

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 residents of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Whereas your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce the royalty taxes on new drilling in Saskatchewan to stop job loss and create new employment in this sector.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Oxbow, Estevan, and Alameda.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce the royalty taxes on new drilling in Saskatchewan to stop job loss and to create new employment in this sector.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, from the Carievale, Gainsborough areas in the very southeast of this province.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present to do with high taxes in Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Whereas your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reduce the royalty taxes on new drilling in Saskatchewan to stop job loss and create new employment in this sector.

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

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Gainsborough and Carievale.

I so present.

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

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.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitions I'm presenting today are signed by individuals from the Saskatoon-Osler area of the province.

I so present.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens demanding a review of parental rights. Their 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.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from Melfort.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition demanding a review of parental rights:

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.

Everyone that has signed this petition is from Melfort, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition from citizens of the province of Saskatchewan who would like to see a much better farm aid package put in place. 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 on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Cudworth.

I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present petitions in addition to the 22,000 signatures presented last fall. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the provincial and

federal governments to meet immediately and conclude a cost-sharing agreement on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that twinning of the remaining portions of the Trans-Canada in Saskatchewan can begin at the very earliest possible date.

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

These signatures are from petitioners in Moosomin, Rocanville, Wapella, as well as Fox Valley, Leader, and Mendham.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned about the state of our highway system in the province. 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.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed these petitions are from all across our province.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to present a petition. 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.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these petitions have been signed by people right across the province, from as far away as Canora, Mr. Speaker. We have some from Nipawin, we have some from Wakaw, Mr. Speaker; we have people in Regina; we have some from Moose Jaw, from Lafleche, Prince Albert. We have some from Moosomin, Rocanville, some from Springside. We have them from all across the land, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues here today in bringing forward more petitions to add to the thousands we already have brought forward. 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 Saskatchewan residents have a safe highway system that meets their needs.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these people that have signed the petition are from Saskatoon, Meadow Lake, Shaunavon, Ponteix, Val Marie, Mankota, Southey, and several of the constituencies of Watrous and P.A. (Prince Albert) and Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased once again to rise on behalf of some concerned citizens in Saskatchewan and present their petition. 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 of the people who have signed this petition today, Mr. Speaker, are from Prince Albert, and I'm pleased to present this on their behalf.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning, or this afternoon rather, the prayer for relief comes from the RM (rural municipality) of Marengo, 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 longer term plan of rural road restrictions reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as the new trucking regulation changes safety factors on these roads.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these folks come from the RM of Marengo, the communities of Flaxcombe as well as from Kindersley and Alsask. I'm happy to present them 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.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Thursday next move the first reading of the following Bill, The Negative Billing and Check-Off Options Regulation Act.

I give notice that I shall on Thursday next, move first reading of the following Bill, The Agricultural Implements Amendment

Act, 1999

And I give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I shall on day 17 ask the government the following question:

For the Ministers of Agriculture and Transportation: what is your response to the Southwest Transportation Planning Council's response to the Estey report, a copy is attached; do you support their claim that the rail companies are abandoning successive sections of a branch line without ever throwing off enough to make an economic short line; if so, what are you doing about it; do you support the SWTPC (Southwest Transportation Planning Council) request for a federal Act that would allow for arbitration of all disputes between short lines and the main line railways and do you support the SWTPC request of the federal government to allow the newly elected board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board to determine the changes to the board's mandate including its role in car allocation.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

For the Minister of Health: where on the list of this year's capital construction costs in your department is the hospital facility in Melville; and given its position, will it still be completed by 2001.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 17 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing: who has been appointed to the task force on municipal renewal; what criteria was used to determine who would be the best people to sit on this task force; how long will the task force be in place; and what monetary remuneration will members of the task force receive?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 27 grade 11 and 12 students sitting in the west gallery from Vibank, Saskatchewan.

They are accompanied by their teachers Paul Loewen and Melissa Hansford. And I look forward to meeting with these fine people after question period, and hopefully they will not have too difficult a question to ask me.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce today in your gallery eight people from the cancer patient lodge, and we'll be meeting after question period to visit and have a bit of discussion. And I'd like everybody in the Assembly to join me in wishing them well in their journey.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise in this House and introduce some very important people that are seated in your gallery. They are future replacement

MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), particularly for benches on the opposite side in the government south . . . side. I'd like to ask them to stand, please, as I introduce them.

Jim Stiglitz from Prince Albert, who is seeking the nomination for Prince Albert Northcote. He represents ward 4 as a councillor in Prince Albert City Council and works with young offenders at the Nisbet Youth Centre in P.A.

Mr. John Knight, Liberal nomination for Regina Victoria constituency, and that will happen on April 13. He operates his own business as a consultant trainer and is editor for *Gray Matters*, a publication for seniors. Being the year of the senior people, I appreciate that.

Tom Crosby — Tom is the Liberal candidate for Regina Sherwood and was an active member of the Save the Plains committee. He is a front-line health care worker and represents Ward 4 as an elected member of the Regina District Health Board. Vic Polsom, and Vic is from Last Mountain-Touchwood . . . candidate. He works for the Justice department as a fines option coordinator.

Rena Sinclair who was just nominated for Regina Qu'Appelle last night. She's an employment and training consultant.

Joanne Johnston, who is here also with her business manager, George Mitten. Joanne will represent the constituency of Cannington. Active in the community of Redvers where she has served on several local economic development hospital boards.

John Patterson. John is a Liberal candidate for the constituency of Regina Northeast. He works for the Department of Justice as a correctional service officer.

And one more gentlemen I'd like to welcome is a business administration student at the University of Regina, the campaign manager for the next MLA for Melfort-Tisdale constituency, Ken Magnus.

And to Leigh, welcome Leigh Spencer.

Welcome all of these people to the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Very noisy, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Leader of the Third Party in recognizing and welcoming councillor Jim Stiglitz as well. Jim is one of my constituents. He plays that role very well and I fully expect that he will continue that in the years to come.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join with the colleagues in the House in welcoming the Liberal candidates and would-be candidates to the Assembly today, particularly those from my constituency, Joanne and George. I've known them for a long time and I look forward to

them also carrying on as my constituents in the future.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Support for Children and Families

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this province there's a long and honoured tradition of caring for children's needs and helping people gain independence. This government has inspired the development of a National Child Benefit and established the Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children.

The action plan brings people together in an co-operative spirit to provide children with school lunches, school breakfasts — like the Neville Goss School in Lloydminster — immunization programs, and expanded community education.

Working together like this, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan way. Children in my constituency have benefited. And because this year's budget got increased funding of \$14 million, they will continue to grow, to benefit, to prosper, and to get the education that they need. Respecting our children's needs now helps build and maintain our collective futures.

But not only children need assistance. The government's building independence strategy helps low-income families get off the social assistance treadmill. Eighteen hundred families last year are off social assistance because of this program.

In the Lloydminster constituency, building independence has been just that. It helps build independent, strong families. It's one thing to talk about the family as an important social structure, but it's another to provide the supports that help families stay together.

I want to thank this government and my colleagues for providing that. Thank you.

Holy Week

Mr. McLane — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week marks Holy Week for Christians across the globe.

Holy Week is the most important period of the year for many Christian faiths. Christians celebrate Christ's triumphant entrance into the Holy City of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the Last Supper and his betrayal on Holy Thursday.

The most solemn of days is Good Friday, marking Christ's crucifixion. This is followed by a vigil and Easter Sunday celebrations marking Christ's conquest over death and love's triumph over sin.

This week reminds Christians that life is not without its troubles and difficulties. By facing those difficulties with love, we build courage. Courage in turn produces faith, and faith builds hope, and hope, Mr. Speaker, shall never disappoint.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to wish everyone a good Holy

Week and also an enjoyable and happy Easter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Red Coat Road and Rail Line in Weyburn-Big Muddy

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. Today I rise to extend my hearty congratulations and a message to Mr. Lonnie McKague, Mr. Kevin Clemenz, Mr. Ed House, and Mr. Roger Dahl.

These four people formed a committee that through endless hours of hard work, personal sacrifice, and good old Saskatchewan perseverance saw the formation of the Red Coat Road and Rail Ltd, a short-line railroad in Weyburn-Big Muddy.

The formation of the Red Coat Road and Rail comes after 10 long months of negotiations with Canadian Pacific Railway and will see the short line operating on some 115 kilometres of track between Pangman and Assiniboia that was slated for abandonment.

The Red Coat and Rail is an organization that consists of representatives of communities adjacent to the rail line including many rural municipalities, three villages and towns, Ogema, Pangman, and Viceroy. These projects are very dependent on local community support and we certainly have seen that here.

I want to say to the members present that I'm extremely pleased to see this valuable section of branch line saved and to remain in productive use for the communities along this stretch of rail.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool still has two elevators along this line, one in Pangman and one in Ogema. The bottom line is that by supporting the development of this short line, local producers are supporting the long-term viability of a portion of the grain handling system in place in Weyburn-Big Muddy.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I know that all members that are concerned with and live in rural Saskatchewan will join with me in congratulating all those involved in this project. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Signs of Spring

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This time of year, after a long, cold winter, we are all very anxious to see the arrival of spring and in fact signs of spring have occurred for a number of weeks already. The first birds to return were the horned larks back in February, and more recently bluebirds, robins, meadowlarks, marsh hawks, and a host of other birds are arriving on a daily basis. This is always very encouraging after a long, cold winter.

Also other signs of spring include the emergence of the rodents, such as the Richardson's ground squirrel which has been hibernating all winter. And plants begin to come to life as well: the crocus buds have come out on the south-facing hillsides already, and the pussy willows will soon be emerging from their

protective shells.

Well not only plants and animals and birds get excited about spring but people do as well. We are shedding our heavy winter clothes. We will probably be . . . A number of people will be into cleaning windows this weekend and raking yards as we get ready for spring. Also gardens is always an important time; many people are already purchasing bedding plants and of course the seeding of spring crops within a month's time will be underway.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is an encouraging time of year for all of us to get out and enjoy the great outdoors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gas Price Hike

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know all members enjoy the member from Indian Head-Milestone and his annual hymn to spring. Spring is a long time coming in Saskatchewan and we look forward to his special acknowledgement that it's on its way.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's another sign that spring is on its way, one that doesn't make us feel so good. And we all saw it last week if we visited the gas pumps, especially in Regina here. Yes, Mr. Speaker, up four cents a litre. What's amazing is that this price hike came barely 15 hours after the world crude prices went up. And if I remember correctly it took about 15 months after it dropped for the pump price to come down — a bit.

Now I know the meaning of that old seasonal phrase — spring forward, fall back; these prices really sprang forward. Now, Mr. Speaker, we know this pricing is not the responsibility of the individual retailer, their profit margin is rigidly controlled. We know it's not the provincial tax because it hasn't been raised in over six years. And the federal tax is the same. Could it be 8 per cent are independents today, compared to 22 per cent a few years ago? Or could it be the lack of enforcement of the Competitions Act by the federal Liberals.

For sure, Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't add up. What you want to bet though is that the member from Indian Head and I will be back with the signs of fall . . .

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

Remembrance Day Writing Competition Winner

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose in this House last session to congratulate a constituent of mine on winning a Remembrance Day writing competition. It will seem that my constituency has more than its fair share of young, talented writers. But I am again this year asking the Assembly to join with me in congratulating another winner of Remembrance Day competitions.

Last fall Kaeley Kindrachuk, an 11-year-old grade 5 student at Hafford Central School, participated in the Remembrance Day competition at her school. Her poem in the junior category placed first at the legion level and second at the zone level. Her

essay, also in the junior category, placed first at both the legion and the zone levels. Her essay has now placed first at the provincial level and has moved on into national level of competition. I know her parents Diana and John Kindrachuk of Speers, Saskatchewan are justifiable proud of Kaeley, as are her three sisters. Kaeley is the eldest of four girls in the Kindrachuk family.

Please join with me in congratulating Kaeley for winning the provincial Remembrance Day essay competition, and wishing her and her essay every success at the national competition. If any of the members of this legislature would be interested in using Kaeley's writing for the Remembrance Day ceremonies, that can be arranged.

I am not surprised by this young lady's exceptional talent as I am quite familiar with the ability of this family. Her aunt, Doreen Madwid, has worked at my constituency office for a number of years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Express

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to bring to the attention of this Assembly yet another achievement of a group of highly talented, well known, and well-loved Saskatchewan entertainers. I want to commend Saskatchewan Express on the recent launch of their CD (compact disc) called *Star Power*.

Saskatchewan Express has thrilled audiences throughout our province and beyond with their live performances for nearly 20 years. They've performed in cities, towns, and parks, at special events, conventions, and conferences. Now their *Star Power* CD will allow people to take this beloved group into their homes.

The youngest stars who join Saskatchewan Express come from urban and rural settings all across our province. It provides these young people with a chance to experience theatre and the performing arts before they become part of the professional entertainment world. And their talent does become part of the entertainment world. Many Saskatchewan Express performers go on to successful careers in performing arts in such places as Toronto, Florida, and New York.

Please join me in congratulating all members of Saskatchewan Express — past and present — for their hard work and dedication. A special thank you to Carol Gay Bell, the general manager and artistic director for Saskatchewan Express.

Anyone who has had the pleasure of seeing a Saskatchewan Express performance will agree that this group is indeed one aspect that helps make Saskatchewan the greatest place to live.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Charity Foundations

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. Madam

Minister, it appears that you also set up one of these charity foundations to run your constituency office shortly after the 1991 election. In November 1991, your NDP (New Democratic Party) campaign manager, Kelly Miner, and your business manager, Don Axtell, set up the Cathedral Area Property Association Corp. Will you confirm that this NDP charity foundation managed your constituency office using money from your MLA expense allowance?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a pattern by the opposition, where one day they come into the House and they make all kinds of wild allegations about a number of companies about which the government could not expect to have all of the details and therefore can't answer at that point in time. Subsequently, subsequently those people that are involved with those corporations make very clear explanations of what has happened, contrary, contrary to the very wild allegations that member is making.

Now, Mr. Speaker, yesterday that member also made wild allegations about a former member of the House, by the name of Bob Lyons, including he said that there was a house missing. I hope he's found the house, Mr. Speaker. And I hope he also had a chance to talk to Mr. Lyons to let Mr. Lyons know what it is that his concerns were because Mr. Lyons takes the point of view that as a private citizen he would like that member to go outside the Legislative Assembly to put forward his complaints and so that Mr. Lyons will have the opportunity of suing him if appropriate. In other words, put up or shut up! Will you do that, Mr. Member?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair will want to remind the minister to use language in the House and debate that is befitting of parliamentary discourse. We'll also want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that question period — Order! — that question period is a time for putting to ministers of the Crown questions that involve their responsibilities as ministers of the Crown. And I want to remind the hon. member that that is a criteria that must be met in order for questions to be acceptable.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions relate to the proper use of monies and I'll direct my question either to the Minister of Social Services or to the Minister of Labour, if they wish to answer the question.

