

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy this morning, Mr. Speaker, to present petitions that were forwarded to me from the RM (rural municipality) of Reford No. 28. 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 for safe driving on what are becoming known as pothole roads, to enter into negotiations with SARM and SUMA for a long term plan of rural road restitution reflecting future needs, and to provide safety for all drivers as the new trucking regulation changes safety factors on these roads.

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

All of these people, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of Nokomis, Saskatchewan and I presume the farm community as well. I'm happy to present them on their behalf.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To present a petition as well, 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.

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the Saskatoon area. I so present.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens asking for review of parental rights. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the communities of Melfort and Fairy Glen. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more

hospitals in the Parkland Health District and to release the district's three-year strategic plan.

People who have signed this petition are from all over Saskatchewan.

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

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

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Saskatoon area.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to abandon any plans to reduce acute care or close any more hospitals in the Parkland Health District and to release the district's three-year strategic plan.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Speers.

I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm here to present petitions today. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon the federal and provincial governments to address the issue of recent American and European grain subsidies and the resulting low commodity prices immediately, work with trading partners to reduce subsidies, and in the event no immediate progress is made, bridge the current cash shortfall appropriately in order to protect the Canadian and Saskatchewan producers.

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

The signatures on all these petitions, Mr. Speaker, if I were to stand here and name each of the communities it would take the balance of this afternoon's session. So I won't do that but merely say that they come from petitioners from right across this great province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise again today to present petitions on behalf of the people of this province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon provincial and federal governments to immediately take steps to end unfair world subsidies and provide farmers with prompt relief from declining incomes, and act as watchdogs against rising input costs which are harming the rural economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have petitions here today from right across this province. I'll just name a few of the communities. We have them from Mayfair, from Spiritwood, from Leoville. We have them from Consul. We have them from Avonlea.

Mr. Speaker, we have some from Kindersley, some from Elrose, Cupar, Arborfield, Limerick, Wadena, Stoughton, and Corning, Mr. Speaker.

We have a lot here from Findlater, Disley, Bethune, which of course is in the great constituency of Arm River. We have them from Carnduff. We have them from Grenfell, Wolseley, all across the land, Mr. Speaker.

And I so present.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues here today and bring forward petitions. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to call upon provincial and federal governments to immediately take steps to end unfair world subsidies and provide farmers with prompt relief from declining incomes, and act as watchdogs against rising input costs which are harming the rural economy.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions add to the thousands that my colleague just raised, and I see they're from Kincaid, Hazenmore, Ponteix, Willow Bunch, Aneroid, Glentworth, Weyburn, Estevan, Bladworth, Saskatoon, Strongfield, Holdfast. It looks like they're from every area of the province, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Now the Chair is having . . . I'll ask all hon. members to come to order.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour once again to stand on behalf of citizens who are concerned about excellence in the education of exceptional children in the province of Saskatchewan, 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 programs for children with learning disabilities in order that they

have an 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.

Mr. Speaker, today all of the petitioners are from Prince Albert and I'm very pleased to table these on their behalf.

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. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 18 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what portion of the health care budget will be targeted to non-governmental organizations who deal with addictions treatment in the areas of alcohol, drugs, and gambling?

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 18 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: do you support the position taken by the Hon. Anne C. Cools as presented in the Canadian Senate on March 4 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Now I will ask for order from members on both sides of the House. The Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the hon. member for Cypress Hills provide his notice of question, and I'll ask for the co-operation of all members to permit it to be heard.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just continue from where I was:

. . . the Canadian Senate on March 4, Thursday, 1999, where she supports Alberta judge, Justice John McClung, who has criticized the Supreme Court judges; if so, on what basis; if not, on what basis; and how will this debate and the ruling affect the Saskatchewan judicial system; will you acknowledge receipt of a copy of the debate as sent to the minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Junior: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly a delegation representing the Tobacco Free Saskatchewan Campaign. I'd ask them to stand when I mention their name.

Walter Gillard is the executive coordinator, Tobacco Free Saskatchewan Campaign. Tristyn Bulai and Shane Kleisinger, two grade 9 students from Lumsden High School. Doug Alexander is representing the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan and the Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan

division. And Patti Pacholek, public issues provincial Chair of the Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan division.

I look forward to meeting with this group in my office following question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the Assembly I'd also like, on behalf of the official opposition, to welcome the people here from the Tobacco Free Saskatchewan Campaign.

I had the pleasure to meet them earlier today and to address them outside the Assembly. And I again would ask everyone to welcome them here and to support them in their campaign.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add the voice of welcome on behalf of the Liberal caucus to the people that have joined us in our galleries here today for this afternoon's proceedings. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery, and I would like them to stand as I introduce them, representing Premier Peat Moss Ltd., Claude Samson, a project engineer from Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec; and Claude Gobeil, manager of their Saskatchewan division at Carrot River; and Spencer O'Byrne, technical coordinator at the Carrot River operation as well.

Mr. Speaker, Premier Sask operates a peat bog located about 50 kilometres north of Carrot River. They produce about 430,000 cubic metres of peat moss every year and it's shipped to, not only locally, but all across Canada, the US (United States), and internationally. And a lot of it in Saskatchewan because it's such good quality, it's used for mushroom production and seedling production.

So please welcome our guests here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well to introduce guests to you and through you to members of the Assembly.

We're joined here this afternoon by five grade 3 students from the Cowessess Community Education Centre. They're accompanied by their teachers, Lois Delorme and Myra Sparvier.

And I'm looking forward to meeting with the group after question period and looking forward to questions they may have. And my colleagues have been suggesting maybe we could offer banana splits. I'll go to them and see if they'll actually help me fund that. But I'd like to invite the members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming this group.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, another individual who has joined us this afternoon, a long-time friend who's actually taught at the university, Mr. Don Clark, who's just retired from teaching but has been very active, and was here with the group students against smoking, and so I'd like members to welcome him as well. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I should like to draw your attention and that of the members to a group who are seated in your gallery. This is a group of 10 adult students; they're accompanied here today by their instructor Bobbie Baker. And they're enrolled, Mr. Speaker, in the University of Regina LINC program, and that is the Language Instruction for New Canadians.

I would ask the members to join with me to welcome these students here, not only to welcome to the legislature but also to congratulate them on their choice as Canada as their new home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the colleagues in the legislature, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine in your gallery, Mr. Wayne Bacon. Wayne and his wife Carol operate a farm in the Kinistino area. Over the years Wayne has been extremely involved in community service, being very instrumental in the formation of the Kinsmen Telemiracle. Currently he's the vice-president of the Canadian canola growers association and president of the Saskatchewan Canola Growers Association. Would everyone in the Assembly please give a warm welcome to Wayne Bacon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly an important constituent of mine that is here today in the west gallery. It's Isabelle Butters, who is known for her service within our own city of Weyburn and area, but also right across the province. She wears many, many hats and of course is today here on behalf of the non-smoking campaign with heart and stroke.

But also I had — just recently, on Saturday — was able to be at a page-turning ceremony in Weyburn for the new Southeast Regional Library that's going to be built there. And she's of course well-known for all of her extremely volunteer work that she's done right across this province. I want everyone to welcome Isabelle Butters here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm very pleased this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly an individual who has been extremely active in health care in Saskatchewan, someone I consider a friend, an individual who has been politically active in her life and was president of SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses) at one point in Saskatchewan as well.

Her name is June Blau She's from Regina. She's in your west gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like her to stand and be recognized. Would everyone welcome her please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also in the west gallery with many people who are active in the tobacco . . . or anti-tobacco lobby, I should say, is Ruth Robinson, who is former president of the Consumers' Association of Canada, has been involved in just about every organization you can think of, is a long-time friend of mine, and a former citizen of the year from Saskatoon.

So I'd like to welcome Ruth here to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without belabouring the point, I too would like to welcome Ruth here. She's a constituent and well-known for her advocacy on a number of public issues, most recently the advocacy to tighten up smoking legislation in Saskatchewan. Well done, Ruth.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and members of the Assembly today, seated in your gallery a young man by the name of Doug Raynes, who's currently working with the Department of Justice, has served in the development of the community corrections program in the area of Yorkton, and is also a shop steward with SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) and does some very valuable work for the member from Yorkton on occasion.

So I want to ask you to welcome Doug Raynes to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, what a red-letter day to have so many great people in the galleries taking in the proceedings. Through you and to all members of the Assembly I want to meet . . . to introduce rather, three very special people who are visiting from Manitoba. Jean and her sons Jeremy and Randal Boiteau are here actually in the process of purchasing a house in Regina, and assuming the realtor has any sense at all, in Regina Coronation Park, my constituency.

Jean's husband Lionel has been here since the beginning of November and he's working for a high-tech company here in Regina. Jean and Lionel came here last summer. Jean was competing in the dragon boat races on a team . . . with a team called Chemo Savvy. That team consists of a group of women who have survived breast cancer. And I want to add that they did fairly well in the dragon boat race. And in the process, Jean and Lionel fell in love with Regina and the rest is, as you might say, history in the making.

So I ask all members to join me in welcoming the three guests soon to be residents of Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Liberal Party Platform

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal Party released Priorities 1999, our election platform. We talked of \$1,000 grants for first- and second-year post-secondary students in Saskatchewan. We talked of reducing the hacks and flacks that have slithered their way into government offices. We talked about more money for health care. We talked about what the Liberal priorities are. Yet after the release of our platform the only thing the Premier criticized was that there were no tax cuts. One can only assume by the Premier's statement that you believe there must still be room for tax cuts.

Mr. Premier, are you saying to the people that there is still more room for tax cuts? After your Finance minister said there was none? Mr. Premier, either you agree that there is . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Now the hon. member will be aware of course of rule 28 which requires that . . . (inaudible) . . . the Assembly, including statements by members, be directed through the Chair. And I'm sure that he'll want to make his statement consistent with the rules.

Mr. McPherson: — So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier must either agree that there is no room for tax cuts or there is still some room for tax cuts. And which is it? Does he agree with us that his Finance minister . . . that there is no more room for tax cuts and that the money is better used for health care and education and other priorities that put people first? Or do you agree with the Sask-a-Tory party that — zap — health care and education funding is frozen just to offer more tax cuts?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Increased Funding for Health Care

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of our recent budget, funding to the Saskatchewan health care system has grown to \$1.9 billion this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ward: — Up 195 million over last year. This money will be targeted to the government's four priority areas. Monies for front-line health care workers to meet our commitments and to address wage issues. Twelve million to reduce waiting times for surgery. Over 25 million for cancer programs — an increase of 14 per cent over '98-99. The new funding will go towards new cancer drugs and programs and services working to fight the disease and 800,000 to expand women's health services. The government is introducing unique made-in-Saskatchewan programs to meet the special health challenges of women of all ages.

The budget also provides funding for additional important health services; over 20 million to support the College of Medicine, funding for three new MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging); a CT (computerized axial tomography) scanner and a

bone density program; over 5 million increase in home care funding for people requiring care at home; over 20 million to support services for northern residents; new hospitals in Meadow Lake, La Loche, and Stony Rapids; 50 million to assist districts in enhancing equipment and supporting a smooth flow of health services into the year 2000.

Mr. Speaker, this health care investment is unprecedented in Saskatchewan history and identified the government's . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Minister of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge the announcement by the Minister of Municipal Government this morning that she will not be running in the next election. Mr. Speaker, we've had many exchanges in my short time in this legislature, some pleasant, some not so pleasant, some complimentary, and some not quite so complimentary.

Very seldom have I agreed with the policies of the ministers, but Mr. Speaker, I must say that through all of this and through all the exchanges that we've had, I've had the greatest respect for the Minister of Municipal Government. Mr. Speaker, I have always admired her wit and humour: her one ring-a-dingy, her two ring-a-dingy, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I presume that the minister is going back to full-time farming and I would imagine what that would mean is that she will be now supporting the Saskatchewan Party because we are the only people in this legislature sticking up for farmers. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say on behalf of the official opposition that I wish the minister the very best in whatever endeavour she takes, and I will miss you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fiftieth Anniversary of Saskatchewan Arts Board

Ms. Lorje: — Mr. Speaker, life is short; art is long. The words, pictures, and music which give definition to an era keep that era alive long after it is past. That is a truism not often recognized in the political world unless we are concerning ourselves with the economic impact of the arts. Witness our successful tax credit for films from last session.

But today is the 50th anniversary of a very significant event in the history of our province. On March 31, 1949 the legislation which established the Saskatchewan Arts Board was proclaimed. This Act created what is now the oldest arm's-length funding agency in North America, and only the second of its kind anywhere.

This legislation was a political decision, it was an economic decision, and for the Douglas government of the day — a government of teachers, preachers, and farmers in a hard-scrabble land struggling to recover from depression and war — it was an incredibly courageous decision.

They knew that art makes a difference in our lives, and that as intrinsically valuable as it is, to flourish, it must have support. This is especially true for Canada and even more so for us in Saskatchewan.

I know all members will pay tribute to the vision which produced the Arts Board — to Ernest Lindner, Emrys Jones, William Riddell, and others — and to congratulate Valerie Creighton for her eight years as executive director. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Care Concerns

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of my constituents in Arcola and area, and the serious concerns they have for the future of health care in Saskatchewan. Last night I attended a health meeting in Arcola with over 50 people in attendance to discuss the health care crisis we are facing.

Mr. Speaker, it is becoming more and more apparent that last week's Health budget did not put to rest any doubts the people of Saskatchewan had for the health care system. The members opposite are so out of touch and estranged with the people of Saskatchewan they continue to say wellness is well. I'm not sure though that even they believe their own words, Mr. Speaker.

The people want to know why Saskatchewan has the longest waiting list. They want to know why this government has not come up with any real solutions and they want to know whether or not they are going to receive proper health care in their communities if they need it. The people of Saskatchewan want the NDP (New Democratic Party) to come clean with their plans for the future of all hospitals in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have claimed that Saskatchewan Party will freeze health spending. I would like them to know that these scare tactics they use on the people of Saskatchewan are old and tired, just like this NDP government.

Approximately a month ago the Associate Minister of Health stated that the NDP government would consult with the people for the future of rural hospitals. Well, Madam Minister, once again the Saskatchewan Party has done your homework for you. Let the people know what . . .

The Speaker: — The hon. member's time has expired. Statements by members continue.

Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Business Education Partnership

Ms. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce to the Assembly that an exciting new partnership in education was announced this morning by my colleague, the minister in charge of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation), and by Mary Reeves, instructional superintendent for the Regina Catholic school division.

This partnership grows out of a special interest that developed several months ago. Students at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys

School in Regina became interested and involved in the current rehabilitation project for our Legislative Building. Because of this interest, the Web site dedicated to the project was officially launched at the school.

Since then the students and teachers of Bourgeoys School have been actively involved in developing the Web site. Out of that involvement has come a strong teaching unit on the history of Regina, a unit that Saskatchewan Education has recommended for use by grades 4, 8, and 10.

The partnership extends beyond just the two key players, Mr. Speaker. For the people at SPMC, this project will give them a new perspective on their work and the students will learn about a variety of professions — architecture, restoration, building management, and so on.

Partnerships work, Mr. Speaker, because they show us how connected we all are. My congratulations to SPMC and the Catholic School Board for this interesting example. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Swift Current Resident Wins Award

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share some very exciting news for the city of Swift Current and the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Brad Wall, the director of economic development for the city of Swift Current, was recently named Saskatchewan's Economic Developer of the Year. This distinction is awarded annually by the Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association.

