jeering from the members opposite.

I am very pleased though that there is a full House here today and I hope that they will listen spellbound to my every word.

But I'm not really expecting it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If they choose to remain silent or even to leave, that's quite fine by me. But what I want to do is just give a very calm, measured, quiet response to the budget. And I will probably be speaking until well past the hour of 5 o'clock. So I look forward to having all the members coming back at 7 o'clock so that we can continue this very thrilling debate.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I wish to do for the next 15 minutes or so, and then probably for half an hour or longer after 7 o'clock, when I'm sure all the members opposite will be back to listen and to engage in the debate that this House is so famous for, what I want to do is first of all start out my speech by reflecting back a bit on the last eight years. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have had two, almost two full terms as a government under the Premier, the member from Riversdale. And I believe that we have done many things of which we can be justly proud, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we were elected in 1991, none of us really I think realized the true awesomeness nor awfulness of the situation. We knew that the previous government had been busy selling off or giving away the assets of the people of Saskatchewan. We knew that they had been on a spending spree and mortgaging our children's future. What we did not realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the extent of that mortgage of the future. We thought perhaps it was our children's future they'd mortgaged. What we discovered, was that they had mortgaged not only our children's future but our grandchildren's future.

(1645)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I decided to run for the New Democrats, having spent 12 years on city council. And as I said to people as I went door-to-door in '91 knowing that it would be a difficult situation, people said to me well what are you promising us? What will you do for us?

And I said it's fairly simple, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If there's one thing I've learned from 12 years on Saskatoon city council it's the ability to say no, and that is what is needed now. We need to know how to say no to the unrealistic expectations that the former government, the Devine government, had created in the electorate.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we took office we discovered a horrendous debt, almost \$15 billion.

**An Hon. Member:** — How much?

**Ms. Lorje:** — Fifteen billion dollars. That is on the government side and the Crown side — \$15 billion debt in a province of one million people. One million people who are good, responsible, accountable citizens; people who pride themselves on their willingness to pay their bills, on their ability not to be in debt.

Instead what did we have? Profligate governments that had basically spent us into the poor house, mortgaged our children's future and our grandchildren's future. The government was running deficits — \$1.2 billion deficit when we took office. And what were we going to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We were dealing with debt, deficits, and disappointments. Because by that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan

were thoroughly fed up, thoroughly tired of the way government was being run.

So we knew that we had to take firm and hard action. We did. And I have to say that the reason we were able to take that firm and hard action was because of the firm resolve, the moral purpose, of the people of Saskatchewan.

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

**Ms. Lorje:** — The people of Saskatchewan knew that something firm had to be done. They knew that things had to change. They knew that drastic measures were called for.

In our caucus in November and December of '91, January-February '92, the debate never was should we do anything about the deficit. The debate was always how quickly should we tackle the deficit because we were looking at a \$1.2 billion deficit, and we knew that that could cause major problems to the Saskatchewan economy if we reversed it like that — overnight.

So we had several spirited arguments and debates about how quickly we should bring down the deficit. And I believe in our first year we chose that we would bring it down to \$600 million. And then we further decreased it the next year, and the next year, until we were finally able to bring in a balanced budget.

And I am very pleased and proud of the Finance minister of the day when she was able to stand in this House and announce that Saskatchewan would be the first, the very first provincial government in the whole Dominion of Canada to bring in a balanced budget. That was a red-letter day, a banner day, for the people of Saskatchewan.

We had all pulled together — the million souls that make up this province — with a sense of common purpose. We pulled together the Saskatchewan way so that we would have a future for our children and our grandchildren.

The budget was balanced five years ago, and I am very proud that the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld, the current Finance minister, just on Friday in this House was able to bring in the sixth consecutive balanced budget in this province.

What we find is that we can be very proud of this budget. We can be proud of the modest tax cuts. We can be proud of the increased spending on health care, education, and highways. And we can have pride most of all, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that we are continuing in debt repayment so that our children and our grandchildren will be able to live without the burden of the debt from the '80s.

Now the budget that we're dealing with and debating here today in this House, Mr. Speaker, is a good one. But the opposition is trying to convince people to jump back into that individualistic, it's-all-me, I'm-all-right-Jack, now-the-rest-of-you-shove-off-the-lifeboat mentality; trying to convince people that they should pit farmers against city people, university people against business people, and the list goes on.

They're playing divisive politics so that people will slide into

what we see in most of the rest of the jurisdictions in North America, this individualistic mentality. That all that counts is what's in it for me, and we don't care about a sense of collective purpose, a sense of commonality, a sense of co-operation, or collegiality.

