

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the petition I want to present this morning comes from the area of the Parkland Health District. The prayer reads as follows:

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.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the community of Hafford.

I so present.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present today on behalf of Saskatchewan's disenfranchised widows. 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, Moosomin, Moose Jaw areas — Moose Jaw in the main, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions 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.

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

The community involved, Mr. Speaker, is Hafford.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitions I have in my hand are signed by individuals from the Hafford, Biggar, and Regina areas of the province.

I so present.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens asking for a 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.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Melfort and Nipawin.

I so present.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today, and it's to increase highway spending in Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to finally show a serious commitment to roads and highways in Saskatchewan by urging it to increase its highways and roads construction and maintenance budget by \$300 million over the next five years as called for in the Saskatchewan Party's election platform.

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

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present petitions on behalf of the people of our province, and the petitioners have signed this petition because they need a real farm aid package. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Domremy and Wakaw, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition from citizens of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

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

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

The signatures on these petitions and others that have been presented are from the communities of Saskatoon, Unity, Macklin, Cut Knife to Waldron, from one end of the province to the other, Mr. Speaker.

I so present. Thank you.

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of the citizens that are concerned over the severe financial crisis that there is involving our farm community at this time. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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.

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

Those who've signed these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from all across the province.

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleagues in bringing forward petitions today from the people of around Saskatchewan who are sick and tired of this highway situation. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petitions here are from Shaunavon, Vanguard, Killdeer, Rockglen, Assiniboia, Crane Valley, Limerick, St. Victor, Climax, Frontier, Val Marie, Outlook, Eastend.

I so present.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The prayer for relief comes this morning from the RM (rural municipality) of Weyburn No. 67 and I'll read the prayer on their behalf.

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 terms 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will every pray.

And these folks all come from the community of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to present it 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. 19 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for SaskTel: what studies and safeguard has SaskTel undertaken to ensure the operators of small security monitoring businesses that there will be no job losses if SaskTel enters the security monitoring field?

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing: for the year 1995, how much funding went from Saskatchewan Lotteries to the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism? Second question: which member organizations of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism received these monies and how much did they get? Third, what were the operating and administrative costs of the umbrella organization known as the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the years 1996, 1997, and 1998; and I so present.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. The Chair is having some difficulty being able to hear the hon. member from Cypress Hills provide his notice for a question and seeks the co-operation of all members of the House.

**Mr. Goohsen:** — To the Premier of the province, Mr. Speaker, I ask the following question:

Does your government support the war effort of NATO and Canada in Yugoslavia and does your government support ground troop intervention in this war?

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question:

To the minister in charge of SPMC: how many paper shredders have been purchased by the government since January 1, 1998, and at what cost?

**The Speaker:** — Order, order. Order. Order.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Research Projects in Saskatchewan

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday was a very good day for Saskatchewan universities, for Saskatchewan research and development, for the Saskatchewan economy, for Saskatchewan's future, and for the people of Saskatchewan.

The minister told us about the Synchrotron project in Saskatoon. The member from Sherwood and I were very pleased to be at a ceremony at the University of Regina with the Minister of Economic Development who announced funding for two major projects at the University of Regina where many of my constituents attend and one of my children are students.

The funding is from the Canada Foundation for Innovation. The projects are for a sustainable heavy oil research facility and for an institute for information research. These projects will have significant commercial applications for two of Saskatchewan's key economic sectors — oil production and information technology. They demonstrate our commitment to economic growth and job creation. Jobs for our best and brightest students. And they show equally our commitment to innovation.

I vaguely remember, Mr. Speaker, a Canadian television show called *Here Come the Seventies* — the favourite viewing of the opposition. But, Mr. Speaker, yesterday shows once again that for the rest of Saskatchewan, here comes the new millennium.

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

##### Saskatchewan Party Candidate for Thunder Creek

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party hosted a nomination for Thunder Creek last evening in Mortlach. There were 553 people in attendance. I stood and counted each and every one of them as they came through the door. There were busloads of people from all over the constituency and dozens of carloads of people.

It was a bright and enthusiastic crowd. There were two very well-qualified candidates, both of whom would make a great MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for the constituency of Thunder Creek. All parts of the constituency were represented, jamming the school gymnasium in Mortlach.

The meeting was originally scheduled, Mr. Speaker, to be held at the community hall but it was quickly realized that it would not be large enough to handle the crowd that was anticipated.

The candidates spoke about a new beginning for Saskatchewan,

one filled with dreams and hope and opportunity, one of new jobs and keeping our young people here in home; a turning point in Saskatchewan's history that the people of Saskatchewan will be talking about for decades, offering the same kind of promise that the settlers originally had here in Saskatchewan. The candidates also spoke of the challenge of the new job as being an MLA and the work they look forward to.

At the end of the evening, after a spirited campaign the Saskatchewan Party members selected as the new candidate for the Saskatchewan Party and the next MLA for the Thunder Creek constituency — Mr. Lyle Stewart.

##### Easter/Passover

**Mr. Whitmore:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night at sundown began the most solemn and sacred and joyous weekend in religious calendars of the two great religions in western civilization.

The feast of Passover began last night, the feast which celebrates the liberation of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. For Christians, today is Holy Thursday, celebrating the Passover supper where we were given the commandment, love thy neighbour as thyself. Many Christians have their own supper today to remember . . . in the remembrance of this Last Supper.

Tomorrow is Good Friday and of course Sunday is Easter. In this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we promote no particular creed, but at this season of contemplation, regeneration, and rebirth, in both the physical world and, we hope, our personal lives, we acknowledge the profound and humbling lessons of the season.

Both religions in the purest form lead us towards peace among all people, as the Hebrew word shalom indicates. Both have at their core the belief in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, of love over hate, of joy over suffering.

With the lessons of Easter and Passover in our hearts and minds, Mr. Speaker, we wish all members and all people peace, safety, and fulfillment. Shalom.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I join with the member from Saskatoon Northwest in just extending a happy Easter through you to each one of the members in this Assembly.

As we're all aware, Easter is a special time of the year. It's a time when Christians throughout the world celebrate not only the death, but I believe, Mr. Speaker, when it comes right down to it, the life of Easter and the resurrection of Easter Sunday morning.

Certainly as we look at Easter, Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a timely event in the fact that it speaks of springtime and it speaks of new life. Mr. Speaker, as many people across our ridings, certainly across this province, we know will be celebrating Good Friday and having special services; they'll be celebrating on Easter Sunday with special services; and I know many of the

members will probably take the time to join with their constituents in celebrating this special time of the year.

So to each and every one, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party caucus, we extend to you a happy and a very pleasant Easter.

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

### St. Ecribus Day

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, today is St. Ecribus Day. Ecribus, from whose name we get the French word *écrire*, or to write — is the patron saint of scribes and journalists.

A Fransican friar in the French Alps in 1237, Ecribus, was murdered at his table while translating on parchment the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness.”

Legend has it that on this day, until noon, writers are released from their rigid and sacred standards of veracity. For this brief moment they are able, even encouraged to slant or falsify their writings before returning to their high standards, Mr. Speaker.

To the love children of St. Ecribus in the gallery, happy April 1. You’ve got an hour left.

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

### Thunder Creek Sask Party Nomination

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, last night was a homecoming of sorts in the Thunder Creek constituency. From the where are they now file, former Tories Lyle Stewart and Devine minister Rick Swenson once again went head to head for a party nomination. It wasn’t the thriller in Manilla nor the bungle in the jungle. It was merely the repeat in the creek.

You see, 14 years ago these two went head to head for the party nod for the Tories. Now they ran for the Sask-a-Tory party. Now they’ve got room for everyone — Tories to Sask-a-Tories, Reformers and former Tories, and of course those stuck in the reformatory. It’s no wonder they want a united alternative.

It seems confusing so we’ve made it easier for them. Rather than four different membership cards, we’ve put it all on one simple card. In the middle is the Sask-a-Tory card, not good anywhere else outside of . . . well, it’s not good anywhere; a Reform card, well it’s not good east of Manitoba; a Tory Party card, it’s not good west of Manitoba; and a united alternative card — well it’s just not good. Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, we have a “get out of jail free” card for those former Tories, now shut-ins watching from some of Saskatchewan’s finest correctional facilities. Just like the Tory party, this multi-sided membership card conveniently . . .

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

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

### Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Annual Powwow

**Mr. Kasperski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the

Saskatchewan Indian Federated College is celebrating its 21st annual powwow. Hundreds of dancers and dozens of drum groups from across North America will be in Regina on April 3 and April 4 this weekend. The dancers come from all Canadian provinces and 12 American states.