Brad was recognized for his work as a founding member of the Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development and its success in attracting new businesses to Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, Brad's hard work is paying off. In spite of an NDP government that is burying people with the second-highest taxes in Canada, the city of Swift Current broke the record for building permits in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, Brad now tells me that the population of Swift Current is now topping the 16,000 mark.

Brad will go on to compete for the honour of National Economic Developer of the Year, an annual competition sponsored by Canadian National Railways.

Mr. Speaker, as well I have further good news but maybe not such good news for the current NDP member from Swift Current. Brad Wall is also the Saskatchewan Party candidate for Swift Current in the next provincial election, which may explain why the current member wouldn't recognize one of his constituent's considerable achievements.

Mr. Speaker, would you welcome . . . or congratulate Brad on a job well done. And we look forward to welcoming him in the . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Negotiations With Health Care Workers

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, overworked and undervalued nurses are walking away from nursing and are not being replaced. A shortage of nurses in Saskatchewan means closed hospital beds, forced overtime, and exhausted nurses. Exhausted nurses cannot continue to provide safe care. The government isn't listening.

Madam Minister, those aren't my words. That is the message of the Saskatchewan nurses on this card now appearing in mailboxes throughout Saskatchewan. Madam Minister, NDP mismanagement of the health system has resulted in nursing shortages, overworked nurses, serious concerns about patient safety, and now we may be on the eve of a full-scale nurses' strike.

Madam Minister, will you admit that your NDP mismanagement has driven the health care system to the brink of collapse?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, as the members may know with the exception of a tentative CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) agreement between the employer, we are presently in a situation in this province where the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and SGEU, representing two health work places, and SUN and SEIU (Service Employees' International Union) are presently negotiating collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, the member will also know that these are the most complex set of collective agreements that this province has ever witnessed, given that we are trying to meld dozens of collective agreements into four or five, Mr. Speaker. And this takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of good will on the part of the people who are at the bargaining table.

Mr. Speaker, I'm optimistic that the parties will continue to work through the many, many issues and that we will arrive at mutually agreed to collective agreements.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Associate Minister of Health, a former nurse who traded in her nursing uniform for a turncoat. Madam Minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order, order, order. Now the hon. member is a veteran member and . . . Order. Order, order. The hon. member is a veteran member and I know well appreciates the limits of debate, and I think appreciates as well that his terminology has gone beyond the acceptable levels of parliamentary debate. I'll ask him to withdraw his remark and apologize to the House.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that remark and apologize to the House.

The Speaker: — I recognize the hon. member from Cannington to conclude his question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, when you became president of SUN you were elected to work for nurses. When you became an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), you were elected on the promise to hire more nurses. And now you've betrayed nurses.

You knew there was a nursing shortage, you knew the NDP wasn't really going to hire any more nurses, and you said nothing. Now nurses are sending out cards outlining exactly how you betrayed them.

Madam Minister, why did you abandon nurses the moment you were elected an NDP MLA?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago we witnessed what I consider to be a most gracious act, where all of the members of this Assembly stood in their place and acknowledged the work of the Minister of Municipal Government.

What I will say to the member is this. That in order for us to make progress in this province, it's important for each of us to respect each other, and that's what the public wants. Mr. Speaker, I have watched this member at his various public meetings across this province make untoward remarks. And I find it absolutely appalling and not the kind of behaviour that should be coming from the official opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I will say on behalf of the government is this. That the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations which represents the employers, and the various unions which represent the various employees in this province are presently at the bargaining table and they are making their way towards collective agreements that will meet the individual needs of the people working in the workplace and the individual needs of patients and the needs of taxpayers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have gladly allowed the . . . or had the Minister of Health listen to any of my comments at a public health meeting. Unfortunately she refuses to attend those that she's invited to, including the one that we invited her to last night in Arcola, Mr. Speaker. My question again is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, the SGEU has served strike notice to the North-East Health District. Support staff are preparing to walk off the job Thursday morning.

Madam Minister, this means surgeries are cancelled, emergency rooms are shut down, and patient care will be virtually non-existent. It means family members taking care of patients in special care home residences. In short, Madam Minister, it means a full-blown health care disaster — something you are very familiar with.

Madam Minister, what steps are you taking to ensure the patient safety in the North Central Health District, and how many other health districts in this province are facing strike notice by the SGEU?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that had I gone to that meeting last night I would have swelled the crowd from 36 to 37, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the member is that I understand that the Saskatchewan Government Employees Union which represents employees in the North-East Health District has served notice of strike action. Mr. Speaker, we are not at all clear at this moment whether or not that strike action will commence. What I can tell the member is that the parties are continuing to negotiate, and that's what's important for the people of this province.

What can I tell the member is that the patient safety of the people that are in our various institutions and in home care are of the utmost top of mind for the Government of Saskatchewan, and we will do everything we can along with the health districts to ensure patient safety.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Had the minister attended the meeting last night, she could have swelled the NDP ranks by 100 per cent from one to two.

Madam Minister, you've been told by district health officials that part of the government's plan in the case of a strike by nurses is to send critically ill patients to hospitals in Alberta and Manitoba. Madam Minister, we have also been advised that health care unions in Manitoba and Alberta will support Saskatchewan nurses by refusing to take Saskatchewan patients. If that happens, Madam Minister, the only option available would be to send critically ill patients to hospitals in the United States.

Madam Minister, can you confirm that it is your plan to send critically ill patients to US hospitals in case of a nurses' strike?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite likes to provide people with information, but I just want to advise the member that the information he provides is not correct.

For instance, last night, he indicated that the only reason why Saskatoon doesn't run the MRI full time is that they refuse to send money to hire more staff. Well, Mr. Speaker, for the edification of the member, the current hours of operation in Saskatoon are from 7:30 a.m. to 7 . . . or to 10:30 p.m. So factually incorrect.

Yesterday he indicated that the Regina MRI is not running yet because we built the room too small. Well, Mr. Speaker, the president of the Regina Health District board indicated to the public that when they moved the MRI in, it fit, Mr. Speaker.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, he indicated that we are squandering — squandering \$1.95 million in new spending because all we're leaving is \$63 million for nurses. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've increased funding for cancer which is important to the people of this province. We've got a mobile CAT scan which is important to the people of southern Saskatchewan. And I think this member is acting in a way that is irresponsible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's 24 hours in a day. Why isn't that MRI running 24 hours a day?

Madam Minister, family members of critically ill patients are extremely worried about what will happen to their loved ones if nurses go on strike. One father of a eight-week-old boy in the neonatal unit of the Regina General Hospital called us in desperation yesterday to say that his son may be shipped to Winnipeg or Toronto.

He complained that no one was able to tell him exactly what the plan was. He was also concerned that if his son was sent to Winnipeg or Toronto he and his wife did not have the money to go to those cities with that child.

Madam Minister, what are you doing to ensure that patients loved ones are kept informed about contingency plans in cases of the nurses strike? And how do you plan to support those families who do not have the financial resources to travel with critically ill patients in the event they are transferred outside of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Okay, I want to go on about what the member said last night. He said that the primary health service sites have no acute care beds. Just for the edification of the member so he can get the facts straight, in Hudson Bay there is a primary health service site and they have acute care beds. In Hafford, the member from Redberry can confirm that they have a primary site and they have acute care beds.

In addition, he said, we should bringing more residents out to rural Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a program that does just that. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we also have a program that trains rural doctors to have specialization in anaesthesia, general surgery and obstetrics.

Mr. Speaker, then he said . . . when challenged about why he didn't call the board, who would surely tell them that they weren't going to close the Arcola hospital. All he can say is: all I can do is quote. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is what we get from this member opposite.

I just also wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that the nurses are continuing to bargain at the bargaining table and we're optimistic a collective agreement can be arrived at.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Rural Road Maintenance

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

commitment to fixing roads is a joke. Two million dollars for rural municipal government — that's \$2 million for 298 RMs. That works out to about \$6,700 per RM. That's about enough, Mr. Speaker, to build about a tenth of a mile or about 530 feet of road in each RM. And, Mr. Speaker, very little more for highways.

You know, first we got rail line abandonment thanks to the federal Liberals. Now we got rural road abandonment thanks to the NDP government. It's no wonder that Sinclair Harrison called the budget a black day for rural Saskatchewan.

Madam Minister, why are you abandoning rural Saskatchewan? Where is your commitment to a long-term plan to fix rural roads and highways in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just to be able to inform the member opposite, we do have a long-term plan. That's what we brought out in 1997, both a plan for increased dollars at \$2.5 billion over 10 years and also a plan that certainly did tackle also the good planning and the efforts that we need to do in rural Saskatchewan.

It's interesting to me, when I listen to the members opposite in talking about branch line abandonment, talking about some of these issues, when their connections both as the Liberals and Tories and the kind of federal policy that has impacted rural Saskatchewan unbelievably, and on the transportation system, we're trying to address that impact. We're addressing that impact with the commitment for more dollars, as we see, more dollars we need from the federal government that is giving zero to this province right now, and also on good policy and planning.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Drug Inclusion in the Formulary

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in this House the Minister of Finance presented his budget and once you get through all the political rhetoric that he had, you come down to find out what's in the budget. And in the budget, Mr. Speaker, they talked about health care and he talked providing some program for meeting women's needs in the province. But what's most important, Mr. Speaker, is what wasn't in the budget.

Now in the budget they talked about meeting the needs of Saskatchewan women and they talked about funding for bone density equipment, Mr. Speaker. And the importance of bone density scanners, Mr. Speaker, detect osteoporosis. What the minister hasn't told us, Mr. Speaker, is that the most important drug, the most effective drug that we have and it's called fosamax, fosamax, Mr. Speaker, which is not covered by the drug plan.

I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Health can tell us today why in the world this drug isn't covered under the drug plan?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can say to the Liberal Party here this afternoon is that I see that we have another press release about their platform.

Now, Mr. Speaker, last week on March 23, 1999 they indicated that they were going to reduce their health district boards from 32 to 12 to 14. Well, Mr. Speaker, one week later they're now scrapping them all.

Mr. Speaker, these folks can't seem to make up their minds. But I can tell the member in specific . . . in response to the specific question that this is a drug, Mr. Speaker, that I understand is presently under review as to whether or not it will be included on the drug formulary.

Mr. McLane: — Well, Mr. Speaker, she made my point. There's some more political rhetoric. That's all they know. They don't want to answer or address the needs of the province, the people of the province, Mr. Speaker — but more political rhetoric.

What this shows, Mr. Speaker, is the incompetence of the NDP government to manage health care in this province — another example of that. They can diagnose the problem. They're willing to do that. But then they don't want to treat it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta and Manitoba they've made this a priority. And they now cover fosamax under their drug plan. Why don't we in this House?

They stand in this House, Mr. Speaker, and they put their political rhetoric ahead of the needs of the people of the province, and especially women. They talk in the budget about how they're going to meet the needs of women, the health needs of women, Mr. Speaker. But they don't do it.

Madam Minister, when will you get your priorities straight and start thinking about the women of this province and the rest of the people of this province as well?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the member doesn't know this but what we have in the province of Saskatchewan is a drug Formulary Committee. This is a group of individuals — scientists, physicians — that determine which medications, which prescriptions should be included on Saskatchewan's drug formulary.

Mr. Speaker, this is not something the Minister of Health determines. This is not something that any member of this legislature determines. This is something that is determined by a group of people that have expertise in this area. That's how the process works, Mr. Speaker. And once they make a recommendation, the drug is included on the formulary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Negotiations with Nurses

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nurses are tired, overworked, and underpaid. Overworked and undervalued equals nursing shortage. Mr. Speaker, nurses will be in a strike position within hours. Like many times before, the NDP promised good working conditions and compensation for nurses. Apparently it's just another broken promise.

Mr. Speaker, one nurse from Fort Qu'Appelle says, and I quote:

Pay me what I'm worth. I'm a registered nurse with 20 years experience. I'm responsible for the lives and well-being of the people you govern. I suggest that you increase our pay and benefits to make nursing a more desirable profession. You may attract new nurses and possibly even keep the experienced ones like myself.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP is failing to make health care a priority. Will the minister explain why her government messed up health care so badly that nurses like this one from Fort Qu'Appelle are questioning why they should even stay in nursing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this province underwent health reform in 1993. And this is a decision made by our government to try and integrate our health services in a more coordinated and co-operative fashion.

Mr. Speaker, it meant that we reduced 400 individual boards to 32. It meant that hospitals and home care and long-term care and mental health and public health, all of these different organizations that were in stovepipes, started to be more co-operative and collaborative to serve the individual needs of Saskatchewan citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that this integration and coordination has had a tremendous impact upon the people who provide services to the people of this province, and that's the health providers. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that.

We now have a situation where we are bargaining the most complex set of negotiations ever in the history of this province. I am optimistic, Mr. Speaker, that the nurses, along with the other health care providers, will have collective agreements that are arrived at mutually.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, these people got rid of 600 nurses and they now try to tell us that their district health boards are much more important . . .

The Speaker: — Now the Chair requests the co-operation of all hon. members on both sides of the House. Order. The Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the Leader of the Third Party put his question. Order.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP's treatment of health care workers is shameful. They've known for years there was a nursing shortage, yet they continued to lay off nurses, hire hacks and flacks, and increase management.

Mr. Speaker, another nurse from Moose Jaw sums the NDP's record on health care up saying, and I quote:

The health care system of this province has declined for the past 10 years. Tommy Douglas would be disheartened by the way the NDP has allowed the health system to fail.

And she goes on to add that she's been an NDPer for years; however, she won't be again.

Another nurse from Melville says, and I quote:

Ensure a new contract is in place as soon as possible, as who would relocate to Saskatchewan if there is a possibility of a strike.

Mr. Speaker, this government put some \$63 million on the table to improve working conditions for health workers. According to the nurses, this won't be enough. Will the minister explain why her government is not making this issue a priority? Why can you still find tax dollars for propaganda but not for much needed nurses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Based on what the member has just told us, it would appear as though there's nothing that's done in this province in the way of health care. And what I do want to say to the member is that each year over 4.6 million visits to a doctor; each year over 925,000 visits to a specialist; each year 9,200 of our citizens are served in nursing homes; each year over 5,000 MRIs; 28,000 people receiving home care. Every day, Mr. Speaker, 35,000 people of this province receive health services. That's what we get for our \$1.9 billion.

Mr. Speaker, health care is getting better in this province, Mr. Speaker, not worse.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Research

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I most certainly would like to give the Minister of Health a reprieve this afternoon, but I'm sorry, I forewarned her that her questions would be coming her way today.

Madam Minister, the federal government's budget last month set in motion the doubling of health research funding in Canada over the next three years with the creation of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. And I would like you to tell the people of our province today what Saskatchewan is doing to take advantage of this exciting opportunity to provide new jobs in the health research sector.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question. This is an important question. Mr. Speaker, as the member indicates, the federal government has released its budget where there is a significant increase in the amount of research funding available to our medical scientists in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak to Jim Dosman, who is a member, a Saskatchewan representative to the . . . a Saskatchewan representative to this council. I'm pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that \$1 million has been allocated to those provinces that are not Ontario and British Columbia and Quebec. And, Mr. Speaker, it will be incumbent upon those provinces to match that funding.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Economic Development and myself are going to be meeting with the necessary officials in

April, and we hope that we will have something to report soon about the capacity and the interest of scientists of this province to do research with the help of the provincial and federal governments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm smiling because that's going to give me a slight hint as to what the answer will be to my next question, which I'm waiting with just bated breath here.