And the question is very simple. Did the NDP charity foundation receive MLA expense allowance money and did it manage the constituency office?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding in that particular case that upon dissolution all the assets were transferred to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, Mr. Speaker. And further it indicated that the Legislative Assembly took the position that in their view all the payments that were made to the association that you talk about, Mr. Member, were in compliance with the directive governing constituency office and services, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for

that response. Now, Madam Minister, the 1992-93 financial statements shows a payment of \$1,748 to Regina Lake Centre. What does that payment represent? Is it a payment to your NDP constituency association?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, there he goes again. He's doing what he did in previous days — throws out all these allegations in the Legislative Assembly, throws them out, you know. Subsequently, subsequently we find that people are able to provide very clear explanations contrary to his wild allegations.

What this member's questioning shows, Mr. Speaker, is that particular political party finds itself in a mudhole, in a political mudhole. And they find that they can't get out and that the only thing that they can do is sling mud — sling mud, lots of mud, in the hopes that some of it will stick, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan should not be confused by this. What we see here is good old-fashioned pre-election mudslinging. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, Madam Minister, if this payment went to your NDP constituency association, I think you would have to agree that's an inappropriate use of taxpayers' money and it should be paid back.

Madam Minister, management companies were banned in June of 1993, yet this NDP charity foundation continued to operate and provide office management services until at least March of 1996 when it filed its final financial return.

Madam Minister, were you paying your MLA expense accounts to the Cathedral Area Property Association to act as a management company after June of 1993?

The Speaker: — Order, order. Before permitting the hon. minister to respond, again I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that in question period, questions, as I've said, must be put to ministers in respect of their departments for which they are responsible. It's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Order. Order. Order. Order.

Now the minister indicates he wishes to respond and I'll permit that, but I ask for all the members to be attentive to the rules of the House.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, for the last time this member, this member in my mind and I think in the public's mind is confusing some very legitimate questions about accounting, confusing those, confusing legitimate practices which are clearly explained after the fact — confusing those with practices that were endemic in that political party during the 1980s.

What were those practices, Mr. Speaker? Those practices amounted to stealing. And for that reason a number of their former members have gone to jail.

Now you ought not to confuse the two. There are legitimate questions as to accounting, Mr. Speaker. We have those all the time. God knows we debate those in the Legislative Assembly. But he ought not to confuse that with thievery, which is what

those members did during the 1980s, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Now the hon. minister recognizes that the accusations he makes is well beyond the bounds of what's permitted by parliamentary debate and I will ask that he will withdraw that remark and apologize to the House.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it was fraud; I guess it wasn't thievery. And my apologies to the House for using that word.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The minister knows that the standard that's acceptable is to simply withdraw without qualification and apologize to the House. And I'll ask the hon. minister to do that.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House for any comments that might give offence to the members.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier then. Mr. Premier, the Minister of Energy also had an NDP charity foundation acting as a management company. From 1986 to 1991, Pine to Prairie Management took in over \$130,000 of taxpayers' money from the expense accounts of the member for Prince Albert Carlton and the Minister of Energy.

This NDP charity foundation was run by the 1991 campaign manager, Don Cody. And once again, this NDP foundation was struck from the corporate registry in 1993 for failing to file financial returns. At that time it had \$1,800 in the bank and over \$5,000 in fixed assets. There is no record of where this money in assets wound up.

Mr. Premier, how did this company build up a surplus, which was against the rules? And Mr. Premier, why did this company simply stop filing financial statements as required by law? Where did the surplus go?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, isn't it refreshing that in Saskatchewan that anyone can go to the Department of Justice to the corporations branch and to be able to retrieve the kind of . . . to be able to retrieve the information that the member is bringing forward. That it's information that has been sent to the corporations branch in accordance with the laws of the province, and that anyone in the public can retrieve that information.

What a welcome departure that is, Mr. Speaker — a welcome departure from the practices in the 1980s where, if it wasn't for some happenstance bumbling across the safety deposit box, we might never have found out the total extent of the fraud which was committed by the Saskatchewan Tory Party in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Isn't it refreshing that we have this public information provided in a totally legal way, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, there's also some very strange entries on these financial statements. The 1989 statement shows \$23,000 spent on insurance, and nearly \$26,000 spent on advertising. That's a lot of money just to insure and advertise an MLA office. The foundation also failed to file a financial statement for 1988, which leaves about \$40,000 unaccounted for.

Mr. Premier, would you be prepared to release all the financial records of this NDP charity foundation to show that all the money was spent properly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, what we have been seeing, what we have been seeing, is that after the member makes his wild allegations in the Legislative Assembly and puts it forward as a statement of fact, we usually find that — he doesn't provide us the whole picture; he provides us part of the picture — but what we find that after he makes all these allegations, the spokespeople for these corporations provide very clear explanations of what took place. And it's anything, it's anything but the picture that the member tries to paint for us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again this is a very sorry party that's stuck in a very big mudhole. Their only hope for getting out of that mudhole is to take some of that mud and start slinging it, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, good old-fashioned pre-election mudslinging — that's what this is, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Financial Support for Farmers

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

Whether you know it or not, Mr. Minister, there's a serious crisis on the farm in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Party has been warning your government since last May about this problem. And what was your response, Mr. Minister? You did nothing. You said there was no farm crisis at that point.

Then you refused to negotiate with Ottawa on a farm aid package. And then one day last January you declared the crisis over. And then after refusing to negotiate, you bought into a federal farm aid program that won't do a single thing for farmers.

Mr. Minister, farmers need financial assistance right now or they won't be able to put a crop in this spring. What specific things are you doing to ensure farmers will get help before seeding?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, this is quite interesting. The opposition who for weeks and weeks just said, quit trying to get the best deal for Saskatchewan farmers and taxpayers, just put your money in, just put your money, I mean . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They want to deny it? I've got the clippings? They may want to deny it, Mr. Speaker, but it's in the press. It's recorded.

Your leader just said, Mr. Hermanson said, just put your money in. I've got the clips. I've read them in this House before. And now to stand up and say this thing's no good. It's nice to play both sides of the fence when you're in opposition. Course if you're going to be in . . . they'll be in opposition forever so they might as well get used to that.

Mr. Speaker, this government, this government worked to get the best deal for Saskatchewan farmers and taxpayers. We did that in light of all the opposition saying just put your money in. I'll tell you they have to answer to Saskatchewan producers because we put our money in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Highway Maintenance

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have some serious questions on behalf of people's priorities of this province. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said yesterday the state of our roads is, and I quote, "very good."

I would think this came as quite a shock to the member from Athabasca, who once said in this House that, and I quote: "Our roads have been called everything from Grant Devine's golf course to a bombing range."

While the Minister of Municipal Affairs thinks roads are in very good shape, the member from Athabasca, once again on May 27, 1998 said that our roads are in, quote, "very poor shape."

However the minister did say in general, I take that to mean that even she admits that there are really brutal roads out there. Can the minister tell us what roads she feels are not in very good shape? What roads she feels are not in very good shape. What roads are the greatest threats to public safety?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the question from the member opposite because when he talks about the member from Athabasca, we're going to be actually going up there on Thursday to do a ribbon cutting of a new road that is in very good shape, which is Wollaston Lake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — And we'll certainly, certainly be announcing some other good work that we will be doing in the North, as we will be doing right across this province.

But I must say from the members opposite, from the Liberals when they did ask the other day like, how many dollars does it take to fix a road or to improve a road, no doubt they don't know. Because what we get from the federal government is zero dollars, and that's what they think fixes roads in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, my understanding is it's the NDP government that's responsible to the people of this province, and they're the ones responsible. And I wonder if the minister going to Athabasca will be flying or driving, because if she drives she will have an experience.

The Liberal Party is today saying we will redirect the fuel tax back to where it should be, on our roads. We're not alone in believing this should happen either. Besides the thousands of people in Saskatchewan, the member for Coronation Park once felt the same way too, quote: "I always thought that a gas tax was something of a user pay system. If you've introduced wear and tear on the highways and roads, you pay for a little bit each time you fuel up."

Well clearly this is not happening under this scenario. The reintroduction of the gas tax was nothing more than a tax grab. And then the member asked, "So to what purpose is a road tax if it isn't going directly into the roads?"

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the same question that the member for Coronation Park asked on May 16, 1988. So what is the purpose of the road tax if it isn't going to all the roads? Is it like he said, just a tax grab?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I'm interested in this question because it was prefaced on the occasion of the unveiling of something called Priorities 1999 election platform, by the remnants of the Liberal Party. Now they're applauding and, Mr. Speaker, I've not had an opportunity to do a complete analysis of this but I will be doing it in the next few days.

They will have \$350 million a year more in expenditures. Oh yes — 195 in Health, 135 in Highways on your road tax question, 22 million on scholarships; that totals to 350 million. And where are they going to get the money from? Even by their own press release, no more than \$70 million by cutting travel, advertising. You can do away with the entire Legislative Assembly and you would save all of 6 or \$7 million.

Mr. Speaker, that question and this so-called platform has got about as much weight as the Tory platform has.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, We're talking about priorities and obviously the Premier does not really care for the priorities of the people of this province. The NDP government claims that it will finish twinning the Highway 1 by the year 2012. With 275 kilometres needing to be twinned that means this government plans to only do about 19 kilometres a year. That's pathetic and the Premier and the minister knows that.

Over two years there were seven deaths on that part of the highway, on the ones that aren't twinned. That means for every 40 kilometres of un-twinning piece of highway there has been a fatality. Often we hear of accidents on those stretches that involve head-on, head-on collisions, accidents that would be prevented if the highways were twinned. Because the minister is waiting 12 years to finish the job, more lives will be lost that could be saved if the minister increased the twinning of the highways.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister content to put lives at risk just because her government doesn't see twinning highways as a priority?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I will refrain from responding to the, I think, rather inflammatory and unfortunate

language about putting risks and people lives at risk based on that question, but I will make one point. In the United States of America on many bridges and overpasses and some selected roads that are interstate, Washington contributes 90 cents to the cost of that road.

In Canada, Ottawa, those Liberals, that rump third-party group which is destined for oblivion after the next election, they get zero, Mr. Speaker, zero. There's not a penny from Mr. Chrétien's government, not a penny to help out twinning out interprovincial roads or trans-Canada highways. You tell us why the Liberals don't give money for highways to save lives.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier keeps talking about rumps. Well that's about all that the people of this province get from the NDP government is their rumps. Mr. Speaker, it's amazing what eight years in government can do to New Democratic principles. It's amazing that once a vocal NDP MLA for Highways now cowers in the corner not saying one peep about our roads.

Mr. Speaker, this is quite different than what the member for Regina Coronation Park used to say in this House. On May 16, 1988 the member for Coronation Park stood in this House and said, and I quote:

We desperately need things to be happening in terms of highways. I very much urge you to get on with twinning of highways.

The member said we desperately need something to happen.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister, why was twinning Highway No. 1 so urgent 10 years ago but all of a sudden because the NDP are in power it's no longer a priority?

An Hon. Member: — No, Channel Lake became a priority.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, \$2.5 billion for the Liberals is nothing — \$2.5 billion. Saskatchewan taxpayers alone is nothing. I want the Leader of the Liberal Party at the end of question period to table to this House, or out there to the press gallery, your letters to Prime Minister Chrétien or to David Collette asking for federal contributions.

Table the faxes, table the e-mails — while he's waving them. Table them. And if they're tabled and written — keep waving them — then tell the press how come they don't even listen to you, the Liberals in Ottawa there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Health Care

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Finance or to the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: — Order! Order, order. Order. I'll ask for the

co-operation of members on both sides of the House. Order. Order. I'll ask all hon. members . . .

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, as people are well aware in this province, recently the Premier of Alberta, Mr. Klein, set a precedent by firing an entire health board because they were over their spending budget for the year.

I want to ask the direct question to the ministers: do you plan to adopt this type of policy in Saskatchewan? Do you plan to fire the Regina Health District Board that has run the huge deficit? And will the new money from the Health budget be going to pay off Regina Health District's debt?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the member may know, last Friday in the provincial budget, the Government of Saskatchewan made a \$195 million additional commitment to the people of this province when it comes to health spending. Mr. Speaker, that is an increase of over 11 per cent. And in this next fiscal year the people of this province, through their tax system, will pay \$1.9 billion — the largest amount of money this province has ever spent in its history — on health services that are delivered to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I've said in this legislature before and I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker, that 28,000 people every year in the province of Saskatchewan receive home care services. Mr. Speaker, every year 800,000 days of in-patient hospital care in this province; every day . . . or every year 650,000 visits to an emergency room, 4,600,000 visits to a physician, and 925,000 visits to a specialist; Mr. Speaker, over 5,000 MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

Mr. Speaker, our health system is delivering a phenomenal amount of service to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplemental to the same two ministers.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday morning as I was driving in to work, I heard the Minister of Finance on a radio talk show. He was talking about the health care and the budget and he said that all of the extra money that he was targeting into the health care would be targeted money to front-line services.

Now my question to the Minister of Health is how can you claim that health boards are independent entities? How can you claim not to be responsible when things go wrong if you dictate how the money is to be spent?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, in the budget that was delivered by the Minister of Finance on Friday, we made it clear to the people of this province that we were going to deal with issues that were of utmost importance to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget we will have additional funds to deal with breast cancer and breast cancer assessment. That is a tremendous issue for the women of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we're putting funds into the breast cancer care and breast care in order to begin to avoid breast cancer.

Mr. Speaker, as well we have women in this province and men in this province that are waiting a long time for bone density treatment in order to deal with osteoporosis. We're putting money into that kind of care for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a mobile CAT (computerized axial tomography) scan for southern Saskatchewan that will mean faster diagnosis, Mr. Speaker. And that's important.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we're putting additional money into services so that our front-line workers can provide the kinds of services that they want to and the people of this province want them to provide.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplemental to the same minister.

Madam Minister, I understand that as of tomorrow there will be several health care workers that will be in a strike position. I want to know how the budget is going to help rural health care in general and how it's going to help those health care workers that are now going to be in a strike position? How are you going to resolve the problems that exist with the workers, for example, in the town of Gull Lake who are contemplating this day whether or not they will go on strike tomorrow?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the people of this province will know that the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and several health care unions are presently in the midst of bargaining a very complex set of collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, we in this province have moved to a situation where there are basically five unions in this province that are trying to negotiate a whole bunch of different collective agreements into one, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about hundreds and hundreds of articles of language, we're talking about thousands and thousands and thousands of pages of collective agreements that have to be melded into just a few, Mr. Speaker. This takes time.

Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that with the budget that was presented in this legislature last Friday, that SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), the employer and the various health care unions can continue to bargain collective agreements and arrive at mutually agreed to settlements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, a very good question and a

very complete answer for 21; and with leave of the Assembly, to also submit answers to questions 22 right up to 30.

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — The answers to items 1 through 10 are 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, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Gantefer.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to be able to participate in this important budget debate. Mr. Speaker, time in this debate is precious, but however I do want to begin with an item that is a little peripheral to the budget but I think important to this House and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, hot off the press from the Liberal Party in my mail box this weekend, I found this news release. The headline, Mr. Speaker, on this news release is the following:

New poll shows Liberals gaining and Sask. Party slipping in provincial and rural support.