Originally, the powwow was started to promote cross-cultural awareness on the U of R campus and to strengthen First Nations culture. The SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) Powwow was and is a spiritual, cultural, and social gathering for First Nations peoples. It also kicks off the North American powwow season.

One of this year’s highlights, Mr. Speaker, is a special teen girls dance in honour of Lily Daniels who has been a dance and cultural teacher for 20 years. And a special hoop dance will be held on Sunday to honour Terence Littlelent, world champion hoop dancer.

I would like to send my congratulations to all powwow organizers and to all the participants. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Newspaper Headlines

**Mr. Ward:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we prepare to go home to our constituencies to carry the good news of our balanced budget, it’s nice to leave the opposition members with some of their good news in their constituencies.

The headlines in their papers around the province read: “1998 was good to Elrose,” *Eston Press Review*; “Residential building permit values in city of Melfort doubled from \$1.2 million, November 1997 to \$2.7 million end of November last year”; “Grenfell site of \$10 million grain facility,” *Whitewood Herald*; “Alliance Pipeline project to begin near Stoughton this summer,” Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*.

Spinning gold into straw or “Spinning straw into gold in Assiniboia” — sorry, Mr. Speaker — *Moose Jaw This Week*.

And a bonus for this week, Mr. Speaker, “Southern Crafts: New home-based business and venture in Kipling,” *The Kipling Citizen*.

It’s the same old story, Mr. Speaker: good news for Saskatchewan — sour Tory faces.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Charity Foundations

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, we know, we now know that several of your MLAs ran their constituency offices through NDP (New Democratic Party) charity foundations in the early 1980s and . . . sorry, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. In every case these foundations were run by NDP activists.

They built up cash surpluses — which was against the rules. They filed incomplete financial records. The records they did file show questionable expenses. And every one of them was struck from the corporate registry for failing to file financial returns as required by law.

Mr. Premier, these are the facts. Many questions remain unanswered. There is one way to clear up everything. Open the books.

Mr. Premier, will you ask these NDP-run charity foundations to release all their financial records?

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, another day, another desperate attempt by the Saskatchewan Tory Party to climb out of the political gutter in which they find themselves in Saskatchewan. Trying to climb out not by dint of honest effort, Mr. Speaker, but trying to climb out by trying to drag others into that political gutter with them. Why are they doing that, Mr. Speaker? They're doing that because as a party they've been totally discredited in Saskatchewan. They've tried to change their name hoping that might save them, and it hasn't done that, Mr. Speaker.

What I say to the Saskatchewan Tory Party is stop your American-style politics as you've been doing for these last number of days. Do it the Saskatchewan way. Do it by saying, first of all, you're sorry for the mess that you created in Saskatchewan in the 1980s. Do it by getting rid of the Tory staffers that continue to work for you. Do it by stopping and refusing to have Tories run for you in this next election, and returning the money that was stolen from the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, in the past few days we have raised questions about six NDP (New Democratic Party) charity foundations. There are three more we are aware of: The Victoria Avenue Community Foundation rented office space to the Minister of Social Services from 1990 to 1993. It built up a surplus of nearly \$3,500 during that time.

The Regina Wascana Plains Community Foundation was set up by the SPMC minister's campaign manager, her business manager, and her election-day organizer. It never filed a single financial statement.

And the North-East Community Foundation was set by Will Olive and two members of the North Broad NDP foundation. It never filed a single financial statement either. That's the total of nine NDP charity foundations.

Mr. Premier, it's time to open the books. Will you ask the NDP activists who ran these foundations to release all their financial records?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I was interested to read in one of the local journals the other day, comments by that member opposite, where he said in the Legislative Assembly

and talked about, quote, "inappropriate use of MLA expense money." Later, Mr. Speaker, outside the Assembly that member said, I quote, "acknowledged the money may have been spent on legitimate constituency expenditures."

So what we have here, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a pattern, is a pattern of fearmongering, of slinging mud inside the Legislative Assembly, and then outside the Legislative Assembly another story emerges entirely.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet and while we're talking about surpluses, Mr. Speaker, I have a question for that member. Can that member inform the House, can he let the people of Saskatchewan know what his plans are for the unspent balance in the Progressive Conservative bank account in the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in Canora, Saskatchewan, in his constituency? What are his plans for that money, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. The Chair asks for the co-operation of all hon. members to allow the question to be heard when it's put and the answer to be heard when it's provided. Order.

#### **SaskPower Delta Project**

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this morning are for the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, I understand there's a new development with your \$100 million computer upgrade over at SaskPower secretly code named the Delta Project. We have been told, we have been told, of a secret little deal cooked up between Bill Hyde, your NDP colleague's campaign manager and Gord Gunoff, the new Liberal campaign manager. We understand that Bill and Gord got together and signed a little deal saying that any current SaskPower employee who works on the Delta Project would get paid \$28 per hour regardless of their normal rate of pay.

Mr. Minister, can you confirm this? Will you release the agreement signed between Bill Hyde and Gord Gunoff regarding the Delta Project?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, first of all I'll refer to the member from Kindersley referring to this secret arrangement, this highly classified Delta Project which is referred to in the annual report I think — highly, highly suspicious deal that was explained and debated by the member from Thunder Creek in estimates last year, where the member from Thunder Creek said we should sell our computers in the Power Corporation because they cost too much. That's what he said. And if I had time I'd go back and refer. Today the member from Kindersley a year later — a year later — catches up and finds that there's this secret project, that's been debated in the Assembly, that's referred to in the annual report.

I say to the member opposite this is no secret. It's the report of doing a different arrangement of computers in SaskPower. There is no secret arrangement. And I say to the member opposite lean over and ask the member from Thunder Creek about the project because he knows all about it.

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

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the problem with this deal between Bill Hyde and Gord Gunoff is that it's unfair to other workers. We're talking about existing SaskPower employees. If someone is making about 15 bucks an hour and all of a sudden they get slid over to the Delta Project at 28 bucks an hour, that's a huge increase.

Mr. Minister, who picks the workers for the Delta Project? Is it Gord Gunoff, the Liberal campaign manager? Mr. Minister, I've read the Liberal platform — code-named not so secretly, platform light. And let me give you a little advice. I wouldn't be taking any management advice from these people over here.

Mr. Minister, will you release, will you release the agreement signed between Bill Hyde and Gord Gunoff regarding the Delta Project?

**Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter:** — I will not take advice from the Liberal Party on how to run the province, but one thing I won't take is advice from Tories on how to run the Crowns. That's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, in 1982 . . . in 1982 when that member was working with Grant Devine to build or destroy the Crowns, the debt in the Crowns was 3.3 billion when they took over. And they said they were going to sell assets, sell assets in order to pay down the debt. And they sold off Saskoil, they sold off the Potash Corporation, they sold off Sask Mineral, they sold off the coal mines, and did the debt go down? The debt went from 3.3 billion to 5.4 billion.

Now, Mr. Member, I will not take advice from you on how to run the Crowns because you would, as a farmer, be selling your tractor and saying that's a good deal because I have less debt on my farm, but the problem would be in your case the debt would actually go up.

No, we won't take advice from that member.

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

### Farm Aid Program

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

Mr. Minister, farmers and bank managers are telling us your farm assistance program will not solve the financial crisis. The Sask Party recently received a copy of a letter from a general manager of a credit union in Kindersley constituency. He wrote, Mr. Minister, to say four things: the farm aid package in its current form won't work; the application process is so complicated that farmers are paying to accountants upwards of \$600 just to fill out the forms. Mr. Minister, also the assistance is needed right now but it won't get to farmers until September; and the payment should be based on cultivated acres in order to simplify calculations and speed up payouts.

Mr. Minister, that is exactly what we've been saying for the past six months. Will you finally admit that your government has failed Saskatchewan farmers, and will you push the federal government to pay out emergency assistance before spring seeding based on cultivated or seeded acres?

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

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is asking questions about the program and I think we've made it very clear that from the beginning we went in this program under protest. If he's making, if he's making these accusations here, I agree that the program is complicated. I agree it doesn't quite hit the mark but I ask you to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, exactly. I ask you to, have you talked to the federal minister? Have you gone to see the . . . or written the federal government to tell them this?

It seems to me that you're on all sides of the issue like your leader who a year ago said — when the Finance minister, agreed with the Finance minister — it's an Ottawa problem, they should put the money in. Then he went a few months later to 70 per cent, 30 per cent and then at the end he said, just put your 40 per cent in. With friends like that, the same leader who advocated cutting federal government agriculture budget, I wouldn't talk about anything if I were you.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, I don't think anybody on that side even understands the AIDA (Agricultural Insurance Disaster Assistance) program. A farmer called the Premier's office and was really unhappy about paying this \$600 for an accountant when he probably wasn't going to qualify. Do you know what the response was . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — From the Premier's office.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — From the Premier's office, they told him to find nine other farmers, go together, the ten of them, and maybe they'd get it done for \$60 a piece.