The Medical Research Council of Canada, Madam Minister, has established a regional partnerships program for provinces — provinces that are viewed as disadvantaged when it comes to MRC (Medical Research Council of Canada) research grants. And you're nodding because you know. Under this partnership, of course, the MRC gives \$1 for every \$2 of provincial funding given. And this represents a 50 per cent return on the investment that we make from the province.

Manitoba, Madam Minister, just received 19 additional grants from this regional partnerships program. Sadly, Saskatchewan received zip, zero, none, because there were no provincial matching funds.

Madam Minister, are there any plans to take advantage of the MRC regional partnerships program, or are we going to miss out yet again on this very, very important opportunity?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the member that the Minister of Economic Development and myself will be meeting with the necessary officials, and that we will . . . we are optimistic that we will be in a position to participate in this kind of program because it will do a tremendous service to the people of this province to have this kind of medical research done here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do know that the government has many conflicting demands on the health care budget because it's something that is endemic across the entire country. But decisions to chronically underfund and to ignore the importance of medical researchers to the overall health of all Saskatchewan residents is truly not acceptable. And it has happened and happened and happened for many years in our province to the point where we're losing many, many credible people.

Saskatchewan health researchers are actually asked, Mr. Speaker, to go into the boxing ring as if their hands had been tied behind their backs. And I'm wanting to know today, Madam Minister, if your department is able and willing to table with us any evidence which proves that the government actually has in progress a plan, a plan to help the medical researchers of our province to be able to compete, because the circumstances they face now don't allow them to compete.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, the Minister of Economic Development and myself are meeting with the appropriate

national officials. We have had the occasion to meet with medical scientists in this province to discuss the need to improve the amount of funding that is going into medical research in this province.

I'm optimistic that we can significantly improve the amount of medical research that is occurring in the province and this will be good news for scientists, but it will also be good news for the people of this province that depend upon medical breakthroughs for our health care. And so I'm optimistic, Mr. Speaker, that we'll be in a position to increase medical research in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to make a somewhat extended ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

Canadian Light Source Synchrotron Project

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce to the House that the Canadian Foundation for Innovation has agreed to provide \$56.4 million in funding for the Canadian Light Source Synchrotron project at the university.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Today's announcement brings the total amount invested by the partners in this project to \$173.5 million. This is the largest single scientific investment in Canadian history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — And it means that the CLS (Canadian Light Source) is now a reality. Construction is expected to begin this spring. The facility will be operational by 2003.

This project is a shining example of our economic development strategy, promoting jobs, and economic growth through innovation. Innovation, the ability to use new ideas and new technologies, is key to creating an economy that can compete in the next century.

Some benefits will be immediate. Five hundred jobs during four years of construction and 200 staff working at the facility by the time it's fully operational. But the project is about more than jobs today. It's about jobs and opportunities in the future. Opportunities that will give our best and brightest young people a chance for careers in Saskatchewan's advanced technology sectors high-end, knowledge-based careers.

The facility at the University of Saskatchewan will be used by researchers in the fields of agriculture, biotechnology, mining, petrochemicals, and medicine to name just a few. It will attract research projects from across Canada and around the world.

And these projects will just be the tip of the iceberg.

Over time firms from across Canada will locate their operations in Saskatoon. More and more R&D (research and development) firms, more and more high-tech companies will seize the opportunity to come to Saskatchewan to be part of the culture of research excellence.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting day for the University of Saskatchewan and for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — The Canadian Light Source project is going to put Saskatchewan on the scientific map. Researchers and scientists from all over Canada and all over the world will recognize that the work being done here is leading edge. And being on the leading edge scientifically means being on the leading edge economically. It means that our industries will be applying research done right here to improve existing products and create new ones.

Mr. Speaker, the opening of this facility means that our image of a new Saskatchewan has become a reality. A Saskatchewan whose economy is dynamic and diversified. A Saskatchewan which is confident, innovative, and outward-looking. A Saskatchewan which has the best quality of life of any place in the world. The Canadian Light Source Synchrotron project is an investment today for our future, a future that our sons and daughters can have right here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, Saskatchewan Party, I rise to join in expressing our excitement about the announcement that the final piece of the puzzle, if you like, has come together on this exciting project for the University of Saskatchewan and for Saskatchewan in total.

I think it's fair to say, as we've watched this project being proposed, negotiated, and today with the announcement coming together, that all of us in this province have indeed been very, very appreciative of the fact that many partners had to work together and contribute to make this a reality, including the province of Saskatchewan, the government of Saskatchewan. And for that we congratulate them for the work that they've done and the co-operation that they have initiated to make this indeed a reality today.

Mr. Speaker, I think that many of the comments that the minister has made in regard to what this can mean for the high-tech, knowledge-based scientific aspects of our economy are very, very supportable. And I look forward to seeing this project develop and mature over the next number of years.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the government to put as much diligence into reducing the tax burden for those 200 full-time workers that are going to come into this project on a permanent basis as they have in putting the project together. And, Mr. Speaker, we'll make sure that that happens over the next very

short while.

Again congratulations to all those involved in this project. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal caucus would also like to express on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan the welcome news today that the Canadian Foundation for Innovation has agreed to provide the additional money, the \$56.4 million to this Canadian Light Source Synchrotron project at the University of Saskatchewan.

The co-operation from the federal government ensures that this type of project has become a reality is extremely important. The announcement brings total investment to a hundred and seventy-three and a half million, meaning the project being a reality, under construction, and expected to open early in the spring of 2003.

Those immediate benefits are more than welcome. This first ever project in Canada with all the jobs over the four years of construction and the 200 staff that will be continuously working when the facility is fully operational. What a hope for some of our young people, and technology that we are able to provide for other parts of this great country.

However, Mr. Speaker, we need to see leading-edge ventures like this, not only in science and technology, but also in economic development which is somewhat sadly lacking behind other provinces.

I just want to, Mr. Speaker, salute all those people who worked so hard to bring this project to Saskatchewan and pray that we may attract more such ventures in the future, for the future of our young people, for the future of people who have left and may now want to return to this great province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — With leave to make comment on a ministerial statement, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolutely wonderful accomplishment that has been announced today. It's been a . . . I think something that has been in progress for so many years that people don't quite understand how significant an announcement this is.

It's interesting, because I was speaking with some scientists on this matter just in the last couple of days, and I was under the impression that attempts to get a Synchrotron for Saskatchewan and for Canada began as was announced in *The Star-Phoenix* some four or five or six years. And I do recall very vividly, having been to a political gathering in Ottawa — at the party that shall remain unnamed — at a convention that was being hosted and that this in fact was a resolution brought to the floor in about 1994, and people were very, very excited. But a lot of

people needed to be convinced that this was something that was really worthy for the nation, and most importantly that Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, and the University of Saskatchewan in particular were the best places for this particular enterprise.

Now I say that it's been a process that's taken place over many years. And just so people know, it's been some 30 years, Mr. Speaker. It's astonishing that after all of this time, that we are now going to be the beneficiaries of the newest Synchrotron technology — the absolutely newest. It's going to place us at a tremendous advantage over the other 40-odd Synchrotrons in the world.

I think it is a tremendous accomplishment for all of the people who played a major role in this, and I want to congratulate the government and all of the people who worked for this project to be in our province, because without their support it wouldn't have happened.

I most certainly would like to make mention of the federal government's role, the commitment of the Liberal Party of Canada to see this through as well. In particular, Mr. Doug Richardson of Saskatoon, who was very, very pivotal in even the name, Synchrotron, being used in a consistent sort of way regarding Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, and the University of Saskatchewan.

And I do want to say that even though we have a huge amount to make up in the loss of . . . the people that we've lost in different kinds of research in the province due to many, many reasons, Mr. Speaker, that this is an opportunity that is going to be afforded so many different disciplines.

It is truly exciting. Exciting for medical researchers, for those in the field of biotechnology, for mining, for pharmaceuticals, and the list goes on and on. I am just extremely excited in case people couldn't tell today, Mr. Speaker.

So I would like to once again congratulate everyone involved. It is truly a red-letter day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, from a government that's open, accountable, responsible, and progressive, I give you this answer to written question 31.

The Speaker: — The answer to item no. 1, question 31 is tabled.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I give the answer to question 32, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to item 2, question 32, is tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

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

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the privilege of speaking about this wonderful budget yesterday. Of course time ran out a bit at 5 o'clock so I have the opportunity to complete my statements about this budget that is really a stable, solid, responsible budget given by this government — and the sixth balanced budget of course, Mr. Speaker.

And it talks of course about better health care and \$1.9 billion to health care and shorter waiting times for surgery, Mr. Speaker, and on and on. And it talks also about lower taxes. Of course the sales tax dropping from 7 to 6 per cent, and less debt, Mr. Speaker, of course. As I mentioned earlier, six balanced budgets in a row, \$3.4 billion paid against our debt, Mr. Speaker, a record that is just incredible, just incredible.

So I'm going to talk a bit more about health care in a moment, but where I left off yesterday, Mr. Speaker, was talking about the Sask Tory Party and why they will not be allowed to give a budget in this Assembly probably ever again by the people of Saskatchewan.

I remember coming to power in 1991, Mr. Speaker, and there was no budget. The Tories didn't pass a budget. Normally you pass a budget in February or March, the beginning of the year, so that you have the plan of spending for that year. Well you know we came . . . they finally called an election in 1991, Mr. Speaker, in October with no budget passed. They hadn't passed a budget, if you can imagine.

People remember that, Mr. Speaker, and people will not elect a Tory government ever again — that is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that is one of the reasons.

We talk about trust, Mr. Speaker. And that's another reason why the Sask Tory Party will never sit on this side of the Chamber. Trust, trust. The member from Canora-Pelly, I remember him saying, and I quote: "It's totally false and nothing but an attempt by the former Tories to grab media attention. We have signed a document from all members and I can say unequivocally there is no truth yet." He's talking about moving from the Liberals to the Tories. That's what he said.

And the member from Melfort-Tisdale, this is what he said:

I absolutely can say I have never, ever considered, never mind participated in any discussions (to cross the floor). It's almost too ridiculous to imagine (he says) . . . I was elected in Melfort-Tisdale as a Liberal, and will continue to represent Melfort-Tisdale as a Liberal. None of our members have initiated or participated in any discussions with any party.

That's the member from Melfort-Tisdale. That's what he said, Mr. Speaker.

This is why the people of Saskatchewan will not have Tories sitting on this side of the House. It's a matter of trust, Mr. Speaker, a matter of trust.

And the member from Kelvington-Wadena, this is what she said:

I would like to inform the people of Saskatchewan, and particularly those in the Liberal constituencies, that we are continuing our loyalty and support to the cause of Liberal Saskatchewan party, the official opposition caucus, and to the people of Saskatchewan. We have not approached the Conservative Party or any other party with the intention of crossing the floor.

That's the member from Kelvington-Wadena, Mr. Speaker.

And where do they sit now? With the Tories — the member from Melfort-Tisdale, the member from Canora-Pelly, the member from Kelvington-Wadena. They all moved from the Liberal Party over to the Conservatives. And they ask the people of Saskatchewan, now that it's getting close to election time, please trust us — please trust us.

And the member from Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker, he said:

As ludicrous as these reports are I want to assure you, the people of the Saltcoats constituency, that I remain committed to you, the Liberal Party, and my caucus colleagues.

As a further sign of my loyalty and that of my colleagues we have each signed a document in which we unequivocally deny any intention of joining any other party.

(1445)

Now that's the member of Saltcoats. And he also, Mr. Speaker, was a Liberal and now he's a Tory. And they ask now the people of Saskatchewan to trust them in forming a government on this side of the House.

Didn't have a budget in 1991. Told stories about their intentions of crossing the floor to the Tories. And they want the trust of the people of Saskatchewan.

Another reason, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, the Tory Party of today, the new Sask Tories are the same Tories as before. I have a little note here and it says . . . I believe it's the *Leader-Post* article and it's August 12, 1997. And the headline is "Devine supports new party." What more do we need to say, Mr. Speaker?

And then in the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times*, Mr. Speaker, Tuesday, February 9, 1999, an ad:

Job Opening. The Sask Party has an opening for M.L.A. for this area. Most people think the pay is good and the hours are short. If you are honest, energetic and have common sense, you should apply to (who?) Grant Schmidt.

The same Grant Schmidt under the old Tory Party is the same

Grant Schmidt under the new Tory Party. And they ask the people of Saskatchewan to please trust us as we want to sit on that side of the House and we want to govern the province of Saskatchewan. Well, no thank you.

Some of the articles are interesting, and this is back in November 26, 1997, Mr. Speaker, and this is an opinion from the *Saskatoon Sun*, and the headlines are: "Saskatchewan Party would take (the) province back 40 or 50 years." The Sask Tory Party would take the province back 40 or 50 years.

And it goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan voters have already had the kind of government that this new party offers. It ruined an economy, widened the gap between rich and poor, destroyed useful social programs, and left a legacy of cynicism and mistrust.

Voters aren't infallible, but they do have long memories. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're telling the Tory Party today, that they are not going to sit on this side of the Assembly and we will not have to listen to their kinds of budgets in the future.

The Humboldt *Journal*, Mr. Speaker. "Association by name" is the article, and it's from a Mr. Ben Gerwing from Lake Lenore. And this is what it says, and I quote:

Because of my silly pride, I would find it impossible to vote for a group of unimaginative politicians who have named themselves (the Sask Tory Party) "The Saskatchewan Party".

I voted for the Devine Conservatives! I am not too proud of the display of intelligence associated with that fact. Now I hear my friends say the Conservatives in Saskatchewan were a bunch of crooks, and I cringe.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order, order, order. Just in the process of recognizing the hon. member from Prince Albert Carlton who wishes to catch the attention of the Chair, I did hear the hon. member for Carrot River Valley using some references that are unparliamentary in his debate. And although he's quoting directly, that still does not permit members to engage in the use of unparliamentary words when engaging in debate. And I will, first of all, ask the hon. member for Carrot River Valley to withdraw his remark and apologize to the House.

Mr. Renaud: — I withdraw my remarks, Mr. Speaker, and apologize to the House.

The Speaker: — Now why is the member for Prince Albert Carlton on his feet?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to request leave of the Assembly to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kowalsky: — I want to thank the member for Carrot River Valley for yielding, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a

special guest in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker, and that is our MP (Member of Parliament) Derrek Konrad from Prince Albert. He has just been in conversation with the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, and on behalf of myself, on behalf of the member from Prince Albert Northcote, and the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, I want to ask all members of the Assembly to greet MP Derrek Konrad to Saskatchewan through the Saskatchewan Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I too would like to welcome Mr. Konrad to the Assembly. Mr. Konrad is certainly my Member of Parliament, and welcome here, Derrek.

I'm going to move on, Mr. Speaker, and talk a little bit about health care. And the reason I'm going to do that, Mr. Speaker, is we do address it in the budget — an extra \$195 million to health care in many areas. And I want to speak a little bit about what that money is going to do.

Nine million in emergency service enhancements such as a single-number calling FleetNet technology and more EMTs (emergency medical technician). Improved community health facilities that offer a broader range of services including emergency and chronic care, palliative care, respite care, visiting professionals. And the list goes on.

Expanded cancer treatment now in 15 health districts, Mr. Speaker. Expanded renal dialysis programs. Ensuring the supply of rural physicians through the emergency room coverage. Weekend on-call relief. Rural practice establishment grants, and training programs and locum relief. And Telehealth pilot projects, Mr. Speaker, using video-conference technology to link physicians, specialists, and patients from rural communities to communities where those specialists might be.