Now in the body of the news release, Mr. Speaker, it reads:

The poll conducted the week of February 22 asked 1,000 voters if a provincial election were held today, which party would be the first or second choice among voters.

Now, Mr. Speaker, listen to this:

When looking at first choice, the NDP had 53.9 per cent of decided voters while the Saskatchewan Party and the (Liberal Party had) . . . 21.9 and 20.3 per cent respectively.

Now the Liberals then use a little bit of a tricky bit of mathematics, Mr. Speaker, and they come up with an arrangement of these numbers to show that they are now in second place.

(1430)

So this week the Liberals are telling us they're in second place. Last November I remember the Tories telling us they were in second place. Now this is the first time in my twelve and a half years in the legislature I've heard parties in this House trying to get the people to believe they're in second place.

This, Mr. Speaker, for all the world, all the world, this reminds me of the old Abbott and Costello routine: who's on first, what's on second.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you who's on first. It's the government of this Premier, the government that just presented this budget. Mr. Speaker, I've just been delivered another item hot off the press from the Liberal Party, and I want to say a little more about that later, this being their new policy document.

But before, before I do that, Mr. Speaker, you and I, you and I, having been privileged to represent the citizens of Moose Jaw for these twelve and a half years, on more occasions than I can remember now have been present at the Hillcrest curling club in Moose Jaw to give best wishes to championship teams that were going off to compete in national competition. More times than I can remember now, we've had Saskatchewan curlers in this legislature after winning provincial, national and world championships.

Mr. Speaker, you and I come from a city of great curlers and we all come from a province of great curlers.

So it seemed to me maybe appropriate in this budget debate that I would begin with an analogy from the curling rink.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, this province is now in the ninth end of the 20th century. And if we are in the ninth end of the 20th century, I tell you Team Saskatchewan has the hammer going into the next millennium.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — I say that, Mr. Speaker, I say, as Wilfrid Laurier said of our nation on the eve of this century, Wilfrid Laurier said this will be Canada's century.

Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the 21st century, we can proudly say this will be Saskatchewan's century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I say that, I say that, because of the God-given natural resource of our land, the richness of natural resources — be it oil, be it potash, be it the land.

I say that because of the wealth of people that occupy our province. Mr. Speaker, we have, in my view, the people with the greatest entrepreneurial spirit in Canada, but an entrepreneurial spirit that has not blinded them to the values of co-operation and compassion. We have the people in Canada with the greatest spirit, the greatest determination. If you want the proof of that, Mr. Speaker, note how this province is the only province that will stand behind its football team no matter what. No matter what.

Mr. Speaker, we have opportunities of education in this province unequalled in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have the history of compassion and co-operation that puts us in good stead to march into the new century.

We have in this province, Mr. Speaker, the strongest and the richest Aboriginal culture of any province, any people in Canada. We have, Mr. Speaker, in this province the most multicultural population of any province in Canada — the only

province in Canada where neither French or English form the majority. We are from the whole world and we can relate to the whole world. We have a spirit, a people, and a base of resource that will carry us into the 21st century. We are the people and the province that have the hammer in the ninth end of the 20th century.

So the question becomes, then, Mr. Speaker, for the people of our province — the question that the people of our province will face over the course of the next 12 months — who is it that will manage this great potential? Who is it that will manage this great possibility as we go into the 21st century? The single most important question facing the people of our province in an upcoming provincial election will be this question — who has the people, who has the plan, and who has the principle to carry this great province into the 21st century? Who has the people, who has the plan, and who has the principle.

So let me, Mr. Speaker, in the time allotted to me say just a little bit of my observation of some of the plans and the people that will present themselves to the voters of Saskatchewan in the next election. Let me begin with my good friends in the Liberal Party. They have some people, Mr. Speaker — although some of us have described it lately as the amazing shrinking caucus. Mr. Speaker, we cannot fault the Liberal Party for the actions of some of its former MLAs who in the dead of night moved over to the Conservative Party. We cannot fault the Liberal Party for that.

But, Mr. Speaker, in my view the people of this province, the people of this province, will long remember what this group of men and women did in terms of its former leader. This province will not soon forget the attitude and the activity of that party in respect to the member from Greystone, the former leader, who, while I may have disagreed fundamentally with her policies, I and many people in this province held her and do hold her in high regard as an individual and as an elected member. And there will be many in this province who will not forget the treatment afforded to that leader by that caucus and by that party.

They elected a new leader, Mr. Speaker — Dr. Melenchuk. His first major commitment as leader was to chain himself to the doors of the Plains hospital. Mr. Speaker, that commitment, that commitment never came true.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about the plans of the Liberal Party, and they have become a little more apparent today apparently, as we have the release of their election platform. It is a difficult thing to follow the plans and the planning of the Liberal Party. Let me give you one example, Mr. Speaker, and members present.

We have heard members of the caucus in the House and outside this House indicate that their party, their caucus has been discussing the matter of a ban on replacement workers in periods of labour dispute. We've heard the member from Wood River, we've heard the Leader of the Liberal Party indicate that in fact they are discussing such a ban.

That's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because another member of that caucus, the member from North Battleford says very clearly they're not discussing such a ban; they're not discussing such a

policy.

Now this is not a large caucus, Mr. Speaker. This is not a large caucus. And I would recommend that they do have a caucus meeting and decide this once and for all — what is the policy of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — Who's on first?

Mr. Calvert: — Who's on first, as my colleague from Regina asks.

More significantly, Mr. Speaker, has been their evolving policy around health care. Now I have in my hand, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party policy statement dated March 23 headlined, "Melenchuk announces major health initiative as the first plank in the Liberal election platform."

Members will have given this careful study, Mr. Speaker, as should the people of our province. In this announcement the Liberal Party commits to the following:

We will make health care the top priority of the Liberal government, and to demonstrate that commitment a Liberal government would create 10 to 12 regional hospitals in Saskatchewan in addition to the regional hospital facilities now located in Saskatoon and Regina.

Mr. Speaker, there are no regional hospital facilities in Saskatoon or Regina. In Saskatoon and Regina we have our base hospitals. The regional hospital facilities in this province are located in Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Yorkton, North Battleford, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals commit therefore to creating 10 to 12 new regional hospitals, I take it like those in Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, North Battleford and so on. However when I turn over the page of their news release what do I find? I find they are committing a sum total of \$2.2 million per hospital for this project.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've spent some time in the ministry of Health — \$2.2 million does not create a regional hospital, Mr. Speaker; \$2.2 million does not create a new regional hospital, and they intend to create 10 to 12 of them.

Mr. Speaker, adding a new piece of diagnostic equipment to an existing facility does not create a regional hospital with a full range of services that the citizens of that region should expect in a regional hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when I add up the total value of the Liberal health plan as advertised on March 23, I come to a total of \$70 million — \$70 million — sum total. Mr. Speaker, that was their promise on March 23, a week ago, that they would spend \$70 million. They sat and they listened to the budget. They heard this government not promising to spend \$70 million; they heard this government say, we are spending in this budget year \$195 million more. Almost three times as much as the Liberals were promising a week ago.

Now, today we are delivered the 1999 election platform, one week later. And lo and behold what has happened to the

commitment around health funding? It has jumped to a total of \$195 million — \$195 million. Last week they were telling us, our major commitment, making health the top priority, would be to insert 70 million new dollars. They've listened to the budget delivered by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health, and now the policy says, well no, no, make that, no, that was a mistake, now we're going to put in \$195 million.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker if this is the kind of planning that the Liberal Party is offering to the people of Saskatchewan, that plan will be rejected, Mr. Speaker. If in fact as this document, their first health care platform document indicates, this is the first plank, well, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to walk that plank into an election.

Mr. Speaker, when the citizens of our province are looking at their alternatives in the next election, they'll be looking at the Conservative Party, the Tory Party, there's no doubt about that. I want members present and the people of Saskatchewan to be very aware that the party which describes itself now as the Saskatchewan Party is, in fact, the Conservative Party of the 1980s. It's the same people, it's the same policies, it's the same party, Mr. Speaker. It is the same party; there is no doubt in my mind.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these folks try to pretend that they are the Saskatchewan version of unite the Right. This is the unite the Right movement in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, a long time ago I was taught that two wrongs don't make a right. Two wrongs don't make a right no matter how you put them together.

We have here members of the Conservative Party who are ashamed of their history. We have members of the Liberal Party, opportunistic for their political future, coming together to form what they describe as a new political movement. That's not a movement, Mr. Speaker. That's not a movement born of the grassroots. That's a movement born of desperation — desperation.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well the member now from his seat asks why I'm not running. I'll say a few words about that . . . I'll say a few words about that in a moment. I would like to ask him to stand up in this House and defend how he can run for that party. Formed in the dead of night without consultation with his constituents, having committed, Mr. Speaker, to his constituents that he would not do such a thing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members of the Saskatchewan Party once in a while . . . well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious the member opposite is very sensitive about this matter, and so they should be sensitive, Mr. Speaker. And we'll be watching very carefully when it comes in this legislature to the vote on the legislation which would prevent such unaccountable activity. We'll see how that member and others vote across the way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in my view it is a dangerous thing, it is a dangerous thing — and members on this side of the House at least will agree — it is sometimes a dangerous thing when a Tory makes a speech. It's a dangerous thing because once in a while, Mr. Speaker, the truth pops out. Once in a while the truth pops out of what they should really be thinking about and what

they're really doing.

Now, very recently, very recently the member of the Conservative Party was in Prince Albert. He was there addressing the chamber of commerce. And while in Prince Albert at that chamber of commerce meeting, Mr. Speaker . . . this is all reported here in *The Prince Albert Daily Herald*, of March 6 this year. The leader of the Conservative Party, Mr. Elwin Hermanson, was in Prince Albert speaking with the chamber of commerce executive, and I will just quote directly from the article in the *P.A. Herald*, quote:

During his chat with the Chamber Of Commerce executive, he was asked about candidate nominations (with) . . . the prospect of women running for the Sask. Party. His reply? Words to the effect that it's difficult to get women involved in politics, since "their concerns are (in) . . . the home" and "they don't like dealing with conflict."

Well, Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say that:

Some of the women who heard his remarks dealt with their immediate conflict — between wanting to ring his red neck and the knowledge that such an action would be illegal — (they dealt with the conflict) by walking out of the meeting.

Mr. Speaker, once in a while, once in a while the truth pops out, whether they want us to know that or not.

(1445)

Mr. Speaker, we have had some time to consider some of the plans of the Conservative Party in their document which is called *The Way Up*, or the way out. I as a former minister of Health am deeply concerned, deeply concerned about their plan for health care in our province.

Mr. Speaker, they have two planks in their health platform. They are these, simply put. They would conduct, quote, "value for money audit of the health care workers in our province." They would conduct, quote, "money for value audit of our health care workers in the province."

And their second plank is they would at the rate of inflation cap expenditures to health, which is essentially a freeze on health care. They would cap at the rate of inflation expenditures to health.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that would mean that had they prepared the budget which is now under debate in this House, a cap at the level of inflation in new spending in health would have meant in this health care budget there would have been 18 million new dollars. That's what it would have amounted to in this budget. And they're proposing to hold this cap on, this freeze, for five years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, every health care worker in the province should take note of this. Everyone who believes in publicly funded medicare should take note of this commitment to freeze funding to health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Because I'll tell you the outcome, Mr. Speaker — \$18 million more in a health care budget does not provide for new technology, does not provide for relief of waiting list concerns, does not provide for new drug coverages. It essentially freezes the wages, salaries, and benefits of every health care worker and every health care professional. That's what it does. And only for five years.

So if it is the plan of the Conservative Party through their health care platform to freeze funding for health care, to starve the system, to starve the system for five years, I'll tell you the result. Those in this province who have the resources will clamour to go to the private sector. They will clamour to go to the private sector. They will so weaken the publicly funded medicare in our province that we will see the demise of that medicare. That's the result of freezing health care funding for five years as they have committed — committed — in their platform document.

Mr. Speaker, they have other plans. They have a plan to tax . . . to cut taxes in this province, to massively cut taxes in our province. They have a plan to cut taxes to the extent, to figures that I've heard, of about \$2 billion. At the same time they tell us they're going to repave and rebuild every road in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's been said before, it's worth saying again — this doesn't add up. It does not add up, Mr. Speaker. You cannot, you cannot simply massively cut the tax revenues to government, increase its spending in a major area, and continue to try and deal with your debt and deficit problems. It just doesn't add up.

Unless, unless — and members should note, and the people of Saskatchewan should note, there is a way you can make this add up. There is one way to make this add up, and that's to do exactly what these people did in the 1980s, and that's to start selling off the assets of the province at fire-sale prices.

I listened very carefully, Mr. Speaker, very carefully to the member from Saltcoats who spoke in this House the other night, determined that this government should renew and change the laws to do with the out-of-province ownership of the agricultural lands of our province. This member said in this House — I could get the *Hansard* and quote directly — he said that we should, quote, "open the borders for the sale of our farmland." And then he said, quote, "What that would do is to bring new money into the province." It's in the *Hansard*. Open the borders, sell the land, bring in new money.

Now that's fair enough. But, Mr. Speaker, if you're willing to sell off the land to bring in new money, if they're willing to sell off the land, then how safe do you think are the Crown corporations owned by the people of Saskatchewan? How safe are the assets of the people of Saskatchewan? We have seen, we witnessed in the 1980s, how a Tory government at that time tried to balance their books by selling off the assets. What happened? Larger deficits and a higher debt.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned when these people intend to spend, to cut the taxes, and not explain to the people of Saskatchewan how they're going to make it add up. Well there's only one way in my view, Mr. Speaker, and that's to sell off assets.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say just a very brief word about the Tory Party plan for social assistance. It's not fully described. But the result of their plan, they claim, will be to move 25,000 — no, check that — 25 per cent of the social assistance caseload off social assistance, a full 25 per cent through something of a work for welfare nature kind of scheme.

It's not fully described in their policy documents. I hope it's not like the policies of Ontario. But I hope that one member or two from that caucus will stand in the House and explain to the members and the people of Saskatchewan how it is they intend to move 25 per cent of the welfare caseload off, putting them onto the street.

Mr. Speaker, as I review the most recent statistics from the Department of Social Services in terms of the caseload, about 12,000 of the entire caseload, about 12,000 individuals are described as fully employable, that is, capable of earning an income outside of social assistance that would give them basic living — 12,000 people.

Now the total caseload today is in the neighbourhood of 65,000 people — thankfully, mercifully, down. But by my calculation, 25 per cent of 65,000 is 16,000 people. Only 12,000 people in the existing social assistance rolls are described as fully employable.

The other 4,000 therefore must come from those other categories, primarily women with single children . . . single women with children, the disabled. I hope that one member of the Tory Party will stand up and explain to this House just who it is they intend to put off the welfare rolls, just who it is they tend to force onto the streets without the support of the community.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen in Ontario, in the Harris Ontario, Tory-led, the result of that kind of Conservative welfare reform. For goodness' sakes, we've got the mayor of Toronto — he certainly would not be described as a friend of the New Democratic Party — the mayor of Toronto saying stop it.