Mr. Minister — hello! Do you have any idea on that side what's going on? You don't even realize what the program is about in any office on that side. And, Mr. Minister, it was you who concluded in January the farm crisis was over. Now you're freely admitting the farm assistance program you signed with Ottawa isn't going to work.

Mr. Minister, you failed Saskatchewan farm families and you blew it. How many Saskatchewan farmers have applied for financial assistance through AIDA? Can you tell us that? How many farmers have been approved for AIDA assistance? And what is the average amount of assistance granted to farmers in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Upshall:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to get irritated today by this member's lack of consistency, but I could. I could. I mean, here these . . . the credibility of this operation across the floor, is not . . . is non-existent. They get up and talk about put your money and put your money in — that weakened our position of trying to get the better, best deal for Saskatchewan farmers and Saskatchewan taxpayers — helped by the Liberal Party, helped by Mr. Hermanson who just said, just put your money in — the leader of the Conservative Party here. And now he says the thing's no good. Well you

can't have it both ways. You can't have it both ways.

And I'll tell you what. I agree with you that this is not a good program. But you're trying to pin it on this government who you were forcing into going into the program.

I mean, your credibility is zero. Zero. What I will give you credit for is taking \$635 million annually out of Saskatchewan farmers' pockets, Mr. Speaker. Crow benefit, two-price wheat, deregulation, and your chief, Mr. Hermanson, wanting to cut federal budget, that he succeeded to do and the . . .

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

### **Liquor and Gaming Authority Budget**

**Mr. McPherson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to anyone other than his political friends, the Premier says that the cupboards are bare. Well the liquor cabinet isn't bare. Mr. Speaker, from a freedom of information request, we have learned that the '96-97 travel expenses for Liquor and Gaming Authority was over half a million dollars. The following year it went up to almost \$570,000.

My question is to the minister: when everyone else is being told to tighten your belt, how can she justify to the taxpayers that they must shell out half a million dollars so NDP hacks can travel to wine-tasting shows in the Bahamas or bingo conferences in Vegas?

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

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority there are a number of areas that received increases in the previous year. One was in the area of travel . . . that you saw many people who had experiences in other places with casino development and gaming development. They also have a broad range of experience in product development and in new initiatives in the Authority.

Mr. Speaker, we take an opportunity for training and development within the Authority whenever we can. And I see here an opposition member who stands up who says how they would treat the public service in this province, is to do away with 600 middle managers, Mr. Speaker, also their support staff and services.

So I think there's a vast difference between the way the public service is trained and developed in this province through our government and through what they would do to people who are supporting and serving this province.

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

**Mr. McPherson:** — Well she's right, Mr. Speaker, and it's a case of priorities. And as you heard they're in favour of jet setting their friends around the world instead of doing what the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan are.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is telling everyone who is negotiating with the government that 2 per cent is all you get — 2 per cent every year for three years. This 2 per cent a year hike — like it

or lump it — may apply to nurses and other health care professionals but it doesn't apply to the Liquor and Gaming Authority. No sir, their travel budget went up 8 per cent in one year — 8 per cent in only one year.

How does the Premier justify an 8 per cent increase in the Liquor and Gaming travel budget when he is only prepared to give the nurses 2 per cent?

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

**Hon. Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we're talking about some of the expenses that increased in Liquor and Gaming, you can isolate one or two areas where people have taken the opportunity to go to conferences to learn more about what we need to do to have a well-regulated, controlled, and limited gaming environment in this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, we can also point to areas that we were going through some one-time expenses when we were developing the casinos in the province. We're going through some one-time expenditures when you want to be able to travel and make certain they're operating smoothly, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we should know those and make certain that we have a well-regulated, controlled, and limited environment, not only on the liquor side of our operation, Mr. Speaker, but on gaming which is far from Jim Melenchuk who says what he would do, is do away with 600 jobs in the Crowns and other government departments. Unnecessary middle management, Mr. Speaker, targeting managers who provide technical support and services to government on all sides of the House.

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

### **Nursing Shortage**

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, for the past few months the NDP has been claiming they're hiring more nurses. Remember at the last session when the Minister of Health claimed to have virtually hired 200 nurses and we found out that wasn't the truth. Then recently the NDP had to close 64 beds because they realized they didn't have enough nurses. Now they claim to be on this great recruitment drive.

Well according to an internal memo from the Regina Health District, the NDP are having problems with their hiring. It seems according to this March 12, 1999 memo for the week of March 8, the NDP made contact with 30 nurses of which 14 applied, yet only 7 were hired.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister, why is it with such a severe nursing shortage that of 14 nursing applicants, only 7 were hired? Did the nurses turn them down once they realized the terrible morale and working conditions that this NDP government has created in the health system?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can report to the member, and I have a report from the Regina Health District that indicates that as of yesterday, March 31, the Regina Health District has hired 76 nurses to the Regina Health District.

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

**Mr. Aldridge:** — Mr. Speaker, again we see the minister is happy to instruct us about the figures for her department, but now it's time to reveal some numbers for the minister's edification. There were 115 unfilled nursing vacancies in the Regina Health District. You're saying you filled some by the end of March 31. But as of the figures we had there is only 12 of those positions that were actually permanent full time, less than 10 of those positions permanent full time; 22 temporary full time; 26 permanent part time; 55 temporary part time.

Didn't the minister listen to any of the concerns of nurses regarding recruitment and retention? The nurses need the job security that only comes with permanent full-time employment.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister, does the minister really believe that the 64 beds will ever reopen when all you ever offer is these part-time jobs? Don't you regret laying off the 600 nurses three years ago? Will you admit that that was a dumb mistake?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member in my previous answer to his question, the Regina Health District, as of March 31, 1999, has hired 76 nurses for the Regina Health District. But I can also report to the member that 32 of those positions are permanent full-time positions, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's important.

As the member will also know, that the issue of the casualization of work is being presently negotiated at the bargaining table. Mr. Speaker, we are extremely interested in ensuring that we are able to offer through our health districts, permanent full-time employment to all health providers in the province.

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

### Crime Statistics

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, a few days ago Statistics Canada reported that Saskatchewan has the highest rate of sexual offences in Canada — the highest, Mr. Minister. Saskatchewan now has this appalling number to accompany the province's other first-place positions: the highest murder rate, the highest break and enter rate, the highest rate for car theft, and the highest violent crime rate, and an extremely high rate of children being sexually abused through the child prostitution trade.

Mr. Minister, what is the NDP government doing about this nightmare of runaway crime so that our communities and our streets are safe again?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's policy is to provide safe communities in everything that we do. We work with many of the issues that arise. As the member opposite knows, this report around reporting of sex crimes has two aspects to it.

One of the aspects is that many of these crimes are crimes against children. And we are in Saskatchewan a place where we have some special ways of making sure that these crimes against children are reported. We have a Saskatoon child centre and a Regina child centre that deal with these kinds of crime in a way that leads the country in how you respond to some of the most difficult crimes that happen in our community.

And we know that working together with Social Services and Justice officials, police, and also the education and health system, we are able to address and report some of the crimes that are not being dealt with in other parts of the country.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say to the Minister of Justice that the record in this province tells the tale. The very fact that there are numbers of children on the streets of Saskatoon and Regina constantly being abused, and whatever programs this government has put in, whatever efforts they have made are minimal. They're not working; they're not enough.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Finance minister quoted the Premier of Saskatchewan saying, we must constantly pursue our dreams including the dream of a safer world.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's dream is a nightmare for many communities in Saskatchewan. In fact some of the worst crimes and prostitution problems are in the Premier's own constituency. Just a few days ago there was a shocking report on television about a woman who was attacked on a downtown street near a service station in Regina. The same newscast indicated that a businessman is now keeping 24-hour watch on his place of business to stop thieves from breaking in.

Mr. Minister, after seven years of NDP government Saskatchewan finds itself on the top of the worst crime lists.

**The Speaker:** — The hon. member has been extremely lengthy in her preamble. And I'll ask her to go . . . Order. I'll ask her to go directly to her question now.

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Minister, while the Premier spends his time dreaming, what are you doing to end the nightmare of crime that has infested so many of our communities?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, these members opposite like to use some of these figures, and we know that especially the lead-off statistics that were used by the member opposite around sex crimes are particularly bad numbers.