Other things that are happening in the health care field, Mr. Speaker, there are 4.6 million office visits during a year to family physicians in the province of Saskatchewan — about \$96.1 million worth; 925,000 visits to specialists; 9,200 nursing home beds; 28,000 people receiving home care services; and a total of 1.78 million hours of service and 470,000 meals. Over 800,00 days of in-patient hospital care. And most people out there do not realize these numbers, Mr. Speaker.

An estimated 650,000 emergency room or clinic visits; 72,000 trips by road ambulance; 800 air ambulance trips; 237,000 diagnostic or therapeutic radiology services; 112,000 ultrasounds in a year, Mr. Speaker; 46,000 CAT scans; 5,000 MRIs; 400,000 immunizations for children and adults; 1.45 million tests in the provincial laboratory; help with prescription drug costs to 100,000 families — \$76 million worth, Mr. Speaker. And I could on and on.

And you know what the Sask Tories do when they go to these town hall meetings. First of all they inflate the number of people that are there. Instead of 37 in Arcola, they say 50. Instead of 200 in Carrot River, they say 300. And so that's what the first thing they do. And then they tell people that your hospital is going to close—they say your hospital is going to close. They say to the people of Hudson Bay, your hospital is going to close. Well we know that's not fact, Mr. Speaker. I was just there to cut the ribbon.

We have a beautiful facility in Hudson Bay. We have an acute care facility, an integrated facility with a long-term care home. We have a doctor's clinic that adjoins it. It's an excellent facility, spacious and roomy and clean and bright, providing excellent care service.

And it's community service now, Mr. Speaker. It's service in Hudson Bay where the doctors are on salary and there's a primary health care nurse now. And there are other services that come to the community, specialized services. And, Mr. Speaker, if there is a service that is not there in the community, they can work to get that service there—like baby dental care or chiropractic care or whatever it might be that's needed by the community.

And what did the Sask Tories say? They say, oh your hospital is going to close. They tell the people that the hospital is going to close. How can they feel comfortable with themselves, telling stories like that, Mr. Speaker? How can they feel comfortable with themselves in confusing issues like health care?

And I want at this point, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Sask Tories however, for one thing that they did for me and my constituency. Because, Mr. Speaker, they did go to Carrot River, and they did call a meeting. And it proved to be a place where I could go and explain to the people the facts about health care.

And do you know, Mr. Speaker, I didn't have to pay for the hall—the Sask Tories paid for the hall. They actually paid for the hall. And I had the opportunity to explain to the people of Carrot River exactly the situation about health care. And I want to thank them for that, Mr. Speaker, because I haven't had the opportunity before. And I want to thank them for that.

And a little bit about agriculture, Mr. Speaker, before I take my place. You know the farmers in rural Saskatchewan are starting to understand that the Sask Tories are not their answer. They are starting to realize that in fact when the Sask Tories stand up and say just put your money up when it comes to the AIDA (Agricultural Insurance Disaster Assistance) program, that something's wrong here.

Why should we—the farmers of Saskatchewan and the people that work on Saskatchewan farms and in the agricultural sector, the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan—why should we be putting money from this pocket into this pocket? Shouldn't it be all Canadians sharing in protecting our farmers when there is a crisis on the farm? Maybe that's the way it should be.

You know all Canadians help the Newfoundland fishermen when they get into trouble. But what happens in Saskatchewan when we have a problem in agriculture? The Sask Tory Party

stands up and say Saskatchewan government just put . . . Saskatchewan taxpayers just put your money up. There's no national vision by that party at all, Mr. Speaker.

They are not protecting the Saskatchewan taxpayer. They are not protecting the Saskatchewan farmer. For the name of politics they're standing up in this House and telling the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan to foot the bill on a national responsibility. And that's not fair, Mr. Speaker.

And every farmer in this province, by the time the election is called, will know that what the Saskatchewan, the Sask Tory Party have done is really cost them a lot of money—a lot of money out of their pockets.

And the Liberals aren't much better, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals aren't much better. The Liberals . . . Here I see there's a press release on March 3, 1999. And they say the Liberals demand NDP use provincial share of farm aid money to help those in need.

Well that's quite interesting, Mr. Speaker. Instead of asking their federal government . . .

The Speaker:—Order. Order. Order. Now all—order—all hon. members, all hon. members will recognize the importance of allowing hon. members to engage in debate in an uninterrupted manner. And I'll encourage members to put their remarks on the record when the opportunity presents itself.

(1500)

Mr. Renaud:—Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I was saying, the Liberals are no better. They say to the province, take your hundred and forty million dollars and give it to the farmers in need; and if you . . . maybe it's an acreage payment, we don't know; we have no real solutions, but, you know, give it to the farmers some other way. Well a hundred and forty million if you divide it on an acreage payment might be, I don't know—a couple of bucks an acre, three bucks an acre maybe.

Instead of fighting or challenging their brothers in Ottawa, the Liberal government in Ottawa, for real help to talk to the American government about the unfair subsidy, to talk to Europeans about the unfair subsidy and to take challenge . . . to take this challenge as a national government and do what's right for Canadian farmers. Take that national responsibility and instead of . . . You, sir, in the Liberal Party across, Mr. Speaker, must demand from their brothers in Ottawa that they take this national responsibility instead of asking the Saskatchewan taxpayer to foot the bill.

And just before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, I want to just say again that I will be supporting this budget. A budget that put a hundred and ninety-five million dollars more into health care; \$1 billion dollars in education, Mr. Speaker. It used to be in 1991 when we came to power that we were spending more on interest on our debt than what we were spending on education. Now today we're spending \$250 million more on education than we are on interest on our debt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — And our debt, Mr. Speaker — \$3.4 billion paid on that debt. And as long as we're in power, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to pay down that debt so that our children do not have to deal with it.

Tax, Mr. Speaker — 1 per cent sales tax. A sustainable tax cut. Yes, the opposition Sask Tories would say, well cut more or expend more. But this sustainable tax cut is here forever. Hopefully as long as we're in power. Oppositions say, you know, we should have cut more taxes, spent more. We on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, will not buy votes with our children's money.

It's a balanced approach — pay down the debt, improve services, and reduce taxes as we can afford it, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the budget and not the amendment to the budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to enjoy getting into the debate on the budget. I think there's a lot of things that have got to be clarified. And really what this, what this budget is really all about is priorities.

Now we look at the Sask-a-Tories, they unleashed their platform — when? — probably September, October. And it's really their document that they're taking into the election. They would rather not have to because it's so outdated already. In fact it's entitled *The Way Up* and I think they should be changing that to the way out, Mr. Speaker. It's out of date, it's out of touch, and it's out of gas. And no more has to be said about that.

What we want to talk about is the budget that was brought down in this province by the New Democrat government — but really the priorities of the people of what that budget should have been.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, March 23, Saskatchewan Liberals announced our health care priorities for 1999. We decided to announce our health care platform for the election at a time for two reasons: first because Saskatchewan Liberals, like the people of Saskatchewan, believe that health care must be the number one priority of the Government of Saskatchewan; and second because we were confident that our health care platform could be fully funded without any increases in taxes. In fact our health platform can be entirely funded using only the increased health funding announced in the federal budget of February.

On Friday, I was pleased to see what the Saskatchewan Minister of Finance, that he went beyond the federal increase in health funding, increasing the health budget by \$195 million. This amount of money will enable us to implement the Liberal health platform and more — if it is focused on the right priorities, if it is not wasted on more administrative costs, if it is focused on securing the front-line health care workers we need to overcome the long waiting lists, Mr. Speaker — so Saskatchewan can again provide the quality health care service Saskatchewan people have a right to expect in every region of this province.

In response to a question on Tuesday, we made it clear that Liberals believe that we must refocus our priorities. If we make

recruiting and retaining the front-line health care workers, we need a top priority. If we place priority on treating our nurses, physiotherapists, and other front-line health care providers fairly and with respect, two of the things we must do are, we must provide full-time regular jobs, so nurses aren't forced to commute between two or three part-time positions to make ends meet.

Experience shows that treating nurses the way the NDP health policy has, leads to burnout and loss of front-line health care providers we need. This must be changed, Mr. Speaker.

Second, we need to improve working conditions by doing things like making sure that workers doing the same job get the same pay.

The NDP merged two unions but didn't do the responsible thing, Mr. Speaker, by making sure this was done fairly. I am confident that a Liberal government can meet these immediate needs. I'm confident a Liberal government can and will create a work environment which treats front-line health care workers with dignity and respect for a cost of 110 to \$120 million, about 60 per cent of the budget increase proposed by the NDP. That will leave a Liberal government with an additional 75 to 85 million to implement the other priorities to which we are committed. And the people of this province are going to appreciate these priorities.

We will create 10 to 12 regional hospitals by making a modest investment in additional services at each of these regional hospitals. A Liberal government will make advanced diagnostic services available at each regional hospital. A Liberal government will provide renal dialysis equipment at each regional hospital, making it possible for people in many communities to obtain these life-saving services close to home without being forced to move away from their jobs, their homes, and their communities.

Mr. Speaker, a Liberal government will purchase four mobile MRIs to provide these specialized diagnostic services at regional hospitals in all areas of the province. The proposed health budget increases will enable us to fulfill these health priorities and much more, Mr. Speaker.

Access to cancer treatment services will be improved. Regional hospitals will increase the availability of services in rural Saskatchewan . . . in Saskatchewan, shortening the waiting lists in rural Saskatchewan and relieving the pressure that increases waiting lists in Regina and Saskatoon.

Saskatchewan Liberals will not change the total funding committed to health care in the proposed budget because, if it is used properly, it will be enough to meet the health care priorities to which we are committed. And in future years the federal commitments to increased health care funding will enable us to maintain these commitments so long as all of these federal increases are applied to health care. Saskatchewan Liberals agree with the Minister of Finance. Health care funding cannot be frozen as the Saskatchewan Tories or Sask-a-Tories have proposed, but we still don't think he has priorities right, Mr. Speaker.

A Saskatchewan Liberal government will expand, improve, and

stabilize health services in rural Saskatchewan and we will relieve the pressure on hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon, removing hundreds of people from NDP waiting lists.

A Saskatchewan Liberal government will do this by again making health care the number one priority of the Government of Saskatchewan by expanding diagnostic and treatment services in 10 to 12 regional hospitals, a commitment that the Health minister is not prepared to make; by keeping open all hospitals in rural Saskatchewan during our first term in office, a commitment the associate Health minister is not prepared to make; by providing physiotherapy and occupation services at each of these regional hospitals, a commitment that the Finance minister was not prepared to make.

It's a question of priorities, Mr. Speaker. Our commitment is to make high quality health care services which are accessible in every region of Saskatchewan the number one priority of the Liberal government of Saskatchewan. The health care budget increase is sufficient to implement these health care priorities if it is done right so it won't be necessary to take additional funds from elsewhere in the proposed budget to meet these priorities.

Further to that, we will be providing substantial budget increases in some areas and reducing the budget in areas which we don't believe are the real priorities of the people of Saskatchewan, first in post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. The budget for Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training has provided substantial increases for student support programs, training programs, career and employment support services, and support for post-secondary education institutions including our universities and SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology).

We reviewed this budget and decided that now, when economic conditions are not good, now is not the time to be adjusting programs that are helping our young people obtain the skills that they need to build a future. Now is not the time to be making adjustments in post-secondary program budgets. However, now is the time to enhance these programs, Mr. Speaker. Now is the time to find the funds from other budget areas so we can enhance these programs that help young people build futures.

Today thousands of young people are delaying entering post-secondary education programs at our universities and SIAST, Mr. Speaker; they're doing it for financial reasons. In today's economic conditions, it is especially difficult for first and second year students. Many are having problems earning and saving enough for tuition. The government can't entirely overcome this problem, but we had better try to help because Saskatchewan's future depends on a well-educated labour force, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Again it's a question of priorities, and in 1999 a Liberal government will introduce a scholarship program which provides \$1,000 per year to every first and second year student enrolled in a full-time program of studies at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, or any of the SIAST campuses.

Beginning in 1999 a Liberal government will provide \$22 million per year to provide \$1,000 scholarships for first and

second year students; every first and second year student enrolled in full-time programs at our two universities and SIAST.

Second, helping maintain rural communities. Saskatchewan rural communities are facing challenging times, Mr. Deputy Speaker: incomes are low, farm input costs are high, the NDP continues to threaten to close more rural hospitals, and threats of grain elevator closures are looming.

In tough economic times rural communities don't need more problems. A Saskatchewan Liberal government will stop the hospital closures; we will help rural communities stop the grain elevator closures. Within 14 days of being sworn in, a Saskatchewan Liberal government will introduce legislation to save rural grain elevators.

Any company seeking to close a grain elevator will be required to provide notice of intent to close. From the date of notice, local community groups will have 180 days to determine whether they want to take over the elevator at fair market value, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the community group and the elevator company can't agree on a fair price, an independent arbitrator will do so. It will be a community decision and a Liberal government will provide assistance to community groups to help them make that decision.

Communities facing closure of their grain elevators, will have two questions to answer: does saving our elevator make economic sense, and if so, is it a priority of our community? We will assist community groups to fund feasibility assessments to answer these questions and to decide whether to take over their grain elevator.

A Liberal government will provide funding to assist one group or community to complete a feasibility assessment. The cost of this assessment will be cost shared with the community group on a 75 per cent/25 per cent basis to a maximum provincial government contribution of \$60,000 per community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1515)

Starting in 1999, a Liberal government will commit \$4 million per year to help communities decide how best to save their grain elevators. Helping communities reach those decisions and save their grain elevators is a priority for a Saskatchewan Liberal government.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to place a high priority on rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan and shock absorbers and tires and wheel alignments and backbones. Highways affects all of those things. And all of us. And so do streets and roads throughout Saskatchewan.

When you look at the priority the Minister of Finance places on Saskatchewan highways, if he has any at all, you have to wonder: do any of the cabinet ministers in the NDP government ever travel on our highways or our streets or our roads? Do they ever get out of that executive jet and come down to earth? A \$15 million increase in the Highways budget all the way up to \$235 million — 235 million when the province collects \$370 million in fuel taxes alone.

If we don't soon get serious, if we don't soon start maintaining and repairing highways, roads, and streets in Saskatchewan, many will deteriorate so badly that they will have to be entirely rebuilt.

A Saskatchewan Liberal government will not allow the deterioration of our highway and transportation systems to continue. A Saskatchewan Liberal government will make highways, streets, and roads a top priority, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Starting in 1999 every penny collected from gasoline taxes will be spent back on Highways and Transportation.

This year it is estimated that the gasoline tax will raise \$370 million for the provincial coffers. A Liberal government will commit all that fuel tax to Highways and Transportation on the following basis, Mr. Speaker: 75 per cent, or two hundred and seventy-seven and a half million dollars will go into the Department of Highways and Transportation budget. That's an increase of \$47.9 million for provincial highways.

In addition, 15 per cent will go to cities, towns, and villages and rural municipalities to build and maintain their streets and roads, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Finance generously put 5 million — 5 million out of 370 million in gas taxes — into a new program he calls rural roads strategic initiatives fund. With a name like that you can be pretty sure it was a bureaucrat in Regina who dreamed the name up, not someone who actually has to navigate around the potholes on rural roads.