There are now 80,000 people in the city of Toronto homeless, 80,000 in the city of Toronto — that's half the population of the city of Regina — homeless, in Canada's largest and richest city, as a result of some of the policies, the Conservative welfare policies in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, these plans do not inspire in at least myself, much confidence in either the Liberal or the Tories parties for the future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, we have before us in this House a budget under debate that I believe speaks clearly to the priorities of Saskatchewan people, clearly to the priorities that have been identified to me in my work in the constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow and the city of Moose Jaw and beyond there where people have said very clearly to us as legislators, that our priorities are health, our priorities are a decent and a fair tax system, our priorities are education, our priorities are transportation.

Each of those priorities, Mr. Speaker, is adequately and more than adequately represented in this budget. In this budget, we add \$195 million to health care expenditures in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Sixty-seven million, Mr. Speaker, 67 million of those dollars are the contribution from the federal government in the renewal of federal funding — 67; \$128 million — \$128 million are new funds from the people of Saskatchewan to fund their most social program, medicare . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . \$67 million.

The member from Melville asked me, how much from the feds — \$67 million. It's interesting that he would ask that question because a week ago he had a news release, as I referred to earlier, saying that the sum total commitment from the Liberal Party was going to be \$70 million.

Now that was 67 from the federal government. That meant the sum total commitment from the province would have been three, opposed to this budget which doesn't promise new money in the future but provides it today, Mr. Speaker, provides it to deal with the waiting list issue, to deal with providing better cancer care, to deal with providing better women's health, to deal with providing better benefits — wages and salaries and benefits — to our health care workers, Mr. Speaker, as well as dealing with the Y2K (Year 2000) problem in Health which is important.

Mr. Speaker, this budget lowers again the provincial sales tax, from seven to six. In three years, from nine to six — a 33 per cent decrease in three years. Mr. Speaker, I say, I say, and I say it without fear of contradiction even though here I'm not agreeing with some of the budget literature, I say we have the lowest E&H (education and health) tax in all of Canada — the lowest.

Because our province to the west, our neighbours and our friends in the province of Alberta have a tax on health care. There's no doubt about that. Every family of four in the province of Alberta, as we were reminded of by the member from Estevan the other day, is now paying \$860 health care premium. In Saskatchewan that same family of four is paying, on average, provincial sales taxes of between 6 and \$700 — 6 and \$700 as opposed to an \$800 health tax in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, but what we sometimes forget about the health premium concept as it exists in Alberta and it was identified in a very recent edition of *The Edmonton Sun* from the Department of Health in Alberta, now 123,000 families in the province of Alberta are delinquent in their health care premiums — 123 families. And these, Mr. Speaker, are not the lowest of income families. These are families . . . because the lowest income families are not required to pay the premium. These are low- and middle-income families who are falling delinquent in their health care premium. And what's happened to those families? Well the compassionate Government of Alberta has now assigned credit collection agencies, credit collection agencies to 40 per cent of those families in delinquency.

Mr. Speaker, we have now in Saskatchewan the lowest education and health tax in all of Canada — in all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this budget continues our battle

with the debt. This is the sixth straight balanced budget, the sixth budget where we've seen dramatic decrease in debt. The debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio in our province is now much healthier than it was even three and four years ago.

There's a billion dollars going into the education and training of our young people and our children. Funding to our roads, up 40 per cent in this budget. Eighteen per cent more for our municipalities this year. And, Mr. Speaker, perhaps proudest of all when I review these budget documents, I think we as a people, as a province, should be proudest of all that in this budget again, funding for the child action plan has gone up — gone up this time 26 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — We as a province, we as a people, Mr. Speaker — not we as a government, but we as a province, we as a people, are investing in our families, in our children, in ever increasing and better ways. When the child action plan was formed only just a few years ago, the first level of funding was \$4 million. That has now grown, Mr. Speaker, in this budget to a total of \$67 million. And we ought to be proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about people and I talk about principle, I want to share with this House before I take my place, a couple of quotes from an individual I believe to be someone who will play an important part in the history of this province when it's written a hundred years from now.

This man said, in reference to this child action plan and these kinds of programs, this man said:

There are those who argue that the best way to deal with hungry children is to throw their parents onto the street. People who argue that people actually want to be on welfare. Well I don't agree. I say that hunting for votes on the back of the poorest and the weakest is despicable. I say that playing politics with the lives of the family and children who have so little is despicable. I say our province is stronger than that; our province is kinder than that. I say our province is better than that.

Mr. Speaker, those words spoken by the current Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, the member from Riversdale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we set before this Assembly a budget that represents a balanced plan, a strong plan, a well-thought-out plan, a plan that speaks to the priorities of Saskatchewan people. I'll be very proud when it comes time to be voting in favour of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

It's not a budget that looks back. It's not a budget with its eye in the rear-view mirror. It's a budget with its eye on the next century. It's a budget that captures the potential and the possibility of this great province and all that we have. That will take us and that gives us the hammer that takes us into this 21st century.

(1500)

I want to share with this House one more quote from this same Premier, quote:

We have accomplished much already. In jobs, in health, in education, and building rural life, and building safe communities, and secure families. But our eyes must be on the horizon. Our challenge is not to look back, but to look forward.

The Canadian theologian Gregory Baum once said an idea about the future enters into the consciousness of people and determines the kind of life they live.

Well friends, that's what politics are all about. Ideas of the future. Positive progressive ideas. Ideas that when they're implemented in the words of Gregory Baum will enter our consciousness and determine our life — a more humane compassionate life for Saskatchewan and for Canada.

Mr. Speaker, that is the vision of the current Premier of this province. That is the vision of this government, that is the vision and the hope that is contained in this budget.

Just two more things, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest today to the Minister of the Environment as he gave us his annual spring report. And he reminded us that not far from here in the roadways and ditches, and I can take you to places just south of Moose Jaw on the No. 2 Highway, I could take you there this afternoon, and you would see the little buds of the little crocuses sticking through.

Now as you know, Mr. Speaker, as much as I love the lily — our Saskatchewan lily, our provincial flower — as much as I love the lily in its great beauty, it has sometimes seemed to me that if we needed and wanted a new provincial flower, I would choose the crocus. I would choose the crocus because, you see, the crocus is not like the wild rose, not like the wild rose. The wild rose, it waits for June, it waits for June when all is sunny and kind and warm.

But not the little crocus, because the crocus, the crocus is courageous, the crocus is the most courageous of our wild flowers. He sticks his little head out, says Imogene Sorely — Imogene Sorely and Jo Carr who wrote a little poem about the crocus — he sticks his little head out . . . and she sticks her little head out even when the danger of frost is not passed. Risking for something better.

Why? Because the crocus believes in spring and has something personal and emphatic to say about it.

Mr. Speaker, we are not wild rose people. We are crocus people. We believe in something. We believe in this province. We believe in its future. And we're not unwilling to stick our necks out at some times in some points at risk, Mr. Speaker, because we're still yet a pioneering province and a pioneering people.

And so when I hear that the crocuses . . . when the Minister of the Environment reports today that the crocuses are out, or beginning to poke through, I tell you that's a great sign, Mr. Speaker. It's a great sign. And I think it's reflected in the hope and the optimism of this budget.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this. A fair number of my colleagues and friends and acquaintances in the city of Moose Jaw have been asking me of late, since I will not be contesting the next provincial election, a number of them have asked me, so what are you going to be doing? Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't answer that question. I do not know the answer to that question on what I will be doing after the election.

But I do know the answer to the question, what will I be doing between now and the election? I know the answer to that question. I'll be doing whatever I can to ensure that Mr. Ivan Costley will be the member of this legislature representing Thunder Creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And I'll be doing what I can to ensure that Mr. Ron Bishoff is the member of the legislature representing Arm River.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And I'll be doing, Mr. Speaker, of course, what I can do to ensure that the current member from Moose Jaw North will be available to be re-elected Speaker in the next House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And I'll be doing whatever I can to ensure that Deb Higgins, Debbie Higgins, will be the next member from Moose Jaw Wakamow to take this seat.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — And I, Mr. Speaker, will be doing everything within my power to ensure that the member from Riversdale, the current Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, will be in this House leading this province into that 21st century which will be Saskatchewan's century.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be voting for the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been interesting to listen to different members of the Assembly speak to the . . . in the current budget debate and give their reasons as to why they would support or would reject . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Stanger: — To introduce a guest and I wanted to do it before the member got going. And I thank the House if they allow me to do that.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Stanger: — In your west gallery, Mr. Speaker, is one of our mayors from northern Saskatchewan, Ray Laliberte from Buffalo Narrows. And I want to introduce him to you and

through you to the legislature and have everyone welcome Ray to Regina. It's a long way and we're glad to have you here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating in the beginning of my debate here, as I listened to the debate here . . . and certainly, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the debate in this Assembly will have pros and cons.

There will be members who will be very favourable, speak very favourable of a specific Bill or in this case the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance. There will be those of us who will take a different view. Those of us who will offer compliments where compliments are due, and those of us who will criticize where criticism is due.

The one thing I'm not sure members on the government side are very proud of today when we look in the province of Saskatchewan, one of the headlines in the papers, in the paper today said, province leads in sex offences. And we look at so many areas in this province, and so many government members have stood and tried to tell us why they are supporting a budget — because it's giving leadership in this area. I believe just the previous speaker talked about the areas of leadership.

The unfortunate part, the stats and the information that we see on a daily basis is not actually putting Saskatchewan at the top. In most cases we're basically at the bottom of the pack. And it's unfortunate that the one area where we tend to be leading all other areas is in sex offences.

And we'd hope that over the period of years we can begin to address that because I don't think that's a dubious headline that any province would want to have. And it's something that I'm sure the members, while they talk about all the positives, certainly would have to look at. And I can see why they continue to refrain from even discussing some of the areas where they were actually leading in this country versus the areas that they are taking a follower role in.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about this budget, current budget, what I find very interesting about the budget, at the end of the day this budget . . . And I will say, as I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, there are areas where I feel that we need to give the government a compliment for the positive parts of the budget.

In the constituency I represent, and certainly being along the eastern side of the province, a reduction in the sales tax is something that all businesses would welcome, especially with Manitoba being our neighbour to the east. And Manitoba I believe currently still has an 8 per cent sales tax. So a sales tax of 6 per cent for a lot of businesses along the eastern side of our province is going to be a benefit, much like Alberta. Anyone who's on the west side finds it much easier to go into the

province of Alberta to do some shopping.

But the thing is, Mr. Speaker, in that regard I will compliment the Minister of Finance, I will compliment the Minister of Finance for taking the document *The Way Up* and looking at it and saying, yes, that is achievable. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the WEFA group that went through all the numbers in the document of the Saskatchewan Party, who are also a consulting firm for the province, were able to indicate to the Premier and to the Finance minister that it is possible, more than possible to raise the provincial sales tax by one point. And we certainly compliment the Minister of Finance for doing that.

One of the areas though, as we've seen, that while the sales tax reduction was certainly complimented by many people across the province, a lot of leadership across this province continues to indicate that the tax burden in this province, despite what the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow indicated, the tax burden is still a major hindrance in job creation and development and economic growth in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I can see, Mr. Speaker, after the budget speech, which I'm sure the Premier and the Minister of Finance were looking at, and as I believe the Premier had indicated he is ready to go to the polls or he would look forward to going to the polls possibly in June and fighting a June election based on this budget. But when I look at the number of groups across this province that looked at the budget and gave this budget a failing grade, one begins to wonder whether or not the Premier may be beginning to get cold feet, especially when we find that this year, what is the province doing.

If this budget, as the Premier has indicated or as the Minister of Finance has indicated, if this budget is everything that they pretend or that the government tells us that it is, if this budget has so much to offer the people of this province, if this budget has so much to offer the electorate of this province, why is the province all of a sudden deciding it has to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in order to promote its budget? Almost three times what it spent over the last three or four years to promote the budget.

Mr. Speaker, as soon as I see a government starting to spend more money to promote a budget, which it's telling us is such a good budget for the taxpayers of this province, you have to begin to ask yourself, do they really believe themselves that the budget they presented the other day is really — or almost a week ago now — is really the election budget that many people believe it is.

But many people, on the other hand, really don't believe is going to give the government that inside track to when they go to the polls in June or even earlier for that fact; the Premier could certainly call an election before June. There's no doubt about it. The Premier's in a position; this government's in a position to go to the polls. Certainly the Saskatchewan Party is ready to go to the polls at any time when the Premier calls an election.

But time will tell whether or not we will be at the polls before or even June, or whether or not we'll be going later on, and the potential — certainly, I believe, the Finance minister is a — was listening to the open line the other day — indicated that

they . . . certainly he hasn't ruled out the fact that the Premier could even go later on. And that's quite possible.

I think the debate taking place around this budget is certainly going to indicate whether or not the people of Saskatchewan will be asked to go to the polls to give either a new mandate or to present another party with a mandate to govern the province of Saskatchewan into the year 2000 and beyond, into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the budget, the government can talk about what it is putting into health . . . Pardon me. The hundred . . . and I believe about . . . so almost \$190 million more into health care. The government talks about putting more money into health care than it ever has before. And, yes, \$1.915 billion is a substantial chunk of change into the health care system. But, Mr. Speaker, \$1.915 billion does not tell the residents of Saskatchewan that they can continue to expect the same types of services that . . . or the same level of services that they have today.

When I say that, Mr. Speaker, what I mean by that is, can communities across this province expect to see the level of acute care beds hold the line, or further reductions? You know, in one of the communities I represent in the Moose Mountain Health District . . . Mr. Speaker, when I see a health district decide that they're going to reduce the number of beds in a facility to the average daily census . . . and the community of Kipling, for example, has 12.7 average daily census, and just recently the health district board took out every bed down to that level of 12.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me when an average is the difference between a high and a low, as I find as I talk to people around the community and around the constituency, their concern is, when you physically remove the beds to that level, and that level then becomes your high, what's the average going to be next year?

That's the question that the Minister of Health is going to have to ask when we get into the ongoing debate and the line-by-line debate in the different departments. What guarantee does the \$190 million have, what does it give to the people of this province? What does it say about the availability of acute care beds in their community or in their vicinity? Because, Mr. Speaker, we will acknowledge the fact that there will not be and there isn't a hospital in every community and there will not be a hospital in every community.

(1515)

But, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that you need to have acute care facilities and services at least in a proximity because we cannot rely on sending an individual from the community of Shaunavon all the way to Regina for emergency care, or in my area from Kipling or the Wawotas or the Redvers of this world, two and a half to three hours out.

And as I was talking to an ambulance driver the other day, Mr. Speaker, who had come to visit me, the fact that when they get to the city all of a sudden they're stuck looking after a patient. And whether it's a patient who's been maybe in a very difficult situation, Mr. Speaker, they find they've got to try and manage

that patient and look after that patient because there isn't access to the emergency wards in the city of Regina here.