They'd like everyone to ignore the very real and positive measures that are in this budget, measures like a 1 per cent drop in the sales tax. Now I suppose, if you look at it greedily and only on the basis of a few small individual purchases, you might say, well what's 1 per cent anyway? It doesn't matter — you know, I buy something for a hundred bucks, I'm not going to save very much. What do I care about a small drop in the sales tax?

But what we have to bear in mind is that that is a 33 per cent drop in sales tax since 1996. We are very significantly on the sales tax measures, Mr. Speaker, going in the right direction.

We also see a modest drop in income tax. And I . . . You know, the members opposite gloss over the income tax drop. They would have the people of Saskatchewan believe that the devil made us do it — a.k.a. (also known as) the federal government. But quite frankly we had choices, Mr. Speaker. We had choices, and we chose to bring in both a drop in sales tax, and a drop in income tax and I think that we should be proud of that. We don't have to run and hide and pretend that there aren't tax cut measures in this budget because there are significant tax cut measures. As well there is continued debt repayment.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I feel very passionately about this. We do have to pay off that debt. It is not acceptable from my point of view that we should simply let nature take its course and wait and continue with a modest debt repayment year by year so that maybe in 60, 70, or 80 years the province is debt-free. No, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that what we need to do is continue as we have been doing for these last five or six years, paying off debt as quickly as we can.

I would remind the members opposite — and I'm sure that they would like to forget this but here's another of those little inconvenient facts brought to you by a New Democrat government — this little inconvenient fact is that we have taken the \$15 billion debt . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The Chair welcomes the enthusiasm of hon. members for the subject of the debate, but also encourages all hon. members to put their remarks on the record at the appropriate time. And in the meantime, if you'll allow the hon. member from Saskatoon Southeast to continue in an unabated kind of way.

**Ms. Lorje:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate your intervention. The chirping from the members opposite was becoming . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Now, the hon. member recognizes of course, that it's just not appropriate to be commenting on the Chair's rulings and I'm sure that she'll just want to proceed with her debate.

**Ms. Lorje:** — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before you stood to your feet I was talking about an

inconvenient fact that the members opposite would like the people of Saskatchewan to ignore. And what is that inconvenient fact? That inconvenient fact is that this New Democratic government has reduced our debt from the \$15 billion that they handed us after they said, we've had our little circus parade and now somebody else can clean up after the circus animals; we have reduced it down to \$11.6 billion. We have made major strides in debt repayment.

We will continue that debt repayment, Mr. Speaker, because as we said when we went to the polls in 1995, what we plan to do, and what we sought endorsement from the people of Saskatchewan for, was a balanced approach to government. That balanced approach being, that when we have surpluses, one-third will go to debt repayment, one-third to tax reductions, and one-third to program enhancements.

And those program enhancements, Mr. Speaker, are the third part of this very fine budget. I already mentioned the tax decreases — the 1 per cent sales tax and the income tax together with various measures to stimulate jobs and the economy. I've mentioned very briefly the debt repayment.

We also, Mr. Speaker, are seeing increased spending for the things that matter to the people of Saskatchewan. Increased spending in health care, particularly to reduce waiting lists, to allow us to be prepared for the Year 2000 — that's next year, ooh, we have to get busy and get those computers programmed real quick. Money for improved cancer treatment for women's health care, and most particularly, money for the front line workers, the people who day to day see patients whether it's in hospitals or home care, see them at their worst and deal with them in the best possible manner.

Our health care workers in this province, Mr. Speaker, are to be commended. They do very, very difficult jobs and we all, I'm sure, on all side of the House, value the very fine work that they do. So I am particularly pleased that this budget does have increased money in it to recognize in a very tangible way the work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, as well as increased spending on health, we see increased spending on education and increased spending on highways. Now what are the things, if any of the members opposite do bother going out door to door, which I somehow doubt because I didn't sense a great deal of consultation on their part before they decided to jump ship and deep six the old Tory Party and jettison the Liberal Party. I don't know that they went out and did a lot of door to door consultation on this, this little manoeuvre.

But if they did bother to consult with their constituents, what do you think, Mr. Speaker, are the things that they would be saying? They would be saying — as we all full well know — please, we want increased spending in health care, increased spending in education, and increased spending on highways. Those three priorities are the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan, and they are the priorities in this very fine budget.

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

**Ms. Lorje:** — But what do the members do? Instead they're

going out and they're saying, oh ignore all that good stuff — ignore it all; it doesn't make a bit of difference. What we really want you to say is, ask your NDP MLA — that's fine.

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 o'clock p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.

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