That fund will be renamed the rural and urban streets and roads fund, and the 5 million will be topped up to 15 per cent of the gas tax. In 1999 it will distribute \$55.5 million to local governments throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the last 10 per cent of the gas tax or \$37 million will be earmarked for twinning of the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highways. For too long we have been hearing about death along the two major interprovincial highways, and it has got to stop, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

After the election it will likely be too late to design and begin a twinning program this year. And \$37 million will only pay for twinning of about 90 kilometres per year. The interprovincial highways twinning program will start in 2000. And before it starts we intend to get a commitment from the federal minister to provide matching funding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — With a total of \$74 million in federal and provincial funding we will be able to complete the twinning of about 180 kilometres per year. At that rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be able to complete twinning of the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highways in the first term of a Liberal government.

So there you have it, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the top priorities of a Liberal government. The priorities we will implement this year, Priorities 1999, the Saskatchewan Liberal election platform.

Now no doubt one of the members opposite is going to ask, well where are you going to get the money? First let me say I'm glad they ask because it shows you the difference in priorities between the Saskatchewan Liberals and the NDP.

The 30 to 35 million in annual operating costs for the health priorities we announced on March 23 will be covered by the increase in federal funding to health care which forms part of the proposed \$195 million increase in the provincial health budget. A Liberal government will maintain that increase in 1999. And we will increase the health budget in future years by at least the amount of the annual increases the federal government has already committed.

First let me total up the cost of the priorities for 1999. Thirty to 35 million for regional hospitals, MRIs for the regional hospitals, and 300 new full-time . . . 300 new full-time nursing positions — costs which can be covered from the proposed increases within this health budget.

Twenty-two million dollars per year for scholarships for all first . . . for all full-time first- and second-year students at our universities and SIAST campuses; \$4 million per year to help rural communities save their grain elevators; 47.9 million to increase the Highways and Transportation budget to \$277.5 million, or 75 per cent of total provincial gas tax revenues with implementation beginning in 1999; \$50.5 million to increase the rural and urban streets and roads fund to 55.5 million, or 15 per cent of the gas tax revenues. This amount will go into the Highways and Transportation budget and every penny will be distributed to cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities starting in 1999, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Thirty-seven million or 10 per cent of gas tax revenue will be earmarked for the Trans-Canada and the Yellowhead, for the interprovincial highways program, beginning next year when we hope to have concluded an agreement for a matching federal contribution to this program. Since these funds will not be spent this year they will be left in the general revenue for 1999.

In summary, the Priorities 1999 commitments of a Liberal government will require spending 124.4 million on new priorities. These new priorities will require us to find savings of 2.2. per cent from elsewhere in the budget.

I want to make one other comment about the budget before I outline where a Liberal government will find the needed savings. Like most Saskatchewan taxpayers, I'm concerned that the proposed budget does not provide for any significant paydown of the provincial debt. And we did look at opportunities to increase the paydown, but determined that today's economic conditions will limit our ability to deal with this priority in 1999.

In future years, we are confident we can provide for both tax cuts and significant debt paydown based on two factors, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First, resource revenues will increase in the future. Oil revenues will come back close to the levels of a few years ago plus new uranium mines will substantially increase resource revenues. Together these should combine to help produce annual resource revenues in the \$900 million range — an increase of about 350 million from the 1999 projections.

In addition, a Liberal government will help create an economic climate in which small businesses will be able to grow and expand to help create an economic turnaround, which will not only increase government revenues providing opportunities for tax cuts but better times will reduce demands on social program costs.

Now the cost savings. A Liberal government will not take over until partway through the year following the election so not all of the cost savings will be fully realized in 1999, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For this reason, and because we will not form a Liberal government until well into the highway construction season, the full 47.9 million increase in the provincial Highways budget may not be fully implemented this year, but all of the other priorities will be implemented in 1999, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A Liberal government will make budget cuts throughout government to save \$24.7 million by eliminating unnecessary middle management jobs and saving other costs related to support services for these positions. By this means we will eliminate 600 middle management jobs out of a total of almost 10,000 jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The jobs we will eliminate are middle managers, policy analysts, spin doctors, and the like. No front-line staff who actually deliver needed services to the public, nor will field-level supervisor positions.

A Liberal government will eliminate only positions earning more than \$60,000 per year. And we also eliminate a few positions which support these middle management positions. For the latter group, the support staff, staff whose positions are deleted, will be given first opportunity at job openings which result from people retiring or leaving for other reasons. A Liberal government will also make sure that executive assistant positions in ministers' offices will make a large contribution to these cuts.

Next, based on figures from the '97-98 *Public Accounts*, we estimate that a 25 per cent cut in government travel will save 9.6 million. And a Liberal government will make sure that travel budgets for ministers and their staff take a big hit. We have telephones; we have the Internet. And ministers don't need executive assistants to carry their bags when they travel. If the choice is health services and highways or government travel, I know where Liberals will place a priority.

The Minister of Finance proposed a budget of 7.2 million for Executive Council. This will make his boss the Premier happy. But is it a priority? Liberals can only find about one and a half million in this budget that is definitely needed. So even if we are generous, the most the Premier's Executive Council may need is about two and a half million dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker, resulting in a saving of at least \$4.7 million.

Of the proposed \$49.2 million budget for the Department of Economic and Co-operative Development, the vast majority is to provide funding to organizations which actually do the job — 35.7 million goes to regional economic development authorities, economic partnership agreements, co-operative development, Tourism Saskatchewan, northern Saskatchewan, and similar organizations — organizations that actually do the work.

The remainder goes to administration and that sinkhole of bad investments, the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. We have banks and other private sector financial organizations. We have the Federal Business Development Bank. We don't need to duplicate these services and we don't need a place to hide Zach Douglas and other NDP hacks. Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation will be eliminated, saving \$6.2 million.

The real work of economic development is done by local organizations like chambers of commerce and the regional economic development authorities and by organizations like Tourism Saskatchewan. So why does the NDP place priority on a \$5 million administrative bureaucracy, a bureaucracy filled with high-priced NDP policy analysts and spin doctors? It will be cut in half as a start, saving \$2.6 million per year.

In 1997-98 the NDP government spent \$9 million to their advertising agencies at taxpayers' expense. We suspect they have hidden at least that much in the 1999 budget to advertise the NDP political through government departments. There is some need to provide basic information to the people of Saskatchewan but we don't need \$9 million worth of political spin, so the Liberals will save at least 7 million by cutting government advertising, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In addition to the ad agencies, the NDP provides full-time jobs for their spin doctors in communications programs. Again there is some need to provide information to the public, but — but — we don't need the political spin. So a Liberal government will cut departmental communications budget by at least \$4 million. That's in addition to more than 1 million for political spin that we already committed to cut from the Exec Council.

A Liberal government will cut at least 8.7 million from legal fees, polling, and other consulting services. Basically we intend to eliminate the patronage services which are so near and dear to the hearts of the NDP government.

Out of a total of \$325 million in proposed spending for supplier and other payments we will find an additional saving of 20.9 million.

That's a total of 90.6 million in cuts from NDP priorities in the 1999 NDP budget. And the Liberal government will make those cuts permanent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For one year only, the Liberal government will also use the savings from Crown corporations cuts to increase the transfer from Crown entities by 33.8 million. For the 2000 budget, we will find further cuts within the provincial budget to cover off these required savings. Then the savings will continue at the Crowns and be passed on to the public through lower rates.

In 1999 and future years, these Crown savings will come from cuts to middle management and senior management, and associated costs of \$19.8 million; \$10.4 million in cuts to Crown advertising budgets, including those used to advertise to entice the people to come in and lose their money; \$3.6 million in legal and polling and other consulting costs. We want to make it clear that the foregoing are the priorities for a full year 1999 Liberal budget.

When we are elected it will not be possible to fully implement our highway commitments both for the Trans-Canada and the Yellowhead interprovincial highways twinning program and the provincial highways program just because it would be too late in the season to design and begin much of the new construction. These commitments will be fully implemented in 2000. The other priorities will all be implemented in 1999.

Within 60 days of forming a Liberal government we will implement all of our health care commitments.

Within 14 days of forming a Liberal government we will pass legislation and provide funding to help communities save rural grain elevators.

Within 14 days of forming a Liberal government, we will provide 55.5 million in funds, funds that will be directly transferred to cities, towns, and villages and rural municipalities; funds that will assist local governments to maintain and repair streets and roads throughout rural and urban Saskatchewan.

Finally the one-time capital cost of diagnostic and renal dialysis equipment for the 10 to 12 regional hospitals plus the mobile MRI equipment is estimated at \$37 million. This is a one-time expenditure. We expect that about 4 to 6 million of this cost can be covered by savings from reducing the number of health district boards and the remainder will be covered by delaying approximately 25 per cent of the capital expenditures the NDP were planning on approving in their 1999 budget.

These expenditures may be important. It is just difficult to say until we have more detailed information but certainly this is clearly a case of getting your priorities right. After all it won't do a great deal of harm to delay the purchase of new government fleet vehicles, new computer equipment, new office equipment. It only makes sense to delay these kind of capital expenditures for one year rather than delaying purchasing health care equipment that could lower the risk to people's health, livelihood, and perhaps even their lives.

When it comes to that kind of decision, I don't have any problem telling you which one gets my vote as a top priority, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the difference between the New Democrat budget, their platform, and what a Liberal government platform is going to all be about. And you travel throughout rural Saskatchewan, through the urban Saskatchewan, ask them what their priorities are and I think they'll agree with us each and every time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Their budget was nothing more than pure politics, and it's showing itself for what it is when you listen to the ads and the thousands of dollars that are being wasted right now to promote what is their election platform.

I'll tell you what wasn't explained in the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What wasn't explained was things such as what my colleague from Arm River raised today in the House about a drug called fosamax which stops bone loss and broken bones and reverses the effects of osteoporosis. They had the political spin about the diagnostic side of that but not the treatment. They're not prepared to spend money to have those drugs

available and on the drug plan here in Saskatchewan.

And another thing that wasn't explained is my colleague from Melville raised questions today on behalf of nurses in Fort Qu'Appelle and Moose Jaw regarding the lack of incentives and the proper work environment and proper pay for the nurses of this province who have to make this health care system work.

The Premier claims he should call for more tax cuts like the Sask-a-Tories have been doing. A 1 per cent tax cut in education and health tax — is that enough? Well it's a great start; we applaud him for that. We think that should have happened. But to go further, what is he saying? Is there room or isn't there room? He's even confusing his front benches over there. I think what he's doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is doing nothing more than playing some politics here.

(1530)

And back to the nurses. You know it's the same Premier who said not so long ago that he was absolutely shocked to find out about this nursing crisis, although he's got an associate Health minister who supposedly, she claims, warned him of that a few years ago — told the Health minister and him. Now he's . . . (inaudible) . . . but he's saying, well we're going to get to the bottom of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what he's telling the people of this province.

Well I thought, well perhaps he's telling, you know, being as honest as he could about getting to the bottom of this. So I wrote him a letter some days ago explaining a situation in Shaunavon where in fact because of a deficit, because the health district is not being provided enough funding for staff, they're laying off I think it was 19 support staff and a handful of nurses.

Well when I put the questions to the health board, the health district board from Shaunavon — is it the fact that you don't need the nurses? Are you overstaffed? They said no, no, that's not it at all. Fact of the matter is we don't have enough money. In fact if we had more money, they stated that they would hire these people back.

So I wrote a letter to the Premier. If you really and truly want to get to the bottom of a nursing crisis, why don't you make sure the funds are going to go out there? They talk about all this extra funding for front-line health care workers. He won't meet with the nurses. I've asked him by way of letter — he won't respond to the letter — if in fact he'll have this meeting and listen to the concerns out there.

We've got nurses in Shaunavon that are working 60 hours a week. These are the ones that were laid off. They're putting in those kind of overtime hours because they are run ragged, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yet the Premier is sitting on his hands doing nothing about it.

When he stood up in front of the cameras that day and said, I'm going to get to the bottom of this nursing crisis, he was making a political statement, not a statement about his concern for health care. He was concerned about his skin. That's what he was concerned about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and no more than that.

And while this is all happening, while he chooses to ignore the problems that are being faced by health care workers, by people like those nurses in Shaunavon who on April 15 are going to lose their jobs if that Premier doesn't get up and get busy and get at it, his friends are doing very well.

You ever look at the list of his friends in government? And we could go on and on, and it's a horribly lengthy list, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Every friend he's got is in there making 150 to 200,000 bucks a year. That doesn't bother him at all. But when we're laying off health care workers he chooses to do nothing about it.

When we look at the travel, when we look at the travel for his friends in government, we can probably cut 10 million in total travel costs. SaskPower executives' out-of-province travel was \$160,000. And I say we can cut that.

The Minister of Agriculture sits there, and he took, he took political hacks six times to places like Rome, Tokyo, China, just to carry his bags.

The Minister of Finance took hacks twice in the past few years to New York, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. Political appointments like Diana Milenkovic, \$21,000 in out-of-province travel. Don Ching, 43,000 in out-of-province travel. Garry Simons, the former CEO (chief executive officer) of the NDP Party, \$9,800 in out-of-province travel. All from SaskTel.

Ron Clark, \$47,000, from SaskEnergy. Zach Douglas, \$14,534, from the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. Cheryl Barber, \$5,211; Randy Heise, 18,000, from SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Gord Nystuen, 2,774, with STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company). Brian Topp, the fellow who travels the rotunda out here working the press, to the United Steel Workers of America convention in Las Vegas — I don't have the amount here. One asks . . . it begs the question, what was he doing?

We look at advertising and communications budgets — two and a half million dollars in Health communications branch. That was representing a 340 per cent increase since 1992. SaskPower over a million dollars in advertising. SaskEnergy \$630,348 to Phoenix Advertising alone. And that is all attributed to the Deputy Premier sitting there.

Government costs, Executive Council, of 6.9 million. And we're saying the Premier just doesn't need that many people to carry his bags.

I could go on and on about middle management in places like SaskTel. I tell you we don't need one manager for every five employees. What about SaskPower? I think it was one manager for every four employees, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

That's what priorities are all about. And the people of this province are going to clearly say we choose the Saskatchewan Liberal priorities over the New Democrat priorities. And the Sask-a-Tories don't even rate in this one.

Yesterday I took note that the Premier when we were talking about roads and highways, he and the Deputy Premier were sitting laughing away. Where's your letters, where's your letters

to the federal government calling for more money for highways and such. Well little did he know we had a stack of them in here and I sent them across to which him and the Deputy Premier sat and had a good laugh because they were caught. Well they sent them back and then they started to heckle: so you sent letters; so what, you didn't get anything.

Well I look in the paper, and we've got a paper here that says Collette plans a major overhaul of Canada's roads, spending three and a half billion dollars. I say the lobbying does work. I say that instead of playing politics they should join with the people of this province in getting their fair share. But first they should put up — put up the kind of dollars that Saskatchewan taxpayers put into this government for the right reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'll tell you right now with what's been going on in this province . . . and it's nothing but pure politics when I see the people in the Wood River constituency, what they're having to go through to get, to get on the waiting list for surgery for some of the things. And I tell you we're fighting this stuff day in and day out. And what they're having to go through when they're driving on the highways in the Wood River constituency or all throughout Saskatchewan.

In fact, a few days ago I had a wheel that was broke right in half on a major highway. What kind of a priority is that of this government to sit back and do nothing about it? They are doing nothing.

They've raised the deductible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) up to 700 bucks. So somebody is hitting these kinds of holes on this kind of highway and there's a \$700 deductible, which means they're probably not going to ever put in a claim. And yet if they have to go out and fix the parts, as this person did — and we're calling on that government to come forward with some money and take care of these problems — they even have to pay tax on it.

So the government sort of gets them coming and going on this one, don't they. Aw, the people are . . . they're tired of that kind of treatment. They're tired of being treated as second class citizens in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think it's time that this government just get at 'er. I say, let's get at 'er; let's call the election and let's have it out. And let's see where the people's priorities are, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I won't be supporting that budget because I'm sticking up for the people that I represent. Thank you.