And I'd like to quote a clinical psychologist who works in this area, and Dr. Doug Jergens says:

These are particularly bad numbers to use to try to determine the rate of offense behaviour in the population.

According to Statistics Canada, Saskatchewan leads . . . (these results but) "Reporting rates can change, due to factors that are unrelated to the actual frequency of offending."



It would be much more appropriate to look at anonymous surveys to deal with some of these things.

We in Saskatchewan have been taking our resources and working together with people in the community to deal with the children that are caught up in the sex trade, to deal with the communities that have some of the issues that are coming up. And we will continue to work with the people in the community and the police to respond to all of these issues so that we have safe communities in Saskatchewan.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### **Bill No. 237 — The Agricultural Implements Amendment Act, 1999**

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill entitled The Agricultural Implements Act.

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

### **Bill No. 238 — The Negative Billing and Check-off Options Regulation Act**

**Mr. Goohsen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill 238, the Act is to regulate the negative billing and check-off options.

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

### **Bill No. 22 — The Special Payment (Dependent Spouses) Act**

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 22, The Special Payment (Dependent Spouses) Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly I would like to make a statement in regards to an historic event.

Leave granted.

## STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

### **Creation of Territory of Nunavut**

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to announce that today, on April 1, 1999, is an historic day for Canada. Today marks the creation of a new territory, the territory of Nunavut. The map of Canada is transformed today, Mr. Speaker, as the previous Northwest Territories is divided into two new territories. The central and eastern portion constitutes Nunavut, with the capital city of Iqaluit, and the western part remains as the Northwest Territories.

Nunavut is a vast territory, Mr. Speaker, containing one-fifth of

Canada's land mass or approximately two million square kilometres. Approximately 85 per cent or a little more than 20,000 of its 24,000-some people are Inuit, and so it seems fitting, Mr. Speaker, that they should name their territory Nunavut, meaning "our land" in the Inuit language, Inuktitut.

The idea of dividing the Northwest Territories is not new, Mr. Speaker. The creation of the Nunavut Territory is the culmination of years of negotiations and the result of the Nunavut land claims agreement in 1993, the largest land claim ever settled in Canadian history. Inuit leaders have been calling for a separate territory with its own government since the 1970s.

The historic significance of this event is demonstrated by the fact that this is the first time the configuration of Canada has been altered since Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, the fiftieth anniversary of which we celebrated just yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

Like the arrival of Newfoundland, the creation of Nunavut is another significant step in the building of our nation. It is a timely example of the Canadian federation's ability to accommodate the cultural and linguistic diversity of its different regions and populations. As Canadians, we can take pride in the exceptional achievement that the creation of this new territory represents. Canada has been able to redraw its map in a democratic, peaceful, and a co-operative manner.

Mr. Speaker, on February 15, 1999, Nunavut's 19-member Legislative Assembly was elected and are being sworn in today. This is a consensus-style government, Mr. Speaker, where MLAs sit as independents in a non-party system. On March 5, 1999, the newly elected members chose their Premier, Speaker and seven-member cabinet. Premier Paul Okalik is not only the newest Premier in Canada, Mr. Speaker, at age 34 he is the youngest.

Nunavut will operate on a . . . as a public government, Mr. Speaker, with law making powers similar to those of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon governments. All residents will be able to vote, run for office, and fill jobs within the public service. Because the Inuit make up the majority of the population, the Nunavut government will reflect Inuit culture and tradition.

Mr. Speaker, today we recognize the enormous opportunities and challenges before the Nunavut government as it works to re-establish self-sufficiency for its future generations. I would like all members to join with me in welcoming Nunavut to Canada. Through you, Mr. Speaker, we extend our best wishes to the new territory of Nunavut and its people and offer our commitment to work together to build a strong relationship with Saskatchewan and with all of Canada. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, also for permission to respond to the statement.

Leave granted.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, today is an historic day not only

for the people of the Northwest Territories but for Canada as a whole. Some day I believe we'll all remember sitting in the Assembly today, the day when the two new territories were recognized and came into being — Nunavut in the east, and the new yet to be released unnamed territory in the west.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of Nunavut as a distinct territory under its own government fulfils the desired aspiration of the eastern and central Arctic Inuit to control their own destinies. This form of self-government is unique to Nunavut. Representing approximately 85 per cent of the population in Nunavut, the Inuit form a clear majority in the Territories and will therefore have a clear majority in the Territories. And they will have a primary influence in the public government to be elected by all residents.

The combined effective creation of Nunavut and the implementation of the land claim agreement will provide the residents of Nunavut with eagerness and a tool to promote economic growth, political stability, and overall increases in a standard of living for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition and the people we represent, we'd like to congratulate the people of the Northwest Territories on their victory of self-government.

Last summer I had the wonderful opportunity to spend time in Yellowknife at a public accounts meeting, and the representatives in the Assembly and the other people who met there were waiting with unconcealed excitement and enthusiasm for today. It seemed to me that the only real issue that hadn't been resolved was which area would keep the very unique licence plates they have in the Territories. We recognize that it was a long and difficult struggle for the Inuit and we congratulate them today.

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

**Mr. Osika:** — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to also respond to that comment.

Leave granted.

**Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today does truly mark a milestone in Canadian history, a day witnessing the creation of a new territory in Canada, Nunavut from the central and eastern half of Northwest Territories. In this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we feel a profound pride and attachment to this development since this was once the Northwest Territories before the creation of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905.

Since then this province has grown and prospered, sometimes in spite of the government of the day, but this new experiment for our Inuit brothers and sisters in self-government, provides a shining beacon and hope for the future.

The creation of Nunavut today joined by the celebrations yesterday for the 50th anniversary of Newfoundland joining Confederation shows the Canadian dynamic is always changing, always evolving, and capable of accepting and making changes which would be difficult in other places such as the former Yugoslavia.

There is no doubt in my mind that the creation of Nunavut will mark a new stage in that Territory in terms of economic development and the development of Inuit pride, much as the creation of Saskatchewan marked a new stage in our economic development and development of provincial pride.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend on behalf of the Liberal caucus the warmest welcome to the newest member of Confederation, Nunavut, and its people. We share with them the pride they feel on this day and pledge to work with them to build a strong relationship between ourselves and Nunavut, as not only are we both descendants of the Northwest Territories but we are also all Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to present a motion to the House regarding the members' statements in regards to the creation of the Nunavut Territory.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Wiens:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena:

That the Legislative Assembly request the Speaker to send copies and transcripts of the members' statements in regards to the creation of the Nunavut Territory to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

(1100)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Ward:** — In the spirit of open and accountable government, Mr. Speaker, I table the answer to question no. 33.

**The Speaker:** — The answer to item no. 1, question 33 is provided.

**Mr. Ward:** — And in the spirit of open and accountable government, I table the answer to question no. 34.

**The Speaker:** — The answer to item no. 2, question 34 is provided.

## 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. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we spent some time looking at some of the record and I think that's what we're doing here is we're looking at the record, the record as indicated by the stats that we use, basically coming from Stats Canada, and the record of the people that are in this House and the record of the people in Saskatchewan from their personal experiences.

And we spent considerable amount of time looking at the record of this particular NDP government in job creation and the fact of the disaster that it was and the arrogant attitude that's over there, still trying to feel that they are the creators of jobs and the creators of a tomorrow for the children of this province which we all know from our experiences they are not.

We also spent some time on health care, Mr. Speaker, and dealing with some of the issues that are out there, the concerns that are out there, and essentially the very two-tier kind of system that's being created in this particular province, very much a two-tier system. We can find that about half the province gets one level of health care; another half of the province gets a totally different level of health care.

But this morning, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to spend some time on the highway situation. And first of all there is one thing that I need to agree with the NDP over there, and we'll get that out of the way very quickly, and that is the fact that there needs to be a lot of input from our federal government. I too have spent some time in the United States and talked to them about how their highway program works where the federal government kicks in.

Our federal Liberals have totally left off the west half of Canada in highway hell. If we look at the stats of what's going on, there is money for eastern Canada — millions and millions of dollars on a yearly basis. And when we look at what the federal Liberals want to do for the western part of Canada, it's zero after zero after zero, year after year after year — no justification, no validity for that decision. It's a typical arrogant Liberal attitude that's out there.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we still can't just say it's a federal responsibility and we'll leave our highways alone. We've had our provincial NDP, Mr. Speaker, as you know very well, say that they have a certain amount of money they're going to set aside, spending it over 10 years.

Well for the last numbers of years they've been way behind their spending. Basically if they're going to spend it over 10 years, it'd make sense to start spending it now. They somehow say, well we'll spend next to nothing now, and we'll spend next to nothing year after year; somewhere at the end of that time we'll find these millions and millions of dollars and we'll dump it all into highways.