So, Mr. Speaker, the public of Saskatchewan are going to look at the \$190 million and say what does that do to give guaranteed access to the emergency services that I need in, or close to, the community that I live in? What is that going to do to guarantee the acute care beds or that level of care beds that currently are needed?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And the member from Regina South wants to enter the debate. Certainly I welcome the member from Regina South because the member from Regina South does not have the same length of time to get access to a hospital that many people in my constituency have. The member from Regina South is . . . unless you run into the situation we did today crossing the Albert Street bridge and you're down to one-lane traffic, Mr. Speaker, that may slow down access to the Pasqua and the General, depending on where you're living.

But certainly when you look at rural communities, many rural residents are a great distance from a health care facility. So they will look at the \$190 million and they will ask themselves what does that do to guarantee me access to a facility that will give me at least a chance at living another day if I'm in a difficult and extreme emergency situation, Mr. Speaker. So those are some of the concerns that we need to be mindful of.

If government can talk about \$190 million, what I hear on an ongoing basis, \$190 million really at the end of the day is going to be nothing, number one.

And I was pleased to see that the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow did acknowledge today, he's the first member that acknowledged that a good portion of the funds going into health care are actually coming from the federal government this way. If those funds weren't there, we wouldn't have \$190 million. If we didn't have equalization payments, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, if we didn't have increased equalization payments, this government would not even have the privilege of being able to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Now I don't know that all hon. members need a reminder to know that they'll have plenty of opportunity to put their remarks on the record. And I'll encourage all hon. members to put their remarks on the record and not be shouting them from their desks.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the government rhetoric over the last few days and the last few weeks certainly at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention in Saskatoon, the Premier talked about the province putting \$85 million into the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program.

Well you know it was interesting. Everyone I talked to thought, hmm, boy, that's 85 million, until all of a sudden they realized that it was only \$10 million of provincial money and \$75 million of federal money.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — But the Premier presented it as if it was his money — and it was somebody else's. That's the same thing that's happening in health care — smoke and mirrors, smoke and mirrors.

The member from Saskatoon is now saying it's all taxpayers, all taxpayers. Well, Mr. Speaker, I find that very interesting. On one hand if it's an issue that the opposition raises regarding funding, then it's all taxpayers; if it's a government member, it's their money.

Mr. Speaker, all I'm saying, as the member from Moosomin, is that the constituents of Moosomin want to know whether or not the \$195 million increase in health care spending will actually provide the adequate care and services. Mr. Speaker, what I was disappointed in, in the comments by the Finance minister . . . And the Health minister's talked about this — some of the questions we've raised about transfers of patients from centres like Regina out to some of the rural areas for convalescence after surgery, freeing up beds in the larger centres, which I commend. I compliment the government for that except for the fact that we found . . . I've had a couple of patients come to me with the fact that they've ended up with ambulance bills as a result of that.

And it would seem to me that the cost in a smaller rural setting is much less than the cost in the larger urban centres. So I'm not exactly sure why the department, in trying to free up some beds so that you can open up some wards to encourage ongoing operations to address the waiting lists, why rural residents would again be hit with what we begin to term as a two-tiered health system. Why that cost should be theirs when a resident in or the area surrounding Regina would not have that cost put on their tab.

But the area I'm disappointed in as well is the community of Moosomin. And a group of individuals in the community of Moosomin have worked very diligently and worked very hard, have overcome many hurdles that have been put in their place by the district Pipestone Health Board in order to get the operating room up and running again in their community.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, the operating room in our large centres, all of the funds to put the equipment in place has come from the Department of Health. The community of Moosomin, just over \$100,000 is going to come all out of the local sources to put the operating equipment in place. And the minister has indicated that they are going to then do a pilot project. Mr. Speaker, my guess is had we not been into an election mode, the minister may not have given the approval for that operating room to go ahead.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you the people of Moosomin all in the past, the people of Moosomin have . . . that hospital has provided a very positive service and a complimentary service to that community, and I fully expect, Mr. Speaker, that when everything is said and done and this pilot year is over that we will find the community of Moosomin has again shown that smaller communities like Moosomin, like the Moosomin hospital, can provide a level of service that the people have come to expect in the past and believe it's still available and able to be accomplished.

So I'm looking forward to the study being done at the end of the year, a study that I believe will show that that hospital in Moosomin definitely has a place. A study that will show that other communities of that size with a facility of that size could certainly help address the long waiting lists we have in the province of Saskatchewan when it comes to surgeries.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not talk about highways and the condition of the highways in the province of Saskatchewan. Here again, I would say the people in my constituency, number one, are grateful for the fact that resurfacing of No. 1 is taking place west of Moosomin. There are a number of areas, kilometres west of Moosomin, that definitely need to be resurfaced. It's like you're going over a washboard road many times.

The road gets pretty rough. In fact a young patient just the other day, coming in as a result of appendix attack, asked his dad if he could drive a little more carefully. It was getting pretty hard riding in the vehicle as a result of the problems he was having with his appendix.

And so we're pleased to see that there is resurfacing of No. 1 west of Moosomin. We're also pleased to see that the Department of Highways has also made a commitment to begin grading of No. 8 Highway south of Moosomin down to the valley.

Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, there was some grading done on No. 8, north of 48 to just south of the valley. And so to see the department moving ahead with some grading south of Moosomin is important and we're really pleased to see that. And I compliment the Minister of Highways and her department for recognizing the need to grade that piece of highway.

And certainly that's an area we're going to be following with very closely because we want to make sure that when the dollars are spent in that area that we have a highway that will be able to sustain the level of traffic, especially with the grain traffic that is moving on trucks up and down our highways now. Mr. Speaker, we definitely need to make sure that we do have a level of road, a grade, that will sustain that level of traffic on it.

When it comes to highways in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not talk about the fact that No. 48 from the Manitoba border right through to the community of Kipling is certainly in bad and major need of repair.

In fact, just a week ago we had a funeral in our community for a younger gentleman who happened to unfortunately lose his life in that storm just outside of Saskatoon and a group of people had come through from the community of Virden. In fact the pastor, who took the service, came from Virden who had been a very good friend not too many years ago with this young gentleman.

And as I was chatting with individuals who had come along they asked me is there a smoother road that we can get on to go back to Manitoba rather than travelling on 48. That was unbelievable. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, interestingly enough the Manitoba portion from the Manitoba border to Virden just

recently was upgraded and it certainly is a nice stretch of highway to drive on.

From our area, it's actually — if we're going into Manitoba to visit some family or friends — it is the portion of road that is much closer but as a result of the condition of Highway 48, that piece of highway that still needs some major work on it, many people refuse to drive on it. They tend to drive on the grid road.

So this is an area that when we get into debate with the Department of Highways . . . I'm looking forward to the debate. I'm looking forward to entering into debate with the minister and, number one, finding out what it costs to build a highway in the province of Saskatchewan — kilometre or a mile of highway — and seeing if there's ways we can put forward ideas that we can address and build more roads with the current highway budget.

Although, Mr. Speaker, we would like to see the government begin to live up to its commitment to that \$250 million a year. They announced three years ago \$2.5 billion over 10 which is 250. Right now we're about 90 million short of that commitment in the last three years.

And based on the economy of this province one begins to wonder whether or not we'll ever achieve that goal. The province might find itself in a situation where all of a sudden it needs a billion dollars in the last year just to come up to that commitment. So we're going to be following up on that very carefully.

And that's one of the platforms we have brought forward — putting \$250 million into highway maintenance with a plan to double the No. 1 Highway across Saskatchewan, certainly the Yellowhead and other . . . and certainly do major work on other major arteries throughout this province. So, Mr. Speaker, that's an area we'll be debating.

The area of education — and I have a community . . . a couple of small communities in my constituency that face the situation of a capital construction project. I know that communities have gone to the district school board to seek guidance and seek approval for a project. And the difficulty in that situation is the fact that it took a number of years to amalgamate the two communities into one school. It's difficult right now to argue two facilities. So the argument is should it be in this community or that community. It's an ongoing debate between two communities, but certainly it's an area that needs to be discussed and addressed.

And when I look at the budget that was presented before us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sad part about this budget is that the increase the government talks about and the Minister of Education will be bringing to our attention will not cover, as the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association), even the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation have pointed out, the increase in the Department of Education will not cover the salaries. And that's just the teachers' salaries. What about all the other salaries?

And I've talked to some of the local board members and the concern they have is that in order to maintain the level of programming they have there today, the Saskatchewan

taxpayer, through property taxes, is going to most likely see a higher tax on their property in order to cover the costs that the boards of education are facing.

So, Mr. Speaker . . . or Deputy Speaker, when we look at this budget, while we compliment the government for reducing that provincial sales tax, while . . . But we're sorry that they didn't look at the income tax portion of it because that's a portion that hits every taxpayer in this province, and address even a portion of it.

Mr. Speaker, we're not . . . Deputy Speaker, we're not saying we'd do that all in one year. In fact, if the members opposite were being truthful with the people of Saskatchewan, they would admit that the Saskatchewan Party platform indicates over a period of years the provincial sales tax would be reduced.

And the former member of Highways is talking about it means debt. It means responsible treatment and level of reduction of taxes in line with creating a greater economic climate in this province, so that this province, so that this province could go ahead and the taxes would be there.

And if the Minister of Agriculture talks about debt, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I find interesting — that member was sitting in this Assembly prior to the 1991 election when the current Premier of this province said that he could govern the province with \$4.5 billion. Now the current Premier's bringing in \$5.5 billion and he's barely governing the province. In fact he has sucked the Liquor and Gaming commission dry in order to present a so-called positive budget to us today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I realize that when you get into debating a budget speech, certainly you're going to hit a nerve. And we recognize that. Certainly government members will hit a nerve with us when they speak. But what we are attempting to do and what our party plans to do, and coming back to that question that the member from Moose Jaw . . .

(1530)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in coming back to the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow and his comments about the Saskatchewan Party, and then of course the Minister of Agriculture decided he had to get into the fray as well and I'm looking forward to the debate.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pleasure of being an opposition member at the current time is we'll have lots of . . . an ample opportunity to debate with the Minister of Agriculture when we get into his estimates because I guarantee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just from what we've seen and what we've been hearing in the last little while, that the agriculture community . . . And when I say agriculture community, I'm not just talking to farmers out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even in the city of Regina, how many businesses are directly reliant on the agriculture community? And the Minister of Agriculture knows that. And this budget is certainly void of any real commitment to agriculture, the

economic engine of this province. So we'll be looking forward to that debate.

But coming back to the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow who has joined in with his colleagues, which disappoints me a little bit. I thought the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow would raise himself a little bit above that. But in regards to the debate over the forming of the Saskatchewan Party, the members of the current government need to realize that there was a grassroots group that were asked to sit down and put together a formula in regards to the formation of the Saskatchewan Party.

And I'm pleased to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, contrary to what the member had indicated, I talked to a number of my constituents in my constituency regarding resigning and how they felt about the issue. Now I will admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I talked to people who would be out there working for me. And I talked to people who were Reformers, I talked to some Liberal members, I talked to certainly Conservative members — that's the background I came from. I didn't necessarily talk to NDP members. I'll admit that. But of all the debate I had in my constituency, the only people that really came up to me were individuals I know would never, and never will — never have and never will — vote for me; I knew exactly where their vote was coming from.

But the people I talked to had certainly indicated to me that they didn't see that while . . . there was any reason why I should be stepping aside. A general election will come along and people will determine. By that time you've already had a chance for the party to get up and running, you've had a chance to bring policy forward and to show us whether or not you're a party and you're a member that's worth supporting and sending back to the Legislative Assembly.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take great pride in having put my name forward. I'm pleased to have had the support of many of my constituents over the past number of years to stand in this Assembly, to represent it, to speak out on their views; to represent, speak out on the agricultural issues or on the family issues, some of the core family issues. Whether it's education, whether it's in health care, or whether it's in highways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been a privilege and it has been an honour.

And I look forward to again representing or going out and speaking to my constituents seeking their support when this Premier and his NDP government decide to screw up their courage and call an election.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Murrell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. March 26, 1999 was budget day in Saskatchewan — a day of hope, of fulfilment, of expectation, of commitment. A day, Mr. Speaker, that charts our course into the new century. A day when we as government members experience the satisfaction of achieving positive results for our people.

A day of expectation from our people, our chambers of

commerce, our school divisions, our health boards, our municipal governments, our farmers, our labour. A day of commitment made by this government to the people of Saskatchewan that we would maintain a balanced approach, committing to pay down the debt, committing needed dollars to necessary services, committing to cutting taxes.

A day, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan await. Too often we all have high expectations and often, through the good work of the Finance minister and his department, these expectations have been met and frequently exceeded.

But we need to be realistic also. In 1991 when this government assumed office, tough decisions had to be made. How to get our fiscal house back in order after years of deficit and debt in the 1980s. Tory debt, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of almost \$15 billion dollars. And debt as all good businessmen know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, means interest payments to the tune of \$2 million each and every day.

Several years ago the member from Cumberland said, if \$1 million is owed and you paid \$1 per second, it would take 12 days to pay off this debt. If you owed a billion dollars and you paid \$1 per second, it will take 32 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to pay off this debt. The debt this province carries is about \$11.5 billion. And in order to put this debt in perspective, I think the tune of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" is appropriate.

People often say to me, why do you continually refer to the debt whenever we mention a need for the increased funding to us. And I continually remind these people, as I will remind all people of this province, that \$750 million servicing this province debt would be much better put . . . to much better use towards services — health care, education, highways — services for the benefits of our people. But the debt is a reality. That is why Saskatchewan has done more to reduce our debt load than any other government in Canada.

In 1991 the people of Saskatchewan told us to get our books balanced and then keep them balanced. Mr. Speaker, on March 26, our Finance minister tabled Saskatchewan's sixth consecutive balanced budget. This is what the Saskatchewan people expect of us and this is what we are going to continue to do.

The Tories are promising lower taxes. We have delivered lower taxes. We have reduced taxes in every single budget since we balanced the budget in 1994-95 — a reduction of income tax and elimination of income tax for 6,000 Saskatchewan people; a reduction of personal income tax from 50 per cent to 48 per cent; small business corporation income tax reduction was cut from 10 per cent to 8 per cent; a reduction of corporation income tax on manufacturing and processing profits; and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have cut the education and health tax from 9 per cent to 6 per cent, the lowest rate in 12 years.

That is three percentage points off the sales tax in three years, a benefit to all Saskatchewan families and a positive step in the right direction, especially for the constituencies on the west side of the province such as the Battleford-Cut Knife constituency. This is a most beneficial tax cut for my people and my businesses, for it allows them the flexibility to compete with our

Alberta neighbours.

Is it enough? No. But it is responsible, and it is continuing our commitment to reduce taxes as we can afford them without risking our balanced budget or our important services.

In addition to tax reduction, we are also working with the federal government to revise the income tax system to make it simpler and fairer.

There is one big difference between this government and the Tories and the Liberals. This government is committed to a balanced responsible budget, and our record shows our commitment. The Tories want to freeze health care and education spending; to cut taxes instead of paying down the debt; to finance tax cuts on the back of the sick, the poor, and our future — our youth.