(1545)

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It really is an honour for me to get up today to speak in favour of our sixth consecutive balanced budget. It's a budget that is moving us forward to a brighter future; it's a budget for the people of Saskatchewan, moving forward together.

This is the first time that I've had the opportunity in this session to get up to have a major address. And so I want to take this opportunity to also commend my colleagues for the fine work that they do in the legislature, and also to the Speaker and to the Deputy Speaker for the fine work that they also do, in the kind

of work they do with school groups and citizens across this province to make sure that the role of democracy, the principles of our legislature, are protected. And I really do appreciate that fine work and I commend you for your efforts.

I also want to take just a moment also to say just a few quick words too about the constituency that I represent of Weyburn-Big Muddy, because it is a very good constituency. And it's a constituency in which I have decided that I certainly want to represent into the next term of office also. It's a constituency that I'm very proud to represent.

It's one that consists of course of the city of Weyburn, many towns, many villages, and many farms. It's a constituency in which of course farming is the backbone. And of course the city of Weyburn is the largest grain handling point in all of Canada. It's a constituency that has oil and gas which is an extremely important part of the constituency, and of course to our whole province. And even though we have seen a bit of a downturn in some of the prices, there's still a lot of optimism for the area in gas and oil.

The largest economic development project that this province had announced in that industry was announced in Weyburn area on the \$1.2 billion project for the CO₂ project in the Weyburn-Estevan area. That's good news for my area, also good news for the province.

It's a constituency that's also rich, not just in natural resources but in its people. The people there. We have farmers; we have small business people; we have people that believe in volunteerism; we have people that believe in entrepreneurship, in co-operatives. They believe in a balance of public, private, and co-operative enterprise.

It's a constituency in which we have wonderful efforts, whether it's in sports, in culture, in dinner theatres, in figure skating, in youth groups, for special needs people, for seniors. Everybody is part of the community.

The churches are very, very active and they are involved in our constituency. Just this weekend I was able to attend the multicultural society's folk-arama, because they celebrate the diversity of the people within our constituency, but within our province. I think, as the budget speech had said in the closing of it, "from many peoples, strength." That is really a motto also not only for our province, but is certainly exemplified by the people within my constituency.

And as I said to begin with, because of the type of people that I've represented, it has been a real honour, and it was an important part of my decision to run again. This is my third nomination that I went through, and it's one in which every time — the first, second, third time — I ran as a New Democrat.

Thank goodness I do know which party I represent, and when I knock on a door I can guarantee the people in that constituency what I campaign on is what I stand for and what I represent. Which is certainly a lot different than what a lot of people have been facing in this province with the people that they have elected.

When you decide to run for election and for the importance of a democracy, you have to think about the importance of serving the people in your area. And it really is rewarding serving in elected office. It's an honour to sit in this government alongside our Premier who is one of the ablest leaders in Canada, who has given me and influenced me in a better understanding of public policy in government and social democracy. Equally I've been inspired by many of my elected colleagues, both in caucus and in cabinet, whose dedication and commitment inspires us all.

Of course as I said earlier, inspiration also comes from the people within our constituency, within the party members, but also the community people within that constituency. The people within our churches, our community organizations, the civil service in the farm and labour groups who are at the very front line of human service. When we look at those people it makes our work also easier.

Another important inspiration for me in why we want to be government — and government is a lot different than just wanting to have power because government is for the people — it's an inspiration for me in order to protect the interests for our children and our grandchildren and our youth, for their hope, their vision . . . their future is truly what makes our efforts all worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, this budget speaks to that type of vision for our youth, for our children, for our province. It's a budget of balance.

Another important reason in which I support this budget, and also the directions of our government, is the importance of accountability, of meeting with the people. I've always made that one of my priorities in serving the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy but also in serving the people of Saskatchewan.

To me, the role of an MLA elected person is to bring the concerns and the issues of the people of your area to the government, and for me as a government member to bring back the policies and the decisions of the government to explain to the people. To bring government and people closer together is an extremely important priority for myself. And I think it's an extremely important priority for our government.

I'd like to quote what one of my wise colleagues, the member from Regina Northeast advised me, "Members get elected because of their ability to listen, not just their ability to talk." And listening is an important priority for me as I believe it's an important priority for our government. Every constituent deserves a response.

Over the last term I've held numerous accountability meetings in my constituency but also had meetings with the health boards, the education boards, the local governments, farm groups, business groups, non-government organizations — many, many meetings to hear what the people are saying to us.

But not only have I done that, so has our entire government caucus because we move our government caucus outside of Regina when we're not in session. We go out to meet the people of this province, to hear their concerns, and for us to tell them what our direction is about.

In November I was really privileged to have the entire government caucus meet in Weyburn and our government committees met with local governments, business people, local groups, associations on health care, on education, agriculture, social programs.

We have moved our caucus . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right — right across this province.

But what I heard from the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy as we hear in other constituencies as well, I heard that they were so pleased that we were out there listening to their concerns. They gave us praise for those meetings. And it was not that they agreed with everything that we were doing, but it was that the government was willing to listen to the ideas and concerns of the people of the area.

My government colleagues were also greeted with great hospitality from Weyburn-Big Muddy and I'm sure that they learned a lot from our area and the priorities that we do have. This fall . . .

An Hon. Member: — Some of us keep going back.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — That's right. We have ministers coming out — we have caucus members coming out — to meet in our constituency several times.

This fall I did hold accountability meetings in asking people what their priorities were. And again our government did a budget pre-consultation right across this province, and I want to thank the member that went as our constituency representative to the provincial level of consultation, Glenn Froh.

We asked the people what they wanted, and what we continued to hear was a balanced approach. We want investment in programs — health care was certainly one of those, education, highways — but we also want to make sure that we can still do some tax reduction and do some debt reduction. A balanced approach, and that's what we heard from the people and that's what we've been able to deliver with our budget here today or here in this session.

I've also got a newspaper clipping before the budget had been released. It comes right from the *Weyburn Review*: What should government do in the budget? And they interviewed all young high school students. These students really had a very good sense. I think the members opposite could take a lot of lesson from what the priorities of the young people are in our province:

Garrett Lee: They should divide their surplus between health, education . . . highways.

Eleisha Lanz: I think there's two main concerns they have to deal with; one is new programs in health care . . . highways, (But we also have to pay down our debt. That's another) . . . main concern is the debt. Our debt is overly high for the number of people in Saskatchewan.

Corey Leblanc: They should probably spend (some money) . . . on health care . . . maybe lower the debt a bit, (maybe) . . . spend some on highways. They could lower (the) taxes

a bit but not a lot.

Jennifer Carson: I think they should put some of the money onto the provincial debt (and then divide some money in some of the programs like health, education, highways).

Cory Sterling: I'd like to see the money put into health care . . . (I'd also like to see some money put into infrastructure.)

These young people had reasonable expectations. They looked at a balanced approach. They talk about reasonable spending. They talk about reasonable tax reduction and debt reduction. But I know every one of those young people do not want to see deficits, because they do not want their futures mortgaged as they already have been by the previous administration in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we call the balanced approach. It is investing in programs as we put more dollars into the programs that the people have been asking for. But, Mr. Speaker, I also believe it's more than just adding money to our budgets. It's also about good planning and how that money can be spent in the best possible way. To me that's what our government is also been about. It's about community involvement or, as I like to say, community empowerment in how programs and services are delivered. It's how government works with the people in this province.

We have a tradition of working with local governments, with school boards, with health boards, with many non-government organizations. But we have also added in many new initiatives that I believe bring local people into greater decision making with the government. As I said before, more community empowerment.

These are initiatives like regional economic development authority, the REDAs, which we are still supporting in this budget. Area transportation planning committees which are helping us plan for the future of the transportation challenges that we face. The child action plan is about government working with community to find solutions.

Safe community initiatives, elected health boards and health advisory councils are all part of involving people at the community level in our province to deliver the programs and services to them. It's how we meet the challenges of change. This is part of the good planning. More than just dollars — it's part of the good planning, it's part of community empowerment, it's part of what a New Democratic government stands for.

In our budget, in our balanced approach, we have certainly highlighted this year in the spending levels in health care. And that's good news for the people of Saskatchewan because when we consulted with the people in Saskatchewan, as we heard across Canada, this is an important initiative that we need to tackle. And it is a number one priority in this budget — it's for this government and it's also a priority for the people.

This is an unprecedented level — \$1.9 billion. More than an 11 per cent increase in health care; the greatest investment in health care in the history of our province. And that's an

investment that's going right to the front lines, Mr. Speaker. One point three billion dollars for payments, for salaries and benefits for front-line health workers — that's two-thirds of the health care budget.

We're investing \$12 million to improve waiting time for key surgeries. We're investing \$800,000 for new programs in women's health including breast cancer assessment, bone density programs to help fight osteoporosis. We're adding \$3.2 million to strengthen our cancer programs to be a total of \$25.6 million. We're investing 5.2 million for increased home care which is so important in rural Saskatchewan. We're investing \$250,000 for a mobile CAT scan, CT scanner, for rural Saskatchewan. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for expanding renal dialysis in rural Saskatchewan. We're investing \$20.6 million for the College of Medicine and the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a tremendous investment in health care. And when I was out in my area to the South Central Health District, they were very pleased with this health care budget. And what they said about it, it was again helping them meet the needs of the people in our health district right across that large health district with a number of communities.

They received a 6.64 per cent increase in their funding to add to our health district. And I quote from the CEO (chief executive officer) of that health district:

This is very reassuring and positive news for our community and our team of health care professionals who provide programs and services to the people of the health district.

Specifically the budget includes funding for a mobile CT scanner for southern health care districts. In addition, health districts will receive assistance to train and recruit nurses. I want to repeat that: funding for the health districts to train and recruit nurses and other health care professionals.

(1600)

He goes on to say that this:

We are very pleased with this budget because it demonstrates the government and health district's commitment to providing quality health care programs and services to our communities.

That is the reaction that we're getting in my health district and the reaction that we are getting right across this province.

And when I want to talk a little more specifically on my own health care district, and take a little tour around, because there are those in the opposition that like to fear monger and try to scare people about the services that there are there in rural Saskatchewan.

When I would leave Weyburn, I can go over to Pangman. They have one of the first types of integrated facilities that has got a health care centre with a community care home, working with the district and the community of people to provide needed health care services for Pangman and area. It's a beautiful

facility. It's a facility in which many services are delivered to not just Pangman but to surrounding communities.

Then I can go over to Bengough. They have a new health centre also onto their long-term care facility that provides tremendous amount of integrated services. They have services there; they have multi-purpose beds in which they can have people over in respite, or they can have them there for observation, or they can have them there for a few days before that they are . . . been going home. They are working together; they had a health care fair there. And the amount of services delivered in Bengough and area are greater than ever before.

Then I can move over to Radville. And again they have a long-term care facility with a health care centre. And what they're having there now is — there's a commitment with the health district to work with that integrated facility there — for a new ambulance and new ambulance garage. Again, more services being delivered in rural Saskatchewan, services that need to be delivered in rural Saskatchewan and which I do support.

It's important that our health district work with those communities. And when I talk about, again, empowering people, before we did health care changes and moved to the model that we have now where we have a health board delivering all the different levels of health care services, I don't recall the number of meetings that we had with the public. Our health district goes out and meets with the public at meetings in order to explain what they're delivering and to find out what the gaps are and what we need to still fill in. Because we know there's still things that we need to do in health care, and they will be listening to the people of the province, to the people of my constituency.

So what we've seen in health care again in this budget is a recognition that there needed to be more dollars in . . . that we have to put more dollars into good planning and good delivery of services for right across this province. The people of Saskatchewan told us to put health care at the top of the list, and that's what we have done.

But again, we hear out there these discussions and sometimes I think misleading comments from the opposition parties. I want to talk a little bit about just the shortage of nurses. Again, I think there's some plain facts here that have to be reiterated.

We put in \$9 million for 195 nursing positions in this province. That was adding nursing training positions to SIAST. And through the nursing recruitment that is happening right now — which is nationwide, continentwide, worldwide — we have recruited nurses in this province from Edmonton, from Calgary, from Winnipeg, from British Columbia, from Ontario, South Dakota, Vermont, Montana, and we're recruiting nurses even from California and Texas.

So we have recognized we need more nurses. We're doing what we can to fill those positions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — We also hear from the opposition about rural physicians. You know, we have the doctors in Pangman

and in Coronach and in Weyburn and in Radville. We have rural physicians. And you know what, we have more rural physicians in rural Saskatchewan today than we did a year ago.

About 70 per cent of our medical grads, the largest percentage ever of those family medicine graduates, are staying right here in Saskatchewan and going to rural Saskatchewan.

So I think we have to continue to remind people of the facts. We are delivering more health care services as the Minister of Health is saying here, day after day, than we ever have before in the province's history.

Four point six million visits to the family physicians; 925,000 visits to specialists; 9,200 nursing beds; 28,000 people receiving home care; 650,000 emergency room visits; 72,000 trips by road ambulance; more than 800 trips by air ambulance; 5,000 MRIs; 46,000 CT scans; 400,000 immunizations; over 1.4 million tests. We are delivering health care services.

There is stresses on the system. We have acknowledged that with our budget. We are going to meet the challenges and we have better services now than ever before in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. And by working with the nursing, the health care providers, the communities of this province, we will protect medicare; we will protect health care; and we will be proud of it. And Saskatchewan will again be leading Canada in the initiatives which we're bringing forward in health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Now what do we hear from the opposition? We hear about freezing health care funding over five years. But we not only hear that; listen to what they say about how they deliver health care services. They talk about for-profit health services.

Mr. Hermanson has campaigned on repealing the Canada Health Act which would mean an end to medicare. He's the leader of the Sask-a-Tory party, Mr. Hermanson — two-tier, two-tier.

The bottom line is that neither of our opponents want to build our medicare system. They both would like to see an American two-tiered health care system for Saskatchewan. That is not what the people of Saskatchewan want; that is not what this government is about; and that is not what we will deliver.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Health care is a priority for this government. It is a priority for the people of Saskatchewan. It is a priority that I am proud that our budget has recognized.

Our budget though, it addressed a lot of other issues too. It's also good news for our children and for our young people. It's more than just a health care budget. It's also an education budget.

This budget will deliver a billion dollars in education funding — 400 million to kindergarten to grade 12; 208 million to our universities' federated colleges; \$206 million in training; \$31 million more for our Saskatchewan training strategy. Still have

JobStart, Future Skills as important programs; entrepreneurship programs. These are all important services, education services for our young people in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that again by our government listening to the people of Saskatchewan, listening to the people within my constituency, that we will be moving towards a joint-use facility in Weyburn which will combine the regional college services with the comprehensive high school. This is good news for my constituency; this is good news for post-secondary, but also our secondary system in Weyburn and area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — This kind of initiative is again what people said. And what we have to do is we have to use common sense in how we deliver services and this will make sense. And I'm very proud that we will be officially doing an announcement in Weyburn later this month to give the details about that announcement.

But not only are we putting dollars into education, we've also had announced, again looking at the role of schools. And that's important, because our schools are delivering different services now than they may have in the past.

So again we're consulting with the people across this province to look at the role of our schools to the future. To me that's important because it is extremely important to have a strong education system in this province as we meet the future, because these are the young people that will be our future. And so we have good news in education.