Well at the rate they're going, when they put out all of those dollars to be spent in the last year, there won't be enough highway contractors to spend it. They won't be out there. They'll have to find them from out of province, which is a disaster for our highway contractors, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, by leaving these highways deteriorate year after

year instead of spending the money that they've allotted to it, by the time — if they ever do get to spend that money and I doubt if they will, Mr. Speaker, because if they were serious about it they would be doing it right now — but by the time they get around to spending it, the highways will be in such bad shape they won't even be able to bring them up to the standards, which are sub-standards of where they are right now.

Let's just look at the road program for RMs that this government has put in place. They told us in their budget that they had put money in place for RMs to build roads. Well that's a very laudable move, Mr. Speaker, very laudable. Now let's see how far it really gets. It gets you 530 feet, 530 feet of road per RM.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they could have probably taken that money and given it to the schools and they could have at least built a racetrack for their track and field events. Because that's only as much as it is — 530 feet per RM.

I'm not sure how they're going to designate this. We'll probably have one of those big signs that they tend to want to build whenever they think they're doing something on highways. And there'll be a big sign that says, the next 530 feet is built by your NDP government.

And then at the end of that — and it won't take long to get long to get there, 530 feet — there'll be another big sign: and the rest of Saskatchewan, we're not doing anything. Great signs.

Mr. Harrison has expressed his concern over that, and I don't blame him. When he has to go to his people from the RMs and say, I've basically given you a high school race track and that's the extent of help that you're going to get, it's not very good.

It's a broken record. It's going to result in broken wheels. We have ducks in ruts and lumps of highway surface flying through the air. And our NDP over there are doing next to nothing on it.

That's their record, Mr. Speaker. That's their record. They're not spending the money they set aside. And the record is that we have the worst highways in Saskatchewan — the worst highways.

Well, Mr. Speaker, being an open-minded sort of a person and always ready to learn something, I picked up a newspaper yesterday which is named after one of our grassland rodents, *prairie dog*, and thought we'd see what that had to say. An interesting section in that paper. It discussed the polls that the Saskatchewan Party had held; polls that indicate that we're around 51 per cent. And in this NDP paper it states they have a poll too. And it disagrees with ours but they're not going to tell anyone. They're not going to tell anyone.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know the usual time that you don't want to tell anyone anything is when you have bad news — when you have bad news.

And then there's a heading in the paper, Mr. Speaker, that reads, "Can the opposition catch the NDP?" Yes, we can. Yes, we can.

Pictured on that same page where that heading lies, Mr.

Speaker, is a picture that I'm sure, I'm sure resembles very much the member from Saskatoon Riversdale wearing a crown and a dress, Mr. Speaker — wearing a crown and a dress. Very interesting.

I'm sure if we pin that throughout Saskatoon Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, we'll have gas jockeys coming out of every service station that's left in there wanting to run against him again. It'll be amazing, Mr. Speaker. But maybe this was just taken from an election campaign or poster that they plan on using in Saskatoon Riversdale. Very interesting.

But like I said, I was open-minded and I enjoyed reading the paper. It's available for free for anyone that wants it, and I suggest you pick it up and read some of those pages.

A comment or two on the farming situation. And we received many, many calls from farmers saying first of all that the whole program just doesn't seem to want to work. It's difficult; it's complicated. And the concern is there that at the end of the day there probably won't be enough money coming through to pay for the accountants that will have to fill it out.

And it's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that farmers who are astute businessmen are given a form that's so complicated that they have to go out and hire an accountant to fill it out. And then at the end of the day there'll be next to no help coming.

And why is there next to no help coming? I think we need to follow through what our Minister of Agriculture exactly said and did. And there's three points we need to bring out because I think that will let the people of Saskatchewan who are watching understand why Ottawa came through with so little.

Our Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, sat down at that particular table and he was asked a question about Saskatchewan finances. And our Saskatchewan Agriculture minister blushed with pride and he said the following: yes, we are balancing our budget in Saskatchewan and we even have a surplus. But there's one more statement that he made: and there is no agricultural problem in Saskatchewan. He'd made that statement earlier. Ottawa knew it.

So here are these three comments from our Saskatchewan minister. We balanced our budget; we have a surplus; and — guess what? — we have no problem in agriculture in Saskatchewan. Now how much money could we have? Well, Mr. Speaker, it isn't very amazing that we got the paltry amount that we got. And I think when we find out where the money actually is going to end up at, it'll be mostly in eastern Canada. It'll be mostly in eastern Canada.

We just talked about what the federal Liberals have done with the road situation. The same thing's going to happen with this amount. We should've had an Agriculture minister who was there negotiating — negotiating hard. He negotiated weakly — and that is with "ea" in case the members opposite can't quite follow that — he negotiated very weakly and not even very regularly, Mr. Speaker, because he wasn't at all the negotiations that were supposed to take place.

But I think we need to set the stage for something before that. We all know that our Premier visions himself as being a

national figure on the national scene — likes to make a big scene out of being seen with Prime Minister. Prime Minister from time to time, as we know, comes to Saskatchewan. We also know our Premier meets with him in other places. And not once, not once, Mr. Speaker, has a single person in Saskatchewan heard him stand up and tell the Prime Minister of Canada: we need some aid and this is what we need. Not once has he spoken up for the people of Saskatchewan in that way. He sends off our Minister of Agriculture, and we've just discussed how effective that happens to be.

Mr. Speaker, need to say a word or two about the situation about justice and crime and safety and security for the people of this province in this province of Saskatchewan. As we all heard this morning, when a Saskatchewan Party Justice critic asked a number of questions and listed the very dubious and shameful record, record — I repeat that again — the record in Saskatchewan. Whether we talk about car theft, whether we talk about murders, whether we talk about break-ins, whether we talk about crimes against our children, we have fared terribly, Mr. Speaker. That's the record, and that's a record that the NDP government over there has to take the responsibility for.

And yet in a very arrogant way they've said, oh, but we're doing new and unique things. They may be doing new things, they may be doing unique things, but how effective are they being new and unique? If it doesn't solve the problem, it doesn't do any good, Mr. Speaker.

And we need to go ahead and take our justice . . . look at our justice system in Saskatchewan and work through those so that people in this province can live the way they want to live. It's a great province to live, great province to be in but people in this province need to feel secure. They need to feel safe. And they don't feel that during the time that this NDP government has been in charge of those issues.

(1115)

Mr. Speaker, on that particular issue — and I mentioned the situation involving children — we've had a few issues in Saskatchewan in recent times that have shown the arrogance of our Social Service minister in particular. Situations where parents and families want and feel they need some more say in what and how their families operate. And in those situations, our Justice department in a very arrogant way has gone ahead and made some decisions.

One of our newspaper pundits made a statement that it may have been the right decision, but the process was wrong. Well the process is almost always wrong when the Social Service department interferes in what happens in families in Saskatchewan, and also very often the decisions are wrong. Process is almost always wrong and the decisions are very often wrong.

I have many examples on my desk, Mr. Speaker, where Social Services just swoop down, broken up families, and then after two or three months of a lot of legal costs they return the family to itself again saying, well, we were wrong. Not quite correct. They don't usually admit they're wrong.

Meanwhile the family has been broken up, costs have been

incurred, and Social Services then walks away without an apology, without covering the legal costs. And it's made families in this province very fearful. The place where there ought to be the most security and the most safety are the families of this province. Our Social Service department is eroding that and putting fear into the family situations wondering when they're going to swoop down with one of their plans to disrupt the family situation and disrupt the upbringing and the safety and the security of children in their own homes. It needs to be addressed, Mr. Speaker, and there are many people across this province that are joining with that concern.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken on job creation, on taxes, on health care and the rights of parents, on the farming situation, on the road situation. I'd probably like to spend a fair bit of time on education because that's my professional background, but I'm sure our Education critic will very ably explain to the people of this province how the budget that was there and as it was touted had money put into it for education doesn't even cover the costs of the teachers' union salaries.

And what are the school boards supposed to do with the increased costs for their utilities, for their power, for their gas, for their buses, for their window repair, for the janitors, for the caretakers? None of that's included and it will show up, Mr. Speaker, on the tax notices that will go back to the people in Shellbrook and Spiritwood.

And at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, from Shellbrook-Spiritwood, we will have a new MLA coming. I keep getting phone calls from that area on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker, saying, what can we do, what can we do to get a different member in here? What can we do to get some representation as we ought to have it?

Mr. Speaker, in light of those sorts of things, I will be supporting the amendment and there is no way I could support the budget as presented by this NDP government. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to take part in this important debate. The budget ushers Saskatchewan into a new century of opportunity and prosperity, a budget which takes a balanced approach — debt repayment, tax cuts, enhanced services — a balanced common sense approach.