The Tories are playing the same old tune. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had a lot of problems with this one because I had several tunes that fit. I thought it was appropriate that we gave them the tune "The Way We Were." The member from Swift Current has a different tune. He figures it should be "Roll Out The Barrel."

An Hon. Member: — How about the theme to *Titanic*.

Ms. Murrell: — Whatever, it's a theme that fits. Health care is and will always be a priority to this government, and is a concern to all of us at some point in our lives. That is why the number one priority of this budget is health care.

This year's budget contains the largest new investment in health in the history of the province — an increase of 195 million, more than 11 per cent above last year's budget. An increase that will benefit cancer patients, covering more cancer drugs and new programs for treatment and prevention. An increase to benefit the special health needs of women's health with increased funding for detection, prevention, and treatment of diseases such as breast cancer, and osteoporosis. An increase to ensure better working conditions for our health care providers. Increased funding to the College of Medicine to make sure we have the doctors and the surgeons we need.

Last year we provided rural practice establishment grants to encourage Saskatchewan-trained physicians to practise medicine in rural Saskatchewan, and we will continue to do so through the medical resident bursary program. In 1998, Mr. Speaker, we had 70 per cent of Saskatchewan's new medical graduates practising in the province.

An Hon. Member: — 70 per cent.

Ms. Murrell: — . . . double the number who stayed in the 1980s. And 26 new physicians have established practice in rural Saskatchewan, in communities such as La Ronge, Kindersley, and Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Lately rural areas are often incited to fear by opposition rhetoric and causing extreme anxiety for the health districts and community residents. Let me assure these communities, this government has no plan to close rural hospitals and we are committed to improving health services in rural and urban

Saskatchewan. Services that will improve and change the way these services are delivered.

Health services are constantly evolving, changing every day with modern technology meeting our needs in our communities. Our health system services 35,000 Saskatchewan residents every day. Every day 15,000 residents see a family doctor or specialist. Every day approximately 240 surgeries occur. Nursing homes care for 9,200 residents every day.

Yes, the delivery of services have changed, and also the health services themselves have changed. Hip replacements, cataract surgery, CAT scans, ultrasounds, MRIs, mental health services, screening for breast cancer and tuberculosis, occupational and speech therapy, health promotion and health research — all essential services that allow us to have the best health care in the world.

And we must continue to have change, to reduce the barriers to health information, sharing and improvements in health technology; to continue to initiate, to provide information about individual responsibility for health, the concept of wellness, population health, and the future and the role of the health system; to continue development of program service standards and objectives; to increase community and individual involvement in decision making regarding health services. We need to consult and review policies ensuring good health, such as social services, environment, and housing.

Through our health boards and our health providers, we can have a voice to assure us as individuals and as communities that our needs are being addressed. Essentials such as access to specialists which are providing services to Battlefords residents on a regular basis. Essentials such as renovations to the hospital and construction of a much needed long-term wing in Unity which this budget has provided funding for. A new building with a new name — the Unity and District Health Centre — coordinating and amalgamating health services.

And new technology enables the Greenhead and other boards to introduce new information to their district, the province, and the world via the Internet. Recently I have been attending community meetings with school divisions and teachers, health boards, and community leaders. And the concerns basically revolved around the increased demand of too many needs, not enough services.

I feel very strongly that many of these issues will be addressed through the primary health services initiatives. The purposes of the primary health services initiatives is to build upon and complement many of the programs and services provided by our district health boards under the umbrella of primary health services — developing, coordinating, and integrating services.

Providers in the delivery of primary health services could include family physicians, primary care and public health nurses, social workers, dentists, chiropractors, home care workers, home care nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, midwives.

The services provided could encompass clinic visits for health problems, prevention programs, prenatal care, treatment of illness and injury, referral, counselling, pain management, home

care, and outreach programs.

(1545)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, primary health services is a team approach. And team members use their expertise to ensure positive results for everyone. Examples of effective team approaches include the following.

During a checkup with her primary care nurse, Sharon, a 40-year-old, expressed concerns about feeling tired. After further exploration of the problem, the nurse suspected that Sharon may be a diabetic and arranged some simple tests and an appointment with the health centre's doctor. After discussing the diagnosis of diabetes with her family doctor, appointments were made for Sharon to meet with the district's social worker and dietitian to discuss the impact of her health condition on her family and lifestyle.

The social worker, dietitian, physician, and primary care nurse met with Sharon to develop a plan of action. Sharon was given information on diet and agreed to attend the next scheduled meeting of a local volunteer support group for people with chronic illnesses. She was given a schedule of nutrition and activity classes at the health centre. The social worker noted that Sharon had a supportive family, adequate income, and the personal resources to manage most issues.

A primary care nurse assigned to coordinate her care called Sharon two weeks later to see how she was doing. The primary care nurse then consulted with other team members who agreed on assignment of responsibilities. Sharon will be contacted by a member of the clinic for further assessment and follow-up as needed.

And primary health services initiative can also support a family's needs.

Caitlin is a seven-year-old girl who lives on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. Caitlin's grade 2 teacher noticed that her reading skills were not progressing and contacted the public health nurse.

The nurse performed a hearing test, which was abnormal, then referred Caitlin to her family doctor at the primary health site. The doctor detected fluid in her left ear, probably the result of an ear infection. Medication was prescribed and plans put in place for Caitlin to receive reading assistance from the teacher's assistant.

During follow-up the health nurse noted that her parents did very little reading to her at home. The information was passed on at a regular primary health services meeting and the primary care nurse decided to follow up with Caitlin's mother.

Caitlin's mom said her husband used to read to the children but had lately been drinking heavily because of his lower back pain. Because she has difficulty reading herself, she hasn't been able to help Caitlin.

Caitlin's mom was linked up with a tutor to help her with reading and a meeting was arranged for the family to discuss Caitlin's school progress with a social worker.

The social worker referred Caitlin's father to his family physician to address the father's problems with depression, and to a chiropractor for assessment and treatment of his chronic low back pain.

The family agreed to continue counselling with a social worker.

A recent needs assessment completed by a district health board highlighted several issues affecting youth in the district. Low self-esteem, above-average teen pregnancy rates, and many drinking and driving violations were noted.

The primary health service team took the initiative with the public health nurse and convened a meeting with members of the student council, teachers, parent association, the district's addiction worker, public health, ambulance personnel, and the local RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

The strategy includes development of a peers helping peers program by the teacher, youth council, the parents' association, the district mental health worker, and public health; individual counselling about risk factors by the nurse or physician, public awareness and education, RCMP check stops on a more regular basis that include counselling.

Town council dedicated a week in June to safe driving. Adding a drinking and driving component to the school's driver ed program to be delivered by the addictions worker, ambulance personnel, and the RCMP. Mandatory addictions counselling of the youth in conjunction with the parents if the youth receives a violation.

These are valuable people resources that many of us have in our communities. People working together to find solutions, a team approach. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this program will work very effectively with the role of the school task force to find solutions of challenges facing our educators, our police, and our social workers.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to congratulate the following Greenhead team members who have recently achieved continuing education accomplishments: Shirley Parkinson, public health nurse; Rob Degenstein, Emergency Medical Services; Theresa Skinner, Emergency Medical Services; Rhonda Bartlett, Emergency Medical Services; Kim Halter, community EMS Emergency Medical Services) co-ordinator; and Yvonne Wiesner, director of nursing services. Congratulations to all of you on your achievements.

I've gone into detail, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I believe that we are reforming health care and as society changes we must change.

Now I would like to touch on the Liberal platform announced recently. The first plank is health care and I quote: "Saskatchewan Liberals believe the time for tinkering (in health care) is over," said Melenchuk. And the first tinkering this party will do is reduce the number of health district boards from 32 to 12 to 14, create 10 to 12 regional hospitals. Sounds like a Super 7 — you pick the number. And with administrative cost savings provide expanded diagnostic and treatment services. — the tune that comes to mind with this plank is "All I need is a Miracle."

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is one of our key sectors and our farmers are in a financial crisis. They cannot compete with the federal treasuries of the United States and the European union. The current downturn in commodity prices, especially grains and hogs, increases the urgency of addressing both short and long-term solutions. Recently we announced that we will participate in the federal agriculture income disaster assistance program or AIDA. This is a \$140 million commitment by the people of Saskatchewan to our agriculture community.

In addition we are providing \$20 million in loan assistance to hog farmers, an \$85 million top-up for producers on their NISA accounts, and we are working towards improving NISA. We have reduced crop insurance premiums to farmers and excluded PST (provincial sales tax) on farm machinery and repairs, as well as the exemptions from the fuel tax on diesel, and rebate on gasoline.

This budget continues to support our agriculture industry by providing more funding to farmers per capita than any other government in Canada. We as farmers and rural residents know that the farm situation is tough for many of us. And we know the reasons — drought, freight charges, elevator closures, high input costs, poor commodity prices.

Now we have the Estey report wanting to remove the freight cap. The federal government says that there are new rules, that we are playing on a level playing field. Some level playing field.

Our producers have been left undefended in a marketplace distorted by subsidies. Canada provides subsidies amounting to the grand total of \$15 per tonne. The United States subsidizes each tonne of wheat to the tune of \$72. The European Community subsidizes each tonne of wheat to the tune of \$116. The tune our federal government is singing is, "I Walk the Line".

Mr. Speaker, our children are our future, and to ensure their future, this budget has increased the funding to education and training so that our children, our youth, and our working force can share the future. Operating grants to schools will strengthen programs, school-based services, and access to computers and the Internet. Capital funding has been committed for over 100 school improvement projects, modernizing and creating a positive learning environment for our students and our educators.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than 400 million in K to 12 funding, the largest amount ever invested in our students and teachers; \$208 million in our universities and federal colleges; and 206 million in training; 31 million more than last year for our Saskatchewan training strategy of skills training through JobStart and Future Skills; for expanded apprenticeship programs, for entrepreneurship training and for SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and regional colleges.

We are moving forward together, investing in our future with our partners educating and building strong links between training and jobs. As well we are investing in roads and highways — 234.6 million in '99-2000, a \$15 million increase to address the challenges facing rural highways, and there's a

further 10 million in revenue sharing for infrastructure in roads and bridges.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we are investing our province's dollars into highways with a concise plan, assisted by our partners such as the west central committee and other area groups so that our network of roads enables our producers and our processors and other value-added products, direct access to the marketplace.

To assist our rural communities with RCMP costs, this budget commits 1 million more to help keep our communities safe. And we are proud of our building independence program and our award-winning child action plan — programs that support those who are less fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to move forward together with a responsible, balanced approach. We are enhancing the programs and services people need — health, education, highways, justice. We are reducing the debt, targeting 100 million this year; and we are promoting growth by cutting taxes, and we will continue to do so as we can afford them in a balanced and sustainable way.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this budget. It is realistic, progressive, and responsible, and truly deserves the theme from "Masterpiece". Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Battleford-Cut Knife I will be supporting the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to take just a few minutes to put on record some of the things that are in the budget that are of benefit to the constituency of Shellbrook-Spiritwood.

But before I carry on with that, I would like to take a little bit of time to talk about something that has interested me when I was reading some reports. Since the logging industry and the forestry industry is a significant portion of the economic well-being of people in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency, whenever there is material that comes through related to forest companies and that, I try to read some of the information.

And just today I was going through NorSask's annual report for last year and it had an interesting paragraph in it that I thought would bring some interest to the legislature and some of the people who are involved in the lumbering industry. What NorSask has done over the past number of years is speeded up their operations by putting in a multi-line system for sawing logs. And so what they've done is they put in a large line, cantor line, and then a small log line, and as well what they call a peewee line. So here's what has taken place while they were implementing it and some of the problems that they ran into. And I think anyone running a business could well enough understand what it was about.

Once scanned, the logs are dumped into one or two . . . into one of two large log bins or two small log bins or one peewee bin, which feeds the cantor lines. Finally the new system was tweaked to make things work even better.

The bins were positioned at a better height to reduce the chance of jams. Certain belts were speeded up to create a smooth flow. And this is the line that I think would be of most interest to the MLAs — and most importantly, a computer bug responsible for randomly dropping big logs into the peewee bin was finally discovered and solved the problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you've been in an area where you were working with logs and you realize what happens when you place a large log where there isn't room for it to go, you can well imagine what took place — everything shuts down and somebody has to get in there to dig the thing out. And NorSask ran into this problem because of a computer bug.

(1600)

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the . . . the item that I would like to cover that I think is of interest to the people in the Shellbrook-Spiritwood constituency is a little bit to do with what the Saskatchewan Tory Party has been putting forward when they have been going out with meetings, and they've given some news releases to these meetings related to converting hospitals in Hafford and places like that.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that the first news release that they put out indicated that they were going to have five meetings. And since then they've had the first three meetings, and I haven't seen any news release about the next five or ten meetings. I think that a number of the MLAs on this side have found it very entertaining and valuable to have the Tories paying for the halls so that we could go there and explain what's really taking place and receive the benefit for it, as the member for Redberry did in the one in Hafford.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out to the Tory Party in this Assembly that one of the places that they indicated on their list of — let me see, I don't know what the number is and I won't take the time to count right now but they have on a list here — one of the places is Big River.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's of a great deal of interest to me that they would have picked that place as one where the hospital was closing because some two weeks ago I was up there with the assistant minister of Health, and we were looking at the plans and the grounds and where they're going to build a new health facility onto the long-term care facility which would actually increase the number of useful beds.

And I want to then take just a little bit of time to say that on page 12, the Minister of Finance in his speech related to the budget said: "In 1999-2000, Saskatchewan's Health budget will increase by 195 million." Eleven per cent more than it was last year, Mr. Speaker, and of that 11 per cent, it says that the budget will provide funding for improved nursing home and health care facilities in Balcarres, Big River, and Unity.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that's an interesting thing to point out to the Conservatives in the House here, that the places that they've picked for . . . where there's a closure and said that there's a closure, are actually some of them that are listed in the budget for building.

I'd like to also point out that the Health budget is going to

provide a 12 per cent increase to district health boards, and they will receive \$139 million more this year than they received last year.

Mr. Speaker, the Health budget, and what is taking place in health care in the province of Saskatchewan in my mind, is nothing short of being unique and very advanced thought in going ahead. Because what it's doing is it's bringing about a change to the health care system, revamping it for new technology, revamping it for new medicines, and shifting the health care from what was implemented by the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) in this province to what is now needed in this new technological world and doing a very good job at succeeding at that in a time of real financial problems for the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it isn't to say that there isn't problems in health care, but I'd like to point out what problems are there in other provinces of Canada. And I have here a news release, actually a copy of a news report that was in *The Leader-Post* on March 1, '99, and it goes on to say some of the following: that there was 123,000 accounts in arrears for people in Alberta who are paying their health care premiums.

And if you extrapolate from that what the Alberta Department of Health has said about it, they say that there's approximately three people involved in each one of these accounts. So you're looking at about 370,000 who have not paid up their health premium in the province of Alberta, and they owe something to the Alberta government of something over 80 million.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the Alberta government has set aside something close to \$10 million for collections and they're using not only internally but external collection agencies in order to mount this collection program.