We also know we want to deliver good, safe communities in our province. That's been part of the restorative justice initiative. But in this budget it also recognizes that with a commitment to safe communities. Seventeen million dollars more for our Justice department for court and correction facilities; for RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) funding in rural Saskatchewan; money to go into the serious and habitual offender comprehensive action plan.

Even though we're putting money though into being tough, tough on those offenders that we need to be tough on, there is more to our budget than just that. What we have to also look at is what are the root causes of some of these problems that we're facing. Part of the review in education, the role of education, is also part of how we prepare our children and work with our communities for the future. But we have to invest in the idea that we can also . . . we have to attack crime by attacking at its roots: poverty, unemployment, family violence.

And we're proud of our programs to help people stand on their own two feet with our building independence program, our award-winning child action plan. And we're investing \$6.7 million in the Child Benefit.

Nine hundred thousand dollars in the Saskatchewan employment supplement to help people find the dignity and the stability of work. We have to believe that the best solution to crime is to give people — especially our young people — constructive, positive alternatives. That honest work beats

dishonest work. That dishonest work does not pay. That's our commitment, and that's good news again for Saskatchewan.

This budget also continues to address important issues in our economy, and certainly agriculture is one of those important issues. We are funding to our producers, to our farmers, more per capita than any other government in Canada. We have stepped up to the plate with \$140 million for the federal-provincial AIDA program even with all of its shortcomings which we tried to negotiate a better deal with no help from the opposition.

We knew at the end of the day that if we had to put our dollars in, rather than our producers getting 60 cent dollars, we wanted them to get a dollar also. So we put our 40 per cent in even though all of the arguments that we have said, with over 40 per cent of the land base, 3 per cent of the tax base — how unfair that cost sharing is.

But not only did we put the dollars in there, we also did an enhancement to the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program, in which again we put provincial dollars with the federal dollars, which is direct money again back to our producers. And every little bit, I believe, does help.

We've provided short-term loans to help hog producers through tough times. Crop insurance premiums have dropped by 40 per cent lower than they were in 1996, and the program now has been expanded to cover more crops.

We've added 3.5 million to agriculture research to a total of 17 million so we can keep building on what is already a world-class record in research and development in ag-biotech, in diversification, in value-added food processing, which is the key to growth in the future.

Agriculture is extremely important to my constituency but extremely important industry right across this province. Like I've said before, we needed to add dollars. But we have to have policies at the federal level that really address the root problems that our agriculture industry is facing in this province. Those problems are from a federal government that would take out a subsidy at a faster rate and a greater amount than ever needed to be met, and putting our producers in a situation to be competing against producers in the European market, American producers, in which their national governments are still subsidizing.

Our farmers are good at what they do. They're efficient at what they do. But when the federal policies target our farmers in such an unfair manner, it is very, very difficult for the province that has economy that agriculture is based on the most . . . our province's economy is based on most, to come up with the dollars then to fight those initiatives.

That's why we've said the federal government needs to come up to better policies. They need to insist that the subsidies in other nations are gone. But they also have to be backing agriculture policy that will be effective for our producers.

When we talk again about the economy . . . And I will get to Highways and Transportation because to me that's an extremely important part of the economy, an important part of agriculture. I do want to say a couple more parts of just what our budget did

in other economic types of incentives.

(1615)

Economic growth in this province . . . it also is important — the small business. In our budget we are moving forward together with improvements for the small-business loans associations, where we doubled the amount that those loan associations can handle and what can be given out to communities, to entrepreneurs to create and expand small businesses right across Saskatchewan.

We changed some royalty structures for gold and base metal mining so that that sector could be expanded. And that follows up things that we've done in other sectors before. That's important to our economy.

It was very interesting today to be part, here at the legislature, to have the announcement of the Synchrotron. That's good news for Saskatchewan. That is leading us to the future. That's more jobs now and that's more jobs for the future. That's the largest investment in research in all of Canada's history here in Saskatchewan. We are moving forward together.

This good news is just almost too much for everybody here. Our economy is growing. And when I hear the opposition I always have to consider. Sometimes I think they're more like . . . they're almost a party from Alberta. They can't seem to give credit to Saskatchewan. They're always talking about Alberta — Alberta this, Alberta that. And I just want to talk a little bit here about what I call the Saskatchewan advantage.

You know it's very interesting in this document that I have. It talks about employment growth in Saskatchewan has been strong. Good news. Low-end jobs pay less and are more unstable in Alberta. Women fare better in Saskatchewan. Alberta shows increasing poverty amidst plenty.

Now Alberta's tax advantage, we're always hearing that from the opposition. Better throw in the cost . . . better throw in the cost of living. When average . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's interesting. One of the members opposite here just reminded me that the chamber of commerce from Calgary has just come back over there on the opposition side.

But when we talk about the tax advantage, we've got to look at the cost of living. When average taxes are compared, Saskatchewan is very competitive. But there are taxes and household charges which bring even our two provinces even closer in line. Okay.

Mix them all together. What you have is a surprising conclusion. Combining provincial taxes and premiums, add in housing, automobile, utility rates. For a family of four earning \$50,000, the total cost in Saskatoon is \$13,243; Calgary, \$13,900. For the family earning \$75,000, Saskatoon is \$17,010; in Calgary, 16,449.

Now isn't that interesting. Where's the Alberta advantage? It goes to the privileged. The Alberta advantage goes to the privileged.

Now I do want to talk about . . .

An Hon. Member: — They don't want to hear that.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — They don't want to hear about the . . . they don't want to hear about the Alberta people flocking into Saskatchewan. I'll tell them about some examples that I've had just this spring.

I was attending a funeral in Regina. This couple came up to me and they had said they'd moved into Milestone. That's my home town, Milestone. Where did they move from? Calgary. And you know what they told me? They told me that they could not believe how much less expensive it was to live here, in Milestone, in Saskatchewan. They said their house costs . . . They went and did their house insurance; it was better. Then they went and did their car insurance; it was better.

And then they said, you know we phoned in to see about changing our health care benefits. And we asked . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . then they asked what premium they'd have to pay. They'd been paying over \$1,000 a month . . . or \$1,000, no, a year in Alberta. They didn't have to pay anything here in Saskatchewan. They said this is a good place to live. They brought three — it's a young family — three young children back to the community in Milestone.

Well then I'm out at a farm rally, farm meeting in Bengough. I have a discussion with a fellow there. Guess what he's doing? — and I've just talked to him two or three times, just on the other side of Bengough — moving back, moving back from Alberta. He's setting up a feedlot because he said this is a good place to do that. He's setting up a feedlot on the other side of Bengough.

Two weeks ago I'm stopped to get gas in Weyburn. See a fellow there, he's got a cap on and I think he's probably with the oil industry. And he says yes, he does . . . he does trucking. And he says you know he's really optimistic about this spring in that area for the oil industry. He says it's absolutely dead in Alberta. And he said I am glad to be here in Saskatchewan. He says I'm very optimistic with Trimension, with PanCanadian, with all of these good news stories for our oil and gas industry.

So there is a Saskatchewan advantage. And what part of that advantage is, like I said, it's more than just dollars when you put into a budget. It's more than just dollars; it's how you plan and work with the communities to deliver the right kinds of services for the people of Saskatchewan. And that is what this government is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, I also want to again take some time, a little bit of a purview again within my constituency. But I think there's stories like this right across the province because a balanced approach is about private co-operatives; it's about Crown corporations all working together to deliver good services.

I want to tell you about another little success story, a good partnership that again shows how we work with communities.

The L'il Red Bus Lines, which I had announced here before, delivering services throughout the rural communities in my

constituency. But they have now got a formal partnership with STC. This could work because we got shareholders that are seniors in Bengough. We've got business people in Ogema, Pangman, Radville, Ceylon, all contributing to this bus line — and it's breaking even. But the only way this bus line can work is because it has a partnership with STC. This is how you learn to deliver good services, sustainable services to rural Saskatchewan.

You know what I hear from the opposition when they talk about STC? STC — gone. That would be the end of the L'il Red Bus Lines. That would be the end of the L'il Red Bus Lines. Those are kind of services that we need in rural Saskatchewan. Those are the kinds of partnerships that you adapt, that you work with, to meet the needs of communities.

Now when I talked before in agriculture and . . . (inaudible) . . . I knew they'd want to sell STC. Yes, and that would be the end. Yes, that's probably . . . That is their motto — not learn how to adjust, not learn how to do things — just sell it off and then we'll see what happens. Yes. We've heard that before. We heard that in the '80s. We heard it in the '80s. Yes.

I am going to just right now talk about highways and transportation. An absolute . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The highway equipment. That's right, sold off, just like that — sold off. Yes, sell off. Well I wouldn't even know if that was a sell off. That was more of giveaway program — give away to their friends. Yes.

I wonder who they promised this time what they're going to give away the next time if they . . . But I don't think the people of the province will ever forget and they'll never get a chance to do a giveaway again. Because their giveaway cost everyone of us \$2 million a day on interest payments that we're still paying today.

I want to get back to the importance of transportation, the importance of also of what's been happening in agriculture, the importance of that whole issue to rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we put in \$2.5 billion in 1997 as a commitment over 10 years. Now I want to do a little bit of time here to clarify what 2.5 billion over 10 years, because again the opposition has been very misleading.

No one over on this side of the House, not one person has ever said 2.5 billion over 10 years means \$250 million every year. It's kind of interesting how they would finance things. If they were doing that with a business they'd say well this is my total investment in 10 years, I'm going to up it up and then be flat — never have anything for any increases again.

It doesn't make sense, doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up. It's like their platform. They want to add more dollars. They'll add it in one budget and then flat. That's what they talk about, a freeze even there.

What we have done is again put more dollars in . . . They must be interested.

Okay I guess . . . Now hopefully the opposition will listen because we are putting in the dollars. We have wrapped up our budget since our commitment by \$75 million. Since 1995

actually our Highways budget has increased by 40 per cent. So that is a commitment.

But part of that commitment is good planning. It is why we're working with area planning committees right across this province. It's why we're working in trucking partnerships. That's why we're looking at both east-west but also north-south corridors in this province. And we have initiated an additional \$5 million to a new type of partnership fund in our transportation and highways.

The members opposite never like to listen to things that are called partnerships because that means co-operation — working together. This partnership fund is a way in which we've been starting to do business in the areas right across the province. And if it makes sense for the municipalities, the Department of Highways, to come up with some good strategies for delivering good transportation in an area, we'll have some joint funding.

And I give a couple of examples of that. Up in the area where the potato industry is in the Lucky Lake area, we've had a number of RMs recognizing that if they can keep the heavy truck haul on a municipal system, that we can save a thin-surfaced highway which is important for ambulances, for education, for other modes of traffic to be on. Therein we said we would put dollars in to help them with that agreement because we both benefit from it.

But I do want to get into a really important initiative that is facing both agriculture . . . has been in grain transportation. We have within our Highways department a unit that works on grain transportation initiatives and short-line advisory unit.

When we see the right-wing policies and the impact that they have had from the federal level on taking out the Crow benefit, the devastating effects of changes to the Canadian transportation Act which has transferred traffic from rail to road, it is incredible that the federal government has not put dollars into our transportation system.

During this important grain transportation review in Estey, we as a province have taken a very, very strong role. And the three major things that we have said over and over and over and over is that if we go to a more efficient system, we have to guarantee that we get maximize the benefits back to producers. There is no use going to a system that's consolidated and in which all the savings are captured by the railways and the grain companies. We have to ensure that producers are protected and that producers get the benefit of any efficiency gains.

We have to say that the review goes right from farm to port and it has to take in the road impact. And so we were pleased that Estey did recognize at least that those provinces, but also that the federal government needs to be putting dollars into roads and infrastructure. That direction is positive, that direction on where we want to see how the branch line abandonment process changes. We want to see the changes that will help short lines be more viable within our province.

But there are concerns, and the concerns that we've raised are the concerns that we hear from the people in this province, the farmers in this province. We do not agree that the freight rate cap should come off unless you've got an effective, competitive

system in place. We said no to the freight rate cap coming off.

We also said certainly the Wheat Board should look at competitive tendering as an option, but the Wheat Board has to remain involved in transportation, remain in the country. It's an important role that the Wheat Board needs to maintain.

We said that producers need to be involved in car allocation. We need to have producers, the Wheat Board, the grain companies — all an important part of that.

We know that the producers need to be involved in the next steps. It makes me very concerned when I meet with the federal minister and he talks about the next steps being industry led. This government is going to protect the producers' voice in these important issues.

It was very interesting to me just recently, having the opportunity — I met with CP (Canadian Pacific) and CN (Canadian National) — and hearing that they are moving to a joint office into Ottawa on their communications. This does seem to tell me that there's a huge lobby being waged by the railways to the federal government on important changes to our future.

(1630)

As a province we have said it, our Premier has said it, our Agriculture minister has said it, I have said it: that producers have to be involved in changes, they have to benefit from those changes, and we will lobby the federal government and we will stand for nothing but those protections being in place.

But what do I hear from the opposition? They barely, barely even want to identify with these concerns and issues. I was pleased just being able to say that a short line is being announced right in my own constituency again, the Assiniboia Sub, in which again we were able to help with funding. We were able to help with technical assistance to that group in order that they can buy a piece of track from Pangman, Ogema, over to Assiniboia, run a short line there. And I'm pleased that the Wheat Pool will leave two elevators on that line so that the producers will make their commitment of volumes on that line and they will make it a success. That's what we need.

And we did that, we did that in spite of all of the obstacles in place. The Canadian transportation Act does not favour this. The legislation is not short-line friendly and we need those changes to be in place so that short lines can be a viable option for the farmers, for the communities, for the people of Saskatchewan.

Red Coat Road and Rail is a success story and it's one in which I am very optimistic that we can get in other places in the province. But we need to have changes at the federal level. It should not be to the degree of difficulty. We need changes in the ways in which you can have fair revenue splits between mainline carriers and short lines. We need that short-line changes so that we can have more friendly legislation that will allow producers to be empowered; like I said, to be able to take some of the destiny into their own hands.

This budget is about good planning and more dollars, but good

planning and working with the communities right across this province. And in Highways we've added \$15 million to our budget this year. And we are working on our twinning initiative. And we are working on primary and secondary and provincial and national highways. We're working on roads in the North. Tomorrow I'll be in the North announcing, again, a completion of a major road project on Garson Lake. We'll be announcing more projects there.

Would we like more money in Highways? Of course we would. And we're asking that federal government to put in some dollars. And it's interesting when the Liberals will say here today that, you know, they're asking too — they showed us some letters and so on. We don't get any response. But in their platform they plan to get a 50/50 cost sharing when they're government.

Now let me tell the members opposite, the Liberals opposite, we can't wait to the next, maybe, millennium for them to be government to get that cost-sharing program. We're asking for it now; we want it to be delivered now.

We hope that the federal government — it's given us a little glimmer of hope — will put their dollars where they've been saying get dollars back into a national highways program, but also infrastructure because of the impacts of the federal policies on our province. They should be putting dollars in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in transportation there are many challenges. But we are working in all of these different ways, whether it's on short-line development, whether it's in trucking partnerships, working with the area planning committees, working with municipalities on partnerships, working with more dollars. We will deliver a top-notch transportation system in this province by working with the people we need. We've got partnerships with municipalities; we've got the province there. We do need the federal government to put up their fair share.

I also want to just comment, in transportation not only do we see the dollars going into roads — and our highways is important — there's also very importance in having safety compliance; all of those initiatives are very, very important that we have a safe system for the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have delivered in many, many key areas, in more program spending. I'm also pleased with the municipal government, that they have \$10 million which can be shared with northern urban and rural municipalities for infrastructure — which may be roads, may be bridges, or may be other things that they determine are their priorities. It's again a step in the right direction.