Mr. Speaker, a budget is a blueprint of a party's philosophy. Examine a budget carefully and you can determine the priorities of that government. Well this budget offers a degree of hope and reality never witnessed before, a budget that offers the people an opportunity to enter the millennium with a feeling of anticipation and hope not the doom and gloom offered by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, economic growth is vital if a province is to grow. Saskatchewan is blessed with many natural resources and with the industrious, inventive people our province led all of Canada in economic growth for the five years from 1992 to 1997. In 1998, we had the highest employment ever in this province.

Slower growth is predicted over the next five years, but we will

still see modest growth, increase of growth on growth. Our 30,000 job target was met in 1998, and a job growth of 3,000 is forecast for 1999, and an average growth of 5,200 per year to 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the employment numbers are a lot better than when the Tories were in office in the 1980s. Job numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are going in the right direction, which of course is up.

Mr. Speaker, despite the downturn in the agricultural sector and the significant drop in the price of oil, the constituency of Swift Current had a record year in its economy. I was so glad when the member opposite the other day mentioned all of the good things about Swift Current. Swift Current has prospered during the reign of the NDP in this province.

The mayor Paul Elder stated on February 13, 1999 that the local economy in almost every category outperformed previous years, and in some cases established new records, thanks to the policies and the directions of this NDP government. Swift Current now boasts a population of 16,113 people — the first time the city reached this level in 10 years.

And here again, the opposition cries that we are losing population. Well I am here to advise you that Swift Current is growing. The city council is aware of the pressure of low commodity prices on the expanding economy but they are still confident of positive economic growth in 1999.

A few examples just of this economic growth is as follows: Ag Growth, a public company with its head office in Swift Current is aggressively pursuing acquisition opportunities and is rapidly expanding. Most of their markets, 80 per cent of it, is with the Americans and so they are prospering very well.

Housing starts reached new heights in 1998 and industry officials believe that the demand for housing should be sustained in 1999.

The Real Canadian Wholesale Club opened its store in a 52,000 square foot facility in January — on budget and schedule. Why? Because many local workers, contractors, and suppliers benefited from work at this project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are just a few examples of the economic growth which was evidenced in Swift Current. Agriculture, natural resources, northern development, value-added industries, research and development, local economic development, and more support for small business are the keys to a prosperous, growing Saskatchewan. And of course this government believes and advocates these policies.

Agriculture is vital for the economy of Saskatchewan. There's no way that we can forget about agriculture. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the current plight of the Saskatchewan farmer is a complex issue. It cannot, it cannot be solved just with simple solutions. Our farmers are the most efficient in the world and if given the level playing field would compete with anyone, anywhere.

But they cannot compete with the United States subsidies or the European subsidies. Our federal government abolished all the

subsidies long before they needed to, while the Europeans and the USA (United States of America) only abolished 20 per cent of theirs, and have continued their subsidies. How can we compete with them? The budget of Saskatchewan cannot compete with the national purse of the United States or of Europe.

Mr. Speaker, even if the federal government had not eliminated the Crow rate, the farmers today would probably have survived this latest downturn in commodity prices. It would've gone a long ways to help.

Mr. Speaker, this government believes in agriculture and is prepared to assist the farmers. One hundred and forty million will be spent on the ill-advised AIDA program. We know that this is a flawed program but we also know that it is a federal program. And we know that our Minister of Agriculture did everything that he possibly could to get a better deal. But did he get support from the opposition? No way. Every time he took a step to gain better things for the farmers, they nixed it. And then they had the gall to sit over there and tell us how to do it.

There's \$20 million in loan assistance for the hog producers — value-added again — which will of course help agriculture. Eighty-five million to top up the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) account; they reduced the crop insurance premiums; no PST (provincial sales tax) on farm machinery; exemption on diesel fuel; 17 million for agricultural research and development. This government works for agriculture but will need federal help to compete with the foreign subsidies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the oil company plays a very important part in the economy of this province and especially in the southwest. The drop in crude oil prices slowed down activity in the oil patch this past year. However, with the increase to over \$15 a barrel there is a healthier state of mind in the oil industry because of that. The price hike provides a glimmer of optimism for the people in this industry.

The southwest was the lone area where drilling actually picked up in 1999. A natural gas deal south of Swift Current saw 75 wells drilled compared to five a year earlier.

The opposition has called for lower royalty rates to stimulate activity in the oil patch. I'm saying that if the price of oil remains above the \$15 a barrel just for a little while longer, the activity will take place as producers will realize a fair return on their investment.

Mr. Speaker, policies adopted by this government have received strong support from the oil industry. They welcome the reclassification of the oil in the southwest, the deep rights reversion program, the establishment of the new petroleum technology research centre in Regina.

But, Mr. Speaker, in speaking with the oil officials and so forth, time and time again, the oil companies invest heavily in Saskatchewan because they admire the stable Romanow government in Regina. Talk to them sometime and they will tell you that this is one of the things which they really like.

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — Order. Now the member should be aware that using members', sitting members' names is not allowed in debate except in a direct quotation lifted off ... out of an article. And I know that the hon. member from Swift Current recognizes that.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What is important for the province is that Saskatchewan's economy was able to withstand the downturn in oil revenue and the depressed commodity prices in agriculture because of the economic diversification fostered by this government. Value-added products, less bureaucratic tape, small business incentive, all of these helped us to weather this storm.

The investment dealers for instance point to Saskatchewan's economic growth as being due in large part to admirable government management of provincial finances. The most indebted provincial economy in the country, thanks to the Tories, has now reduced the debt burden to the provincial average. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a more diversified economy thanks to the policies of this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care is a great concern to the people of Saskatchewan. Of course I take a special interest in medicare as the southwest was the location of Health Region No. 1, as I've said time and time again, and this served as a model for medicare first for the province and later for the rest of Canada. The citizens of the southwest Saskatchewan are proud of this fact and rightly so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is obvious to all people that the number one priority in this budget is health. The hundred and ninety-five million increase, more than 11 per cent above last year, represents the largest new investment in health in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget consultations held throughout the province, the people stated time and time again that their priority was health care. This increase of a hundred and ninety-five million in health is just another indication of how this government asks for input from the people and then reacts to their concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 1.9 billion health budget, the largest health investment in the history of this province, will improve and enhance health services for all the people of Saskatchewan. There's been a lot of debate about the waiting time for surgery. Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget will provide the funds for the Minister of Health to introduce the recommendations contained in the report just recently released concerning waiting lists. Another example of how this government listens to the people. We listened to the people's concerns and then acted upon them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the scourges of this point in our history is cancer. Daily we read about the horrible effects of this dreaded disease. This budget will provide for improved access to cancer treatment and perhaps, just perhaps, a cure will be found to eradicate this deadly killer.

Another area which has been earmarked for additional funding is the whole area of women's health, such as the new bone density equipment to aid in the early detection and treatment of osteoporosis. Again we listened to the people's concerns.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will also address the issue of retaining and/or recruiting doctors, especially in rural areas. In the past many of our Saskatchewan-trained doctors would leave the province. In fact during the Tory reign in the '80s, only 35 per cent remained in the province.

**An Hon. Member:** — How many?

**Mr. Wall:** — 35 per cent remained. In 1998 that figure had doubled. 70 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the Saskatchewan graduates chose to remain in Saskatchewan — 70 per cent, and this did not happen by accident. This government recognized the issue and took immediate steps to remedy the issue.

And finally, but very important, this budget will provide for improved working conditions and compensation for nurses and other health workers to ensure the best possible health care. Contrast this with the Hermanson Texas audit of health workers. Don't be fooled by the Tories' proposed audit. It is a direct attack on health workers. The Tories feel that the health workers, including nurses, are inefficient and that savings could be recouped on the backs of these dedicated workers.

Mr. Speaker, I could spend hours on listing the initiatives contained in this budget on the enhancement it will provide for health care. Items such as new hospitals in northern Saskatchewan where they are going to be built where they are needed — not like in the '80s where they were needed to try to garner votes . . . votes, as was done in the '80s.

Expanded home care and mental health services, expanded CAT (computerized axial tomography) scan capacity; cancer outreach treatments and kidney dialysis in more communities; funds to ensure vital medical components such as heart monitors will be Y2K (Year 2000) ready.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other day one of the members opposite attacked the health district in Swift Current — the birthplace of medicare and the home of health district no. 1.

I want to mention just a few of the things which have here. We have a new chemotherapy outreach program so that residents of the great southwest no longer have to make the long trip to Regina or Saskatoon for treatment. The outreach program saves patients time, money, and inconvenience.