And I think that that's one of the things that needs to be pointed out about the difference between the taxation structure in the province of Saskatchewan and that in Alberta. And it ties in directly with the policies that the Sask Tories in the province of Saskatchewan want to implement and that is that they want policies implemented where you pay directly for what you're receiving and not policies that tax those areas where there is money available and spends it in the areas where there is need. And I think that this fundamental difference shows up very clearly in what is taking place in Alberta related to their health care premiums.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to cover one other item before I sit down and that has to do with the remarks that have come from the opposition that indicate that they do not believe that we have reduced the taxes in the province of Saskatchewan. And so I did a little research and checked up on some of the information that's available related to the gross domestic production in the province of Saskatchewan for the past 10 years or so. And I'd like to just bring this information to the attention of the House.

In 1989-90, if you do not consider the interest payments that were being made by the government of the day, the amount of expenditures in the province of Saskatchewan amounted to 20 per cent of the GDP in that year. And the reason, Mr. Speaker, that I removed the interest payments is that if you included

those interest payments, it would be 22 per cent.

But as has been said by members of the opposition, whenever you are operating with a deficit you are really just deferring taxes. So I bring . . . so I point out the two differences there. But, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at this budget, 1999-2000, the GDP, the expenditures of this government is 19.5 per cent of GDP — a half a per cent less than that percentage used 10 years previously without interest payments.

But if you subtract, Mr. Speaker, the interest payments from the expenditures of the government today, you come up with the interesting stats that it's only 16.5 per cent of the GDP that's spent in the province of Saskatchewan.

So you're looking at, approximately, in a 10-year period, the 10 years that there's been an NDP government in power for eight of the years, you come to a position where there's been a drop of over 4 per cent, three and a half per cent in the amount of income that the people of the province of Saskatchewan generate that is collected in taxes by the province of Saskatchewan and spent on their behalf.

And there is a substantial reduction, Mr. Speaker, in the amount of taxes that are collected. And that shows up, Mr. Speaker, because this government in its managing the economy and managing its expenditures have been very interested in seeing to it that they did a very good job.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have looked at some of the other comparisons related to that, to the taxes in the province of Saskatchewan, and I'd like to just point them out. For anyone that wants to look at it, they can look at the budget address because they're in there. But I think that they should be brought to the floor of the House and talked about a bit.

If you look at the provincial debts and the provincial debt as a per cent of the GDP, in the years 1993 it was about 70 per cent, and today it has dropped to around just under 40 per cent or 39 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a significant change in the economic viability of the province of Saskatchewan, and I want people to understand that.

Mr. Speaker, the same can be said if you look at it in terms of actual dollars. There's been a significant drop from just around 15 billion to about eleven five this year, and that's a substantial reduction in our debt over that same period of time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time that you've given me. And I will . . . I would like to thank the people in my constituency for their support and for the questions that they've asked me and for the opportunity I have had to represent them. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well I didn't speak to the Throne Speech and that wasn't easy because I've always got a lot to say. But I'm going to speak today against the amendment and in favour of the budget.

And I'm going to start by saying a few words about why I don't support the amendment. And it has a lot to do with the authors

of the amendment and my basic lack of trust in anything proposed by this opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now there's two reasons that I lack trust. One of them is their close relationship with Grant Devine who, as we'll remember, recently was at the unite the right conference. And you wonder why I would raise that. But at that conference, Mr. Devine was supporting the notion that what they needed was a new flag of convenience so they could all hide their political origins under a new name.

And I have to say that it struck me as having quite a bit of similarity to the strategies employed by the opposition here who are also flying under a flag of convenience. Now you . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I know that the opposition will be interested in what I have to say next because anybody who was following the unite the Right conference knows that was quite a debate over policy but there was one policy that in the end they managed to agree to. The Reform were holding out for a Triple-E Senate; they wanted it equal, elected, and effective. And the Tories were holding out for a quadruple E Senate, but they gave up their demands when they found out that incarcerated was spelled with an "i". So it was good though that they were able to agree on one policy.

The second reason I wouldn't support an amendment put forward by this opposition is because it just doesn't add up — the kind of things that they support. They want lower taxes, a higher spending on selected areas, a freeze of key social and education programs. And basically I don't think they address the fundamentals of fiscal responsibility, a thriving economy or a thriving community. In their view they want to privatize public services, sell the Crowns. Now I don't know how I could support an amendment that had such a devious and ill-advised origin.

(1615)

The other reason I might have trouble supporting something that they put forward is these comments by Elwin Hermanson in speaking to the chamber of commerce in P.A., and they asked why it was that his party didn't have more women candidates. And he said, well, it's difficult to get women involved in politics since their concerns are with the home and they don't like dealing with conflict. And some of the women I guess who heard his remarks dealt with their immediate conflict by walking out of the meeting. And I think women thought that our fight for progress was over but apparently your leader has a desire to take us back into the ice age here.

The other reason I wouldn't support an amendment put forward by this group of people is that they are trying to make ordinary citizens afraid that public health care is collapsing to force them to abandon medicare and to get into private health models of health delivery. And I guess you have your reasons for doing that but campaigns of fear against public services, in my view, are not the way that anybody would want to go.

Elwin Hermanson goes further by saying that he would support the federal government surrendering its responsibility for health care to the provinces. And this is just on the heels of finally managing to get the federal government to put back 2.5 billion of the \$6 billion that they removed from health care.

And what's he prepared to sacrifice on this? The concepts of universality and federal funding responsibility. So again I have difficulty supporting an amendment that is arising out of that ideology.

Let me talk a little bit about the health system in Alberta for a moment. I found this a particularly interesting article. It's about the premiums from this non-taxed province where single Albertans pay the government 408 per year for coverage, and families, 816 a year, which is about 14 per cent of the budget.

Now listen to this because you'll be interested, because I know you care about these things in the opposition. Dave was an Edmonton food service worker and the hotel that was hiring Dave went bankrupt. And one of the things they'd been doing to save money toward the end of the time they were in business was they had not been paying for Dave's health care premiums which was part of his employment contract.

So Dave goes to the hospital to get services and he finds out that he's not eligible because his health care premiums haven't been paid. And now he's afraid to go to a doctor because not only will he not get health care but he'll get turned into a collection agency. I don't think this is the kind of universal health program that we're interested in.

And just a further late breaking report on this approach to health care says the government is pledging to crack down — I love that language used with people who are only trying to get health services — to crack down on the thousands of Albertans who try to get doctor services free without paying medicare premiums. He estimates about 250,000 Albertans are involved and those in arrears are being chased by collection agencies.

I was actually embarrassed to find out that this exists in Canada where I was under the belief that everybody was covered by health care. So I just say again that I don't understand why you in the opposition would support these kinds of approaches.

And you purport to support small-business people, farmers, working people, but yet these people don't benefit from the kind of agenda that you're putting forward. You're, in my view, putting forward an agenda that calls for an economic free-for-all in our society. Certainly all your anti-worker Bills and all the other Bills that I've seen you table in the House would suggest that you're . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now the hon. minister I know will be aware of rule 28, which requires that debate occur through the Chair, and I'm sure that she'll want to honour that in her debate in response to the Speech from the Throne.

Order, order. Order.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for bringing that to my attention. And I notice that you're interested in what I have to say so I will try to direct myself more directly to you.

The economic free-for-all that you would support will only benefit the largest of corporations and are of no benefit to small-town Saskatchewan or to small-business Saskatchewan.

There's a quote here that I want to read to you because I don't know if you're familiar with Robert Kaplan the author, but the headline is, "Corporate power called bad news for democracy":

Corporations and big businesses are in the early stages of becoming the new forms of political sovereignty and in fact the 200 largest corporations employ less than three-quarters of one per cent of the world's workforce but control 25 per cent of the world's economic activity.

Now these are situations that lead to unrest, and everybody knows that peace and prosperity go hand in hand. And I just warn you on your agenda of economic free-for-all that you're not benefiting people that you choose to support.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about then and now because of course a lot of us are known as the baby boom generation — although I'm neither a baby or booming at the moment, but this is a name . . . well maybe a little booming. But one of the things that characterizes our generation is the pressure that the large numbers of us place on things like pension plans and health services.

And recently I was listening to the fellow who's the Chair of the International Year of the Older Person, and he was making a presentation to a group of senior women. And one of the facts he mentioned during his presentation is that 43 per cent of the province's health budget is spent on seniors.

Now he wasn't saying this as a way to make people feel bad or feel responsible for spending; he was basically saying it's good that we're able to provide these services but because of the large numbers of us that are aging, that this is becoming a more expensive proposition.

And I do want to emphasize that a lot of things have changed since we were younger. Then, when we were younger, we feared being caught with *Hustler* magazine, but now people fear being caught by *Hustler* magazine.

Then, we would want to get out to a new, hip joint, but now we worry about getting a new hip joint. In the old days we had long hair all of us, but now some of us are longing for hair. In the old days we watched John Glenn's historic flight with our parents, and now we're watching it with our kids, or our grandkids as the case may be.

Then, our concern was passing a driving test, now it's passing a vision test. And then, we used to say whatever, and now we say it depends. So a lot of things have changed, Mr. Speaker, over time.

But we are a hardy bunch here in Saskatchewan. At 10 degrees centigrade, Vancouverites try to turn on the heat and Saskatchewanians plant gardens in the same circumstance. I don't know what it is, Mr. Speaker, that you do to inspire so much group participation. I'll just have to be a little more careful here.

The Speaker: — Order! Now the Chair is much pleased to see the enthusiasm for debate on the budget, but the Chair does want to encourage all hon. members to put their considered remarks on the record so that everyone may enjoy them rather than shouting them across the floor.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I don't want to put too fine of a point on it, but we are a hardy people here in Saskatchewan. At 10 degrees centigrade Vancouverites try to turn on the heat and in Saskatchewan we plant gardens. At minus five degrees centigrade Torontonians wear coats, gloves, and wool hats and we throw on a T-shirt.

At minus 30 degrees Calgarians fly away to Mexico and that's time for our light jacket. But at minus 300 degrees centigrade, I don't know if I can say — do I have to say heck freezes over? — and the Saskatchewan Roughriders win the Grey Cup. So we're a sturdy lot of people that manage to survive a lot.

And balance, I would say, is the hallmark of this province. We're progressive people but we also have a conservative side to us. And in a way you would think that would be very fertile ground for a group of people with a conservative philosophy, but the thing that creates problems for them is people in Saskatchewan also like to co-operate. And when we were elected in '92, voters said, let's co-operate to clean up that sorry Tory mess that was left behind. And I think it was very clear that that's what people wanted us to do.

So our first term of government was really about fiscal responsibility because it was quite a mess and it took quite a while to get it in hand and to balance the budget, even though we were the first government in Canada to eliminate our deficit and come in with a balanced budget.

Now the second term of government we dedicated ourselves to helping strengthen communities and strengthen the kind of decision-making processes and community participation that took place.

And I believe that our third term will be about the new millennium and building on the foundations that were constructed in the first two terms. Because in order to construct the kind of world that we want to live in, you need good foundations and good fundamentals.

And I want to talk just for a minute about, I guess it's my version of our vision for the new millennium. And I see it as being a world-class workforce in a world-class workplace in a world-class economy, all supported in the environment of world-class communities and environment.

And I just want to talk a little bit about how I see us building the fundamentals of these different parts of this vision.

For a world-class economy, there's more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before in the history of the province. So while the opposition might be critical of our achievement, Mr. Speaker, it's better than anything that they or any of the predecessors have ever done.

Our jobs are of better quality for those that are less fortunate than in Alberta. Women fare better in Saskatchewan. Our

incomes for women are at a higher level than they are in Alberta. And in that mecca of plenty, they are showing increasing levels of poverty.

Now Alberta charges more for university education and spends less on health. And if we base our provincial comparison on sales tax alone, Alberta might be the place to be; but if we base it on car insurance and health premiums, then Saskatchewan clearly wins in a landslide, Mr. Speaker.

In the area of taxation, we've rolled back the sales tax harmonization. Prior to 1991 . . . and I'm sure the members opposite will remember that families were paying PST on children's clothing, medication, residential electricity, gas and other essential goods and services.

In 1992 the child component of the Saskatchewan tax reduction was increased by \$50 per child. In 1995 the debt reduction surtax was eliminated for low-income earners and reduced by 150 per taxpayer up to 300 for a dual income household.

I know it creates a lot of pain for the opposition to listen to this but if we go over it enough times they'll remember it.

In 1997 the PST was reduced by 2 per cent, and of course we've gone another point now. The base on our personal income tax rate was reduced by 50 per cent to 48, and there's additional relief at that level now flowing from the federal changes which affect our Saskatchewan tax base.

And the Saskatchewan Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan employment supplement were implemented. And I think these are important tax changes that have affected families in Saskatchewan.

The other fundamental that's important for a world-class economy is that the debt has dropped from 70 per cent of GDP, which is just a startling figure that anybody would have run it up that high, to 40 per cent now in 1999, and will be less than 35 per cent by 2002.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, we stand a good chance of continuing to have this success as long as the opposition isn't elected.

Now the next point I want to move on to is the notion of a world-class workplace. And when we talk about a world-class workplace in Saskatchewan, we talk about safe, fair, and co-operative workplaces. On the safety front, we have a number of Acts that protect workers, including occupational health and safety, labour standards, radiation health and safety regulations, prevention services branch.

In the area of fair workplaces, we believe that people have a right to benefit from the profit created by their labour and the services that they provide. And so we have a number of mechanisms to ensure good collective bargaining.

And we actually have the . . . And probably the opposition and the third party chirping will be interested in this figure — that we have the lowest number of time-loss days from labour disruption of any province in Canada. And I think that's a very good record for our level of co-operation in solving disputes. Part of that is a result of the fact that the Department of Labour

is taking a much more proactive approach to offering dispute-resolution services to people in the community.

The other issues that exist for workers include The Pension Benefits Act 1992, The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act 1992, The Workers' Compensation Act 1979. These are all ways that we try to make workplaces safe.

(1630)

Probably one of the areas that people will find the most interesting will be the Farm Safety Advisory Committee because a lot of our accidents in Saskatchewan happen on the farm, Mr. Speaker. And we've had great success, actually, with the children's . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I think all hon. members will find it a great deal easier to listen if they aren't using their mouths at the same time. And I will recognize the Minister of Labour and ask for the co-operation of all hon. members to allow her to proceed in debate on the budget in an uninterrupted manner.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker. I was hoping actually, when I prepared my remarks, that people would hang on every word, but I obviously will have to do a little more work here to get their attention.

The Farm Safety Advisory Committee is an important committee. And one of the things that we do, actually — I think one of the members of the House, her daughter was involved in getting this started — is the farm calendar program where children do posters about farm safety issues and are able in their classrooms to learn about issues about how to safely be involved in farm operation, and issues about riding on machinery and those kinds of things. And it's been a very successful program because we do have still more deaths than we would want to see in the farm occupation. And so we're very pleased that our department has a farm safety advisory committee and that they're doing that kind of work.