But as the young people that I referred to earlier in my speech, it's more than just putting more dollars in. We also looked at the balanced approach. And we were able to again do a tax reduction and that's important to the people of Saskatchewan. And it's important to us. And so our Finance minister was pleased to announce that the PST (provincial sales tax) would drop again 1 percentage point. That's 3 percentage points now been delivered to the people of Saskatchewan.

We've been able to reduce income tax when we sustainably can. We've had a 10 per cent decrease in income tax, and we've

had targeted tax cuts in gas and oil, in potash, now in base metals, but in other key areas of the economy in order to help rejuvenate the economy and to expand the economy and the jobs and the diversification in this province. These tax cuts are sustainable and they're here to stay and we're going to have more as we can deliver them.

Another thing I think that was very important in our budget was that we're going to look at the entire income tax system and review it to make it more responsive, more efficient. So we know that lower taxes certainly are an agenda that we will do but only in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Speaker, we also looked at debt and there is less debt. We promised to pay down debt to reduce the mortgage of our children's future, and we have. Six straight balanced budgets. Balanced budgets, 3.4 billion in debt paid off since 1994 — that's a huge accomplishment, a huge accomplishment.

So, Mr. Speaker, this budget — I believe our Throne Speech also — delivers a vision for Saskatchewan and it's a vision that I'm committed to. It's a vision of a united not a divided community. It's a vision of strong economic and job growth in our private, our co-operative, our Crown sector. A strong diversified economy in all of our areas of our province — north, rural, urban; our economy that creates meaningful, well-paid work; an economy that levels up not down as some members opposite seem to purport as the way to go.

I mean when opposition will even, even criticize the increase of a minimum wage, you do really wonder if they ever consider levelling up as part of their platform.

This is an economy that builds strong, vibrant, rural Saskatchewan with more diversification, more value-added, more returns to the producers. And I'm pleased that we're going to be able to deliver on new generation co-ops and new legislation because those are the keys to the future for us; producer-owned short lines so that farmers have the opportunity to gain more for the products that they produce. That's the vision that we have.

We have a vision for strong, safe communities where children can grow up in safe families. A Saskatchewan where publicly funded, universal, administrated, accessible health care is for all. A health system where people live long and healthy lives but when they're ill that there's state-of-the-art health care services.

It's a Saskatchewan with strong-quality public education, early intervention, and lifelong learning opportunities; a Saskatchewan with accessible post-secondary education and training programs; a Saskatchewan where the environment is kept sustainable for future generations. That's what I see.

And it's a Saskatchewan of balance and stability — balanced budgets, lower taxes, shrinking debt, quality services. That's what we are building with this budget.

But let no one ever forget that there is another vision over there; that there is the opposition and that's not the kind of Saskatchewan that they see.

Actually we have a party, as our Premier likes to call it, the Sask-a-Tories — I sometimes call them the Tory witness protection plan — that do everything to hide from their record. And they do have a record. It's a record that we see headlines on, provincially and nationally. They have a record that I actually heard at a meeting with some of the members opposite at, that just brought back the politics of the '80s in Pangman, Saskatchewan, like I couldn't believe.

I heard members opposite from the Sask Party saying things like, oh, they've got all that money over there in Liquor and Gaming, they can spend that money to help you farmers out. Then he said, oh yes, yes, that education tax on the land, yes, maybe we should take that education tax off the property. And then they talked about, oh yes, we can spend here, we can spend there. And when I said, well what about the next year after you do that? Oh well — you know. Who cares about the next year. Who cares.

Our children have cared about the next year, and they're still going to care because they saw what the record was of the '80s. It wasn't the people in that meeting, the Pangman meeting, that were from the '80s, it was the Sask Party that went back to the policies, the politics of the '80s.

I even heard the rural/urban piece. Oh, urbans don't understand the world. They even suggested that the communities there — Weyburn and Bengough and stuff — didn't even understand the rural issues. They suggested there, splits again between First Nations and other people in our communities. It's irresponsible. It's unconscionable. It's the policies of the '80s; it's the policies of division; it's the policies of irresponsible spending and not caring about the future. It's the policies of power, not government.

So when you see a group of people through the middle of the night form a new party, and they don't have the conscience to go back to those people that elected them to seek a by-election, to gain a new mandate — that's again old policies. And when you look at that party and how they mixed together, and you check out the addresses and the telephone numbers and who's involved, it's pretty hard to say that they're not the Sask-a-Tory party trying a name change, and think the people of Saskatchewan will ever forget. I don't believe people from Saskatchewan will ever forget.

And I believe people saw the way a person . . . If a person decides to leave a party, they should go back to their constituencies, seek a nomination, get re-elected which the member from Athabasca did. That set the standard high. That set the standard high and that's what this government is about — is high standards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . now isn't that interesting . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I'll ask the hon. members on both sides of the House to come to order and allow the Hon. Minister of Highways and Transportation . . . Order. There's plenty of opportunity. Hon. members will recognize there's plenty of opportunity to get into the budget

debate and I'll encourage all hon. members to put your remarks on the record. They're not necessary to shout them across the House. Order.

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on their platform when I look at that Sask Party platform and I see division all over it. I see things too . . . when they talk about short line railways, it's interesting what they think the block is.

The Speaker: — Order, Why is the hon. member on his feet?

Mr. Jess: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd also like to thank the Minister of Highways for giving me this opportunity. I would like to introduce in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, Mr. John Enns, Mr. Walter Enns and Norm Haryung. They are in here to meet with the Environment minister to discuss regional parks and I will be meeting with them after 5 o'clock. I'd also like to mention, just as we welcome them, that Mr. Haryung has served the Meeting Lake Regional Park as the manager for — and I'm not just sure of the years — it was getting close to 30 and that was longer than anyone else in the history of the regional park system in Saskatchewan. So I'd like you to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Hon. Ms. Bradley: — Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, when I look over at the opposition and I looked at that Sask-a-Tory platform card, and I see things there again like, I just, . . . one example, one example on short-line railways. What do they say is the impediment? Successor rights. We've talked to the short-line groups. They said, oh on a list of 10, it might be 12. We can work through it because it is the Saskatchewan way; we're getting short-line railways in this province because we can. Do they say that there's any problem with the power that CN and CP have? Do they say there's any problem with the federal legislation that's giving difficulty? Oh, no, no. Let's blame some workers somewhere as the problem. It's always that divisionness that is in there.

But we've been there, we've been there, and we don't want to be there again. And it is the politics of the '80s.

(1645)

You know, there was nothing even for education in that platform — I noticed that too. And of course, in health care it was kind of interesting. They're going to do a value audit on front-line health care providers. They seem to want that two-tiered system where the rich can buy their way to the front

of the line.

I don't believe that that's the direction the people of Saskatchewan want to see. It's a party that's afraid of its past. It's a party that did not, cannot, I think, give a valid commitment to the people for the future.

When I think about the Liberals — I've already talked about them a bit today, but I see what they're doing — of course they don't have really a balanced approach. It looks like just kind of spending more and maybe somehow cut government. And it's interesting when they say cut government when 80 per cent of government is people and delivering services and jobs, so I do wonder what they really do intend to cut . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And yes, their plan does change every week. Every day you hear a little different plan there.

Again, they spend so much time amongst themselves trying to figure out really who is the leader or who should become the leader or who was the leader, and they haven't had a lot of times to get their policy together. And we can understand that. So we'll just kind of leave them.

But, Mr. Speaker, our budget, our Throne Speech, our government is about a plan for the future. We're social democrats. We will not go back. We will go forward. We're not afraid of our record. I'm not saying it's perfect but let me tell you, I can carry my two platform cards around from '91 and '95 and I'm not afraid to carry those with me, because we have delivered in most ways we possibly could to the people of Saskatchewan.

Were there some mistakes? Yes. We will acknowledge that. But we're not afraid of our record. Because we give our commitment, I give my commitment to the people of the province, as social democrats we believe in building for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to be able to . . . I'm very pleased today to be able to say that I am in favour of the budget that's been delivered here today. I believe it really is all about moving forward together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's been sort of an interesting afternoon listening to the ramblings and gambollings that we've had going on here. People who've sort of told what they thought they were about and what they thought they were going to do, and no end of misstatements and statements that went off in the wrong direction. And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that maybe we need to sort of start reviewing some of this. And I'm going to suggest if there's anyone that's left out there in television land this afternoon . . . and I doubt if anyone's got the fortitude to have listened to what we've had to put up with, especially in the last hour.

But in Saskatchewan one of the things that I think we're all concerned about is always job creation because, Mr. Speaker, that involves our kids. And I think if each one of us that's watching the debate today —, whether it happens to be in the

House or some other place in Saskatchewan — spends a little time and says, okay where are my family members at, where are my friend's family members at in the neighbourhood, where have all the kids gone?

Mr. Speaker, we know where they've gone. They're not here. Because if they are here they're probably for sure unemployed. Let's look at the job creation record in Canada. Saskatchewan was the only province, Mr. Speaker . . . And they want to talk of their record. They stood up there and they yelled and they waved the arms as true NDP way and said, look at our record. We just heard the Minister of Highways saying, I'm not ashamed of my record.

Here's the record, Mr. Speaker. Here's the record. The only province in Canada to lose jobs in the past year — the only province, the only province. That's the Minister of Highways' record. That's the record of every single NDP over there. They made sure we were not only at zero when it comes to job creation — we lost jobs, Mr. Speaker. The only province in Canada.

We have no end of funny little jokes we tell around the coffee shops and those sorts of places in Saskatchewan. And I think Saskatchewan coffee shops are a good location to find out what's really going on in the province. And I think the NDP members should go there sometime and find out exactly what people are thinking.

But we go down to . . . and we've got the Minister of Agriculture talking about polygraph. Well let's just do a little polygraph right now. We just had the people from the NDP, Mr. Speaker, who told about all the jobs they've created. Their record is, we lost jobs in Canada.

But as I was saying, you go to the coffee shops and you hear the odd little joke about this group or that group. Newfoundland — well they've been the butt of a few jokes here and there. But no longer, Mr. Speaker, no longer. They created 6,100 new jobs in that little rock. I have no idea what they managed to do to find work out there, Mr. Speaker, but they found 6,100 new jobs — 6,100 new jobs. And listen to the excitement over there . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I think the Chair need not repeat the remark that he made just a few minutes ago. All hon. members will recognize the importance of decorum in the House. And I will ask that you provide that to the hon. member for Rosthern.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, it's really exciting to hear the excitement and the enthusiasm in the NDP's side of this House when they find out that there's actually an opportunity to create jobs in a place like Newfoundland.

If Newfoundland can create 6,100 new jobs, what shouldn't we be able to do in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Oil, potash, uranium, farming, lumber, agriculture, all kinds of value-added things — manufacturing of farm equipment. And just today we had a fantastic announcement out of Saskatoon of something that's happening that's unique not only to Saskatchewan but Canada and the world.

With all that happening, the Rock, Mr. Speaker, produces 6,100

new jobs, and we lose jobs. And they have the nerve to go ahead and say they're proud of their record. Well if they want to run on their record, let them.

It reminds me of . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member from Swift Current right now says, bet your life. Well it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the person running against him in the next election has won awards for economic development. Not an NDP, Mr. Speaker; that's a Sask Party person. That's a Sask Party person who leads in his own community with the creation of jobs, of economic welfare, of enthusiasm, of vibrancy.

And how many jobs has that individual from Swift Current created, Mr. Speaker? None. He's been part of the government that has made sure we've lost jobs in the last year.

That's the record, Mr. Speaker. That's the record. And they can chirp from their side if they wish about polygraph. But people know when they look down their street, they look in their family, or they look out on the sidewalk and their front driveways at Thanksgiving, at Easter time, at Christmas, and look at the licence plates — look at the licence plates — we know where they come from.

And we have the member from Lloydminster say, why don't we move to Alberta? We're not moving to Alberta, Mr. Speaker, because we love Saskatchewan. We have good ideas for Saskatchewan. And we're going to lead this province into a much better world than the NDP has ever dreamt of, Mr. Speaker.

In that one year, how many fewer jobs? I had an individual from our newspaper ask me about this little stat, and said, how many jobs have we lost? And I wasn't quite sure; I thought maybe a thousand or two. We've lost 100 jobs less than 5,000 jobs.

And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, those people didn't just go home and say, well I've lost my job; I guess I'll just sit here and have the state take care of me, as a social democrat would probably want them to do, because that's what they want to do. They have this social conscience where they're hoping someone will be unemployed so they can take care of them. That's why they create the job situation that we have.

Five thousand fewer jobs in Saskatchewan, and I'm sure those 5,000 jobs aren't sitting in those communities doing nothing. They've gone looking for work because that's the Saskatchewan way. And we know they couldn't have found it in Saskatchewan because there's fewer jobs in Saskatchewan than what there were. They've had to leave.

Where have all the children gone? The NDP in this province, Mr. Speaker, have chased them out, not just to the east side of Lloyd but to the side of Lloyd that's on the Alberta side, because that's where the opportunity is.

Let's look a little bit about taxes. Because as these people are looking for work and as they find jobs . . . and I meet a lot of these because my community and my friends and my neighbours are in the same situation, where their children are elsewhere. And we've just had this government talk about this

great tax reduction that they've done and they say, well it's gone from nine to six, and they want to take credit for that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, who brought it up to nine in the first place? Who brought it up to nine? Who brought it up to nine? It happened to be the NDP over there brought it up to nine, the NDP government — just zap! and there we were. Unfortunately the Premier in his usual way didn't freeze it . . . (inaudible) . . . prepared to do something with it.

Nine per cent — can you imagine that? No wonder people from the middle of the province, west, thought it was a good place to go to shop elsewhere where the tax situation is different — 9 per cent. Finally they bring it down to seven where they had it originally and wanted to take some credit for that. Two steps back and one step ahead. Another step ahead. You haven't made any progress; but yes, this NDP thinks that's progress.

Let's just look at the situation. And over there the Agriculture minister is already talking about going to Alberta. Let's look at Manitoba. It used to be nicknamed the postage stamp province, Mr. Speaker, and you're well aware of that. That little postage stamp province, that little postage stamp province, last year . . . People that live there, a family, takes home \$4,396 more in take-home pay than a Saskatchewan family. That's Manitoba. For those people that don't want to look west they could look east.

Taxes are terrible. Ask the average person in an agricultural venture to look at his tax notice that he gets to show what he's paying in property tax and he'll tell you what's happened in the last little while. While this government has talked and said, well they've balanced their budgets, they've balanced their budgets on the taxpayers of this province, the property taxpayer. And rural Saskatchewan has taken a major hit on education tax and so have the people in towns. As they look at their tax notice they see that education is taking an ever larger bite out of that. As a province, the NDP government backs off of its responsibility as far as taking care of education.

But we need to spend a little bit of time on health. The NDP seem to think that they are the protectors of health care in Saskatchewan. Well let's spend a little bit of time seeing what they've done with that. And I guess probably the simplest would be is just to ask the people out there what can you tell me about lineups in Saskatchewan? I've been to the coffee shops. I can tell you what they think about the lineups in Saskatchewan. And I think that's something that this particular government needs to take care of.

The longest waiting lists in the country to see a specialist or receive treatment — that's their record. Everyone out there knows it. The longest waiting lists in the country to see a medical specialist and receive treatment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a whole lot more to say but I see that it's about 5 o'clock, and with that I would like to move to adjourn debate for today.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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