Our wellness programs which provide health monitoring, foot care, and health education are really catching on. We began with five locations serving an average of 350 people in 1994. Last year, programs were held in 11 locations a month and served 2,251 people per month. This program helps prevent health problems or in some cases, catches the problems early. Wellness works, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an argument lost on the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the other day the member from Rosthern rose and applauded the excellent care he had received during his recent illness, the ambulance which transported him to the hospital, the doctor who performed the surgery, and the nurses who cared for him during his recovery.

Mr. Speaker, most of the people of this province would agree wholeheartedly with his assessment of the health care, and I

will agree with it wholeheartedly as I received the same kind of care during my recent short stay in the General Hospital. No wonder surveys show that over 90 per cent of the patients using the health system rate it as excellent or very good.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it incomprehensible that the member opposite then stated that the ambulance would . . . that he was afraid that the ambulance would take him to the wrong hospital. Did he feel it would end up in Prince Albert or perhaps Swift Current?

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we provide 72,000 road ambulance trips every year and more than 800 trips by air ambulance. That's 200 trips per day. Our skilled, dedicated paramedics and EMTs (emergency medical technician) provide life-saving emergency services to the people of Saskatchewan day in and day out. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ambulance crews do an assessment of every patient they pick up. Then in constant communication with the dispatcher and the medical staff, they determine what type of emergency service the patient needs and proceed accordingly.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the member to suggest the transfer of patients by ambulance to wrong destinations is a regular occurrence stretches the truth to the greatest degree. Mr. Speaker, did the member really worry whether the ambulance would arrive at the correct destination or is this another example of the fearmongering tactics of the members opposite — a tactic which they are become masters at.

Mr. Speaker, does the member derive perverse pleasure from trying to instill fear among the elderly, the grandparents, the young, about a system which is dependable, safe, and efficient. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a blatant form of fearmongering in hopes of quick, political gain. This tactic will not be accepted by the people of this great province; people who co-operate with each other, are compassionate, and are the lifeblood of this great province.

Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on March 22, the member from Saltcoats quoted extensively on the health program in Swift Current as stated by Shirley Douglas. He took great pains to take some of the quotes of Shirley Douglas but he stopped short of the whole story. So I just want to help him a little bit with that.

One of the quotes the member used was as follows:

The privatization of health care is slow, it is incremental, and it is massive. The dismantling of the national health care system is by design, not by accident.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, suddenly this quote refers to the health system in Swift Current — not nationally — but it refers to Swift Current. I realize Swift Current is a great city. I realize that it has great economic growth. I realize that many people are envious of all the things we have going for us. But to claim that it represents the national scene is just a little stretch of the imagination, of which he has a lot.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps because he wasn't there while I was, he failed to mention the Shirley Douglas impassioned plea for the people to work with the one and only

party which would guarantee that medicare would survive — the NDP.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then she made a scathing and I mean a scathing attack on the Saskatchewan Party. The party that would dismantle medicare and would give us American-type medicine, privatization, two-tiered. And there's no way that we're having any of that. That was the part that he forgot to mention.

Of course I will apologize because he wasn't there and perhaps he didn't know that this had happened. But there was a candidate there who was there and heard this attack and his head was on the desk. And you know who I'm talking about.

Mr. Speaker, this 1.9 billion budget truly represents the importance this government places on medicare as compared to the statements made by the members opposite.

The Tory health policy — let's just take a look at it very quickly. Mr. Speaker, the Tory health care policy is really all about an audit. Their value for money audit means that control over the health system becomes the job not of the doctors, not of the professionals, not of the health boards, but of the accountants. Their value for money audit is the only way they can come up with any new health care money. By auditing the work of front-line caregivers and their support networks, the Tories hope they will find the money for all their other health promises.

Remember their plans for health — and education for that matter — are to increase the budget by only the amount of inflation. So where are they going to get the money for the new equipment? We won't get any new equipment.

Where will they get money to have contract settlements? There won't be any contracts. They'll probably abolish them and probably try to take away any gains which they have made.

How are they going to pay for new doctors who we will need in the system as our population continues to grow? Where will we have enhanced services? We'll go back to the dark ages.

And where would we be today if those Tories were governing during this massive federal down cutting of support for the health system. The people know who introduced medicare. They know who are opposed to it. And they will show it in the next election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another thing which is very important to the people of Saskatchewan, of course, is education. As I was involved in the education scene for many, many years, I take quite an interest in this. This budget invests over \$1 billion — our largest investment ever in education and training to prepare Saskatchewan people for success in a rapidly changing, highly competitive, high-technology economy. As the Premier stated to a group of grade 11 and 12 students at the Swift Current Comprehensive High School just recently, that learning for a living — that's right, learning for a living — will become the way of life in the future.

The funding for the Saskatchewan's kindergarten-to-grade-12 school system totals more than 550 million — an increase in the operating grants to schools, an increase in capital funding for school improvement, and increases to school boards through grants in lieu of property taxes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud and excited about the initiative to be undertaken by the Education minister to discuss the roles of schools in Saskatchewan. The review's objectives will be to provide those with an interest or an involvement in education an opportunity to discuss society's changing expectations about the role of schools in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hope that they will reach a consensus on what we can expect from our schools and what our schools can expect from our communities, our families, and other agencies to support children and youth. This new education initiative provides a real opportunity for all stakeholders to make their views known. It is also an opportunity that should not be missed by the people of this great province.

Secondary education has been covered by a lot of the previous speakers and so forth, so I'm not going to spend too much time on it, other than they did get additional funding for their programs and for their capital construction.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things which I would like to talk about, a little bit about, is our . . . this government's plan on balanced budgets. Working together, the Saskatchewan people took this province from the brink of financial disaster to a place where we are among the best in all of Canada. The budget is balanced and includes a plan for three more balanced budgets. With those three more balanced budgets, even with the tax reductions and new investments and services, this will be nine straight years of balanced budgets, this one being the sixth year. Saskatchewan's record of balanced budget is second to none in all of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we promised to pay down the debt to reduce the mortgage on our children's future, and we have. In 1994 Saskatchewan's debt stood at almost 15 billion, and we know who we can thank for that. Today it is down to about 11.5 billion. So in other words, 23 per cent lower than it was in 1994. And we have a plan to pay down the province's debt reducing it to 10 billion in 2003.

Lower taxes, the other part of it. Paying down the debt, balancing the budget, lower taxes. This budget cuts the education and health tax rate from 7 per cent to 6 per cent. The members opposite said, oh yes, well who put it up to nine? We did. We know that. But why? They forget to say why we did that. We had to in order to look after some of the financial obligations which were put to on us by the Tories, who had year after year deficit budgets — deficit budgeting all the way through.

And so what we have is that in the spring in the last two years we have cut back the education and health tax by 3 per cent. A great record, and a record that we should be proud of. What it does is it puts back \$300 million into the hands of the family, the businesses, the municipalities, the educational institutions. This all puts back money, which of course will again then be used to create jobs and increase the economy.

Saskatchewan people will also save approximately 30 million a



year in provincial income taxes as the result of the tax changes announced in the recent federal budget. So that since 1995 income taxes paid by the average Saskatchewan family have been reduced by over 10 per cent. No small feat in itself. And over the next 12 months we will consult with the people of Saskatchewan in adopting and designing a new system of income tax for Saskatchewan.

(1145)

And now let's take a look at the Tories' tax policy. Elwin Hermanson, the Fearless Fosdick of this party spawned in the darkest of night states:

I'm glad I'm not the Finance minister and have to go around this province talking about this small reduction in taxes, small reduction.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think he has to ever worry about that because there is no way, no way in this whole wide world that he will ever be in a position where he will be able to determine what taxes will be cut and how they will be cut.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — A tiny cut — what's a hundred million dollars? What's a billion? This is the typical attitude that the Tories had in the '80s and they still have it and they will drive this province into deficit spending once again if and when they ever gain power. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with an attitude like that, they can forget about that.

They introduced deficit budget after deficit budget until they had a debt of \$15 billion, a province on the brink of bankruptcy, and leaving a debt to be paid by our children, their children, their grandchildren, because the debt is so massive. These are the people who are asking for support from the hard-working citizens of Saskatchewan.