This year we also were involved in the balancing work and family initiative, because many people are feeling pressured by the demands of a two-income family to try to also pay the attention they want to pay to their families. So we tried to work in a very positive way in achieving a high quality workplace in Saskatchewan where people's needs are met while at the same time meeting the needs of the employers for a highly, highly skilled workforce.

And that's why we move on to the discussion of world-class workers. In the time that we've been elected we've implemented a new training strategy in Saskatchewan and started to reorient all of our institution towards being more responsive and more meaningful to both young people and employers. Whether the government is the employer or the private sector is the employer, to provide those kind of employees that really have the relevant training and experience for today's world.

We've made improvements to the student assistance program in last year's budget that makes it easier for students with children to attend school and not end up with burdensome debt loads.

We've created an employability assistance program for disabled persons, and there's more people out in the workforce today who are disabled than there ever has been before. And I think people appreciate that chance to contribute.

The apprenticeship and skills training area, there's a new model being developed that . . . the legislation is in front of the House this year. And it combines education, labour, and business in an industry-led approach to apprenticeship and skills training.

In the area of the changing nature of the workforce, there is a Metis development fund and as well an Aboriginal employment development program which is helping speed up the entry of Aboriginal people into the labour market. And these are very successful programs that are based on partnerships between people who see that our common future lays in dealing with these kinds of issues.

In the area of economic and co-operative development there's been more empowerment of communities through neighbourhood development organizations. And the environment and resource management area of course works closely with SARCAN on assisting people to get into the labour market through that door.

So I think we have a world-class workforce and a world-class education system. And I think that when you hear reports from businesses outside the province, they say one of the reasons they like to do business in Saskatchewan and one of the reasons why they actively recruit Saskatchewan people for their companies is because we have a strong work ethic. And because we've made an investment in education, we have the kind of highly skilled people that people want to hire. So I think that speaks well for the kind of choices that we've made in investing in people.

The next thing I want to speak to is a world-class community and certainly a whole range of initiatives, from the Saskatchewan child benefit, the child action strategy, the office of disability issues, the new housing strategy, assistance for people on social assistance for school supplies and other expenses like that. We've got the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate that make sure that people get the services they're entitled to.

In areas of labour law we've increased parental, maternity, and adoption leave so that people can spend that important time getting their family started.

We have The Victims of Domestic Violence Act that helps protect women in their homes against violence. We've moved into areas of restorative justice to make sure that criminals are not just punished but that in future we have a society where we have fewer people committing crimes because we've taken better approaches to justice.

This year we've got the child abuse strategy and resources allocated to that. So I just want to say that I think we've done a lot of work with the integrated school-based programs, expansions to community schools, in this year's budget in creating that environment for strong communities and world-class communities that hopefully the United Nations will continue to recognize in the future.

The last comments I want to make, Mr. Speaker, involve a little bit about the budget. And we know this budget was about paying down the debt, cutting taxes, enhancing health care, and those being the main priorities that people identified to us in the pre-election consultations.

Now I just want to comment a little bit on the remarks of the Leaders of the Opposition and the Third Party regarding the budget.

Now Elwin Hermanson, I could go over his remarks but I think that there's such a huge lack of credibility there that there's really not much point in spending much time on it. And I think you've probably heard enough about it that you could give that speech by now, Mr. Speaker, even though I know you wouldn't because it would compromise your independence as a official of the House.

Now Jim Melenchuk shows a little common sense when he says that this wasn't a bad budget. And I think the opposition should get on board with Mr. Melenchuk, who has the honesty to recognize a good thing when he sees it. One minute, Myron. So I'm just going to close by affirming that I speak against the amendment for all the reasons that I've stated and in favour of the budget for all the reasons that I've stated.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I was sitting back the other day thinking a bit about the budget and those wonderful words from our Finance minister and trying to absorb them and determining what it really means and . . . but first I had to go back and think about where we came from.

Because I remember in about 1990 I was nominated to run for our party in the constituency of then Kelsey-Tisdale and we realized there was some great difficulties in Saskatchewan, great financial difficulties. There was no budget passed in 1991. When we did in fact win the election I believe it was the Gass Commission that opened the books to find out exactly the situation of the province. So I was sitting back and looking back at all of those things — where we came from in 1991, the deficit.

The government of the day was spending a billion dollars a year more than what it was taking in and of course when that happens, you're creating a huge debt. Well when you create a debt, Mr. Speaker, there's interest to pay. So you have to pay the bills. You have to pay the interest on the debt. So when you have to do that, you have to take money from other areas to be able to do that, and the previous administration were borrowing great sums of money to try and give the services but on the other hand were just creating this debt and of course huge interest payments.

So what was happening then is the province . . . I guess we were sort of passing the debt to our children, doing things today what would have to be paid for by our children in the future. And of course when we came to power we didn't believe that that was the correct way to do it and so we had to really go to work and we had to tell the people of Saskatchewan the real situation, and

we did that. And we rolled up our sleeves and we got the scrub brush out and away we went.

Wasn't easy at the beginning because we, ourselves, the New Democrats, had to raise taxes in fact. We first of all got rid of the PST which was a really bad tax. It was sort of like the GST (goods and services tax) where it taxed us on our haircuts and on services to our vehicles and meals in the restaurant and our children's books and children's clothes and all those kinds of things. Well that wasn't good and we knew that so we got rid of that.

But we did have to raise the E&H tax because we had to get this debt under control. We had to stop the deficit, the spending more than what we were taking in each year. We had to bring that to a level to balance the budget as we say so that the debt wouldn't increase and we could in fact start paying it down and then we would pay less interest and then we would have more . . . we could have more money for services that the people of Saskatchewan really wanted.

So that's what we did, and we did have to, like I say, raise the taxes to some degree and we had to ask each department in the province to go back and to see where there were efficiencies within those departments. And I know, as Minister of Highways, we took the Department of Highways and we . . . we looked at management and we looked at the operation . . . the buildings we had out in the country and all of those things, and we made reductions there so that the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan wouldn't have to pay for some of those things and we could be as efficient as possible, still giving the services. With a little bit of increase . . . with the increase of taxes try to get this balanced budget, and of course in 1994 finally we got the province turned around. And all of a sudden we had a balanced budget. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that now today when I'm speaking in this House I'm talking about the sixth balanced budget — sixth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — What a change, what a change from the previous Tories over there sitting across not listening to this and they should. But sitting there and spending a billion dollars a year, Mr. Speaker, more than what they were taking in, in comparison to a government who look for every efficiency within government, had to in fact increase taxes for a while just to get everything balanced. And . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I think yes, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that they're listening and I'm very glad because they probably can learn something.

Like I mentioned, in 1994 we finally had the economy of the province turned around, and the finances are still very fragile, Mr. Speaker. But we were able then to start reducing taxes little by little and enhancing services little by little, and paying down that huge debt, because we didn't want that debt over our children's shoulders when they take over this province. We don't want that.

So little by little we continue to do that and that's what we call the balanced approach. And that's sort of I guess the flagship of this government, of the NDP government, is that balanced approach where we balanced the budget. And we take the surplus and we take one-third of that surplus and we put it to

reducing taxes, the taxes that we ask the people of Saskatchewan to pay to get our financial house in order to begin with. And we take one-third of that surplus, Mr. Speaker, and we pay down that huge debt.

And do you know that since 1994 we have paid \$3.4 billion on that debt that our children will not have to pay in the future, Mr. Speaker. We rolled up our sleeves; we took that scrub brush out; and we looked at every nook and cranny for all the savings we could and we found some, Mr. Speaker, and now we have less of a debt and I'm very proud of that.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also take one-third of that surplus and we put it into services to try and enhance services as those services need it. And in this budget of course we looked at health care primarily, but certainly looked at education and highways and other programs as well, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to talk just a little bit about health care. Well in the health care field, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of changes happening — not only in Saskatchewan but across this great nation. You see in the health care field there's new technology being developed and invented every day. And a province that will provide that service to its people must purchase that equipment when it can.

There's also new drugs, Mr. Speaker, new drugs invented every day. And those new drugs are not inexpensive; they're very expensive. And we have to supply . . . as a government we have to try and supply as best we can those drugs to the people that need them.

(1645)

And demographics, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan as across Canada, are changing. I think it was about 1939 when rural Saskatchewan peaked in population. Since 1939, rural Saskatchewan, the population has been declining. I know; I'm the eldest of a family of seven, lived on a quarter section or a section of land, and in those days there is lots of farmers that lived on sections of land, one section, raised large families. Now some of those farms are much larger, families are smaller in size generally, and so there has been a movement to the urban centres from the rural setting and the rural areas of the province.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll go back to about 1985. It was my understanding at that time that about 60 per cent of the people in Saskatchewan still lived in rural areas and 40 per cent lived in urban. Well now that's reversed, Mr. Speaker. Now there are about 60 per cent that lives in the urban centres and 40 per cent in the rural settings.

So can a health care system that was built for the '50s and '60s and '70s, could it provide the services necessary to the people in the '90s and in the year 2000? Well I think it needs changes, and all systems need to be changed and looked at on a continuing basis because of new technology, the cost of services and new drugs, and certainly demographics and those kinds of things, because the services that people demand now and ask for and need must be provided to them but they may be provided in a different way.

And so our government is taking charge of that and in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we are spending more in health care than ever before in the history of the province of Saskatchewan — \$1.9 billion, Mr. Speaker. About 42 cents on every dollar that the government takes in from taxes and from royalties and wherever we get our money from to provide the services to the people of Saskatchewan, 40 to 42 cents, Mr. Speaker, goes to health care. What are we going to do with that extra money, Mr. Speaker? We're going to look at waiting lists for surgeries. We're going to try and improve that. We're going to look at better treatment in regards to cancer, and also women's health services — osteoporosis, Mr. Speaker, and breast cancer.

Twelve per cent of the . . . 12 per cent increases to the district health boards. The district health boards now provide services in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because we feel it's better to provide services in the northeast . . . services that the people in the northeast need in comparison to the services perhaps in the southwest may be altogether different — the needs may be altogether different. So health districts will look at their needs in their districts and provide those services, Mr. Speaker. And so that's why we went to the health district concept and we believe it's working very well. Certainly there is . . . Everything hasn't run as smoothly as we would like but when we're working with a health care system as big as the one in Saskatchewan, it's not easy to change, and it's been there for a long time.

And of course there's the scare tactics by the opposition, which . . . As you change the system, as people in the local communities change the way they deliver services to their areas, there's always the scare tactics of the opposition who say, well your hospital's going to close or this is going to close or this isn't going to happen or whatever. And so we have to beware of that as well.

I know that, talking a little bit about the scare tactics, I was in Carrot River at a meeting the other day where the Saskatchewan Party, I believe, advertised to have this meeting about the Carrot River hospital. And there the health district, I believe, are talking of changes to the services offered in that community. And they're talking about an amalgamated service with acute care and swing beds and respite care along with the long-term care home.

And of course the opposition party were there to tell people that this was no good. But of course the opposition didn't have their plan. They didn't have or couldn't tell the people what they would do if they were government. And I think the people there really kind of expected that. They didn't expect that the Liberals, who were also there, Mr. Speaker . . . The Liberal leader, Mr. Melenchuk, and the Leader of the Tories, Mr. Hermanson, were arguing amongst themselves about who would be the greatest.

And the people were not there to hear that political debate, Mr. Speaker. They were there to hear what the opposition would do if they were in power or what the Liberals would do if they were in power. But of course they didn't have any answers for them. They were just saying that the NDP are bad.

And I don't think the people bought that because you know what happened, Mr. Speaker, is that the 200 people actually

asked the NDP candidate for that area all the questions. And so the Liberal leader sat there and the Tory leader sat there and didn't participate much in the meeting at all after the questions were asked of the NDP MLA.

So I know that they're scare tactics and I don't think . . . They haven't got a policy really. I know that the Tory Party says they're going to freeze spending on health care. And I know they have support from the Canadian taxpayers association. Mr. Truscott, I believe who worked for Mr. Hermanson, says that we shouldn't spend any more money; we should freeze all the spending, in fact. And I believe that Mr. Hermanson agrees with that that we should freeze spending on health care.

But I want to say that with the cost of new technology, which I just talked about a little earlier, and with the costs of new drugs that come onto the scene daily and with the changes in services that are required, ambulance services, and all the other services required in rural Saskatchewan that it's impossible, I think, to freeze funding in health care. I think you must react to that.

So I would hope that the people of Saskatchewan realize what freezing health care funding really means. Does it mean that we are going to move to the American system of health care where you have a private insurance firm that might insure you, or might not, depending on your health situation. And I know myself with perhaps a bit of a heart condition, would I get insurance? I don't know under an American system.

And so I would be very reluctant to elect the Saskatchewan Party because — or the Tories I guess — because I would be very scared that I would not be able to get health care services. So that's why I would not want to go that way, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that I call the other party Tories — the opposition Tories. They call themselves the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, but I call them the Tories because I think there's some reason for that. And I need to tell the people of Saskatchewan that there is a reason for that because if you look in the phone book — and I think many of us have explained it before — if you look in the Regina phone book for the Saskatchewan Party, it will be listed there. And if you look under the Progressive Conservatives or the Tory Party, it'd be listed there. But funny thing — it's the same address and the same phone number so I imagine it's the same people.

And, yes, if you look at who's working for the new Tory Party, the Sask Tory Party, it's certainly the same people that worked for Mr. Devine and his crew. And if you look at the candidates, I think you'd find the very same people working for the Tory Party, or for the new Tory Party, as you did for the old Tory Party. And it goes on and on and on.

And then if you'd take a look at their policy, Mr. Speaker . . . And I think I have a copy. *The Way Up* it's called and it's a very appropriate title because if you . . . the way up is . . . if you've taken people to the bottom, you certainly have to look for the way up. And I know that their party in the 1980s took us to the bottom and we're struggling and slowly coming to the top under this government.

And this budget, I think, Mr. Speaker, talks about that because . . . After the budget I talked to some people and one person told

me that it was . . . he called it a stable . . . stable budget is the word he used, Mr. Speaker. Another person said it's a sound budget, it's a sound budget; it's got strength. Another person said, it's a common sense budget.

It's not like the Tories that say, oh, we've got to cut . . . you should've cut taxes more. You should spend more for highways. You should spend more for this, and you should spend more for that, and . . . And I don't know where they get that from, but that's not where the people are.

Another person said, Mr. Speaker, it's a realistic budget. And that's right. The Tories' voodoo economics, I guess is what I like to call it. It's just it doesn't add up. It just doesn't add up. It's the spend-and-borrow economics, Mr. Speaker. It just doesn't add up. I think what I'd like to call it, it's let-our-children-pay economics.

And I think that's what I'm so scared about. That's why actually that I sought the candidacy in Carrot River Valley this time, to make sure that the Tory government does not get into power because I don't think we want that let-our-children-pay economics back into this province again.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to carry on. But being that it's close to 5 o'clock I would like to move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