Trust us, they say. Our numbers just don't add up, but trust us. We will lead you to the promised land. Promises of increased debt; promises of privatized health care. Promises. Promises of cutbacks in essential services such as education and health; promises of long-term debt; promises of workfare for the poor, the downtrodden; promises of increased wealth for the large corporations; promises to destroy rural Saskatchewan. Promised land? No, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, a good budget, as someone wrote on my paper and I didn't write this — yes, yes, yes, a thousand times, yes that it is a good budget. And as I mentioned in my reply to the Throne Speech, I referred to the Throne Speech as being the real McCoy, the job that sent the Tories reeling.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget delivers the knockout punch — a balanced budget and a budget that shows this government listened to the people and then acted on it, down and out.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no way that I could possibly support the amendment, but my goodness, I will enthusiastically support the motion. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm really delighted to be here today and represent the people of my constituency of Kelvington-Wadena and to make sure that I go on record telling everyone in the Assembly and the ones that are watching that we don't support this budget, that we support the amendment, and that we have very good reasons for not supporting this budget.

I think that the people in this province know that the budget that was presented a week ago is talking about expenditures of \$5.6 billion in the year 1999-2000. That's \$1 billion more than when this government came in in 1991-92. A billion dollars — 20 per cent more spending than they had nine years ago.

Now we all know that there is very few people in this province, if any, can say they've had an increase of 20 per cent in their income in the last nine years. And if they do, I'm sure they have something to show for it.

The people of my constituency are saying, June, you know what we have to show for this? We have a health care system that's in a crisis. We're spending more money than ever on health care and we have 53 less hospitals. The health care in rural Saskatchewan — if you can call it health care — is something that the people are saying it's not even something that can be recognized as care; they feel like second-class citizens.

The roads and the highways have deteriorated to an embarrassment and also a health hazard. Rural Saskatchewan itself has been ignored; not only the RM but programs like our provincial parks that ... and regional parks that have no funding any more. Funding has gone to provincial parks but the regional parks have not had any money. And area after area has been cut.

I think that the government is probably remembering what the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) said about this budget. He called it a black day for rural Saskatchewan. And that's what it is.

The education system is suffering, probably right across the province, but I think the headline in today's paper underlines what the school boards are saying. They're saying school divisions are reeling from this budget. They know they're going to have to go back to the taxpayers of this province and say we're going to have to up the mill rate again. They're going to have to get more money out of your pocket. And taxpayers, landowners are saying, I have no more money to give. But education is a government priority.

The Saskatchewan Party has three priorities, four priorities. The first one is health care, and we'll be talking more about it, but the people are saying, how can you tell me that their government is spending more money on health care than they ever did? What have we got to show for it? And we all know that there's no answer to that question. There's nothing that is tangible that we can put our fingers on, to show for where this \$1.9 billion is going to. So we have to ask and we have to go in and find out where is the money going to?

When we look at the big picture in this province, and that includes the Crowns because I'm sure everyone knows that the spending of the Crowns is 40 per cent of government spending.

We have an interesting statistic that was given out by the Provincial Auditor. I think that probably the members opposite, when they looked at it, probably cringed because they would have a tough time explaining things like 1991 expenses, and . . . up to 1998. And our accumulated deficit at the end of the year in 1991 was \$7.885 billion. That's in 1991. That includes the general program. It also includes some of the enterprises, like SaskEnergy and SaskPower, Liquor and Gaming, SaskTel, and some of the other ones. In 1998 the accumulated deficit was 8.972 billion.

Now we may say that we've got a . . . have paid down some of the debt. But when we take the whole picture into consideration, we don't have . . . we don't see our debt going down — we see the debt going up from 7.885 billion to 8.972 billion.

We often talk about the taxes . . . the interest charges that we are paying as citizens of this province. In the year 1991, it was 1.53 billion. Last year, 1998, the interest payment was 1.175 billion. That is again an increase. That's not . . . When I hear the members opposite talking about the \$2 million that we spend every day on interest payments, you haven't done one thing to help that. The people of this province are still paying interest at the same rate as they did 10 years ago.

And the numbers are not being disputed — the numbers that the Provincial Auditor is talking about. We can't just take one part of the financial picture and say, this is what's happening in Saskatchewan. When you look at the big picture, we are spending more money on interest than we were in 1991. That's thanks to this NDP government.

I'm going to go into a few other issues that I wanted . . . before I close this book up, I just wanted to make one comment about the Department of Agriculture. I'm sure that the farmers in my area are going to be just delighted when they hear that this week has been declared Orchid Week.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew):** — Why is the member on her feet?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — With leave to introduce guests?

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In your gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to introduce a nominated candidate for the upcoming election. And that's Mr. Mark Wartman, who will be the candidate running because Suzanne Murray, of course, unfortunately we've lost her. But I think that Regina Qu'Appelle Valley is exceptionally lucky to have two such fine candidates in a row.

So if the Assembly would join me in welcoming Mark here today.

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

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister of Health wants me to repeat the fact that he declared this week Orchid Week . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . oh the Minister of Agriculture declared this Orchid Week. All the farmers in Saskatchewan that are out planting their orchids are probably just delighted that we have now had Orchid Week.

We have a government that in 1991 spent \$827 million on agriculture and in 1998 we spent \$251 million on agriculture. That's typifies what this government believes is important when it comes to agriculture. It's not spending the dollars there, it's making sure that people know that it's Orchid Week in this province.

The government has also in their budget talked about the \$10 million that they were going to be spending . . . giving as an increase to rural municipalities. When that's broken down it's 7.5 million to urban municipalities, 2 million to rural municipalities, and .5 to the North.

Now when we divide that out between the nearly 300 municipalities in this province we'll see that they each get around \$6,000. Six thousand dollars for the RMs that have their roads deteriorating, the RMs that have been asking for an increase, RMs that have been cut back by as much as 75 per cent since 1991 are now going to get \$6,000.

And not only they don't get it, they have to come up with an additional \$6,000 of their own before they get it. It's a matching grant. I don't think they're going to get too many bouquets of flowers or praises of acclamation from the RMs in this province . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Orchids.

**Ms. Draude:** — Yes, maybe some orchids.

The budget also says they're going to pay \$235 million for highways, up 7 per cent over last year's budget. That's of course an increase and it's needed very badly. But one of the things that hasn't been underlined is the fact that \$5 million out of that is the same money that was introduced under RMs when we talked about the program for thin-membrane highways. So we can talk about it in RMs and we can talk about it in highways and it's the same dollars.

I think people get into it and they're going to start saying, how many more times are we going to congratulate ourselves . . . or are they going to congratulate themselves for the same amount of money.

I was interested to read an article by Diane Francis a while ago when she was talking the brain drain from Canada, and I think that Saskatchewan probably typifies this. The brain drain, fact no. 1, some 23,000 Canadians are enrolled in American universities. This is up 10,000 from 1986. The past 50 years the

alumni that went into the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have founded 4,000 companies with \$232 billion sales worldwide. We are losing our people from Canada but we're specifically losing them from Saskatchewan.

The province of Saskatchewan, we have shown in many reports that Saskatchewan's economic momentum finish is skidding to a stop. The report in *The Globe and Mail* this week talked about . . . ranked the provinces, and Saskatchewan was again ranked as the worst out of the 10 provinces. It placed last in three categories and second last in one. And this is the kind of problem, the hurdles that people of Saskatchewan are facing when they're trying to deal with . . . have a business in this province.

I think one thing that maybe not all the farmers in Saskatchewan have heard, but I think it's important that they know, is one of the members opposite wanted to talk about farmers and treaty Indians as the ones who get this break on sales tax. From the start, farmers have had certain exemptions. They've had exemptions on farm machinery and repair that saves them \$62.9 million. They have exemptions on fertilizers and pesticides and fuel tax that's saving them \$225 million.

I don't think you'll find many farmers out there thinking that the government has done them a real favour by giving them exemptions on commodities that of course are the one area of our economy where they don't have any choice about the prices they're getting. They don't have any choice about adding on or downloading their cost to anybody else. They take what they can get in the system that we have.

(1200)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I took issue with a statement made by one of the members opposite when they were talking about social services and what the government is doing for young people, especially the ones that are in need that are going to food banks. I have a letter here; it was directed to the Social Services critic of our party and it was from the Hunger in Moose Jaw, Inc.

The people there are saying and advising the government, pleading with them to recognize the fact that child hunger is a growing issue in communities across this province. In 1993 when Social Services began to deal with the children who were going to school hungry, they started serving between 30 and 40 lunches a day. Today in Moose Jaw they are serving over a hundred lunches, and there has never been one amount of increase in funding from Social Services to address this very serious problem.

There are people that are . . . the people that have written this letter are working with these children every day. They rely on a core group of volunteers to make and deliver lunches for the lunch program. The community of business contributes with discounts or donations to the food costs, and the volume of fundraising needed to sustain a program is taxing on the staff, the organization, and is unsustainable in this present form.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the type of thing that the real people in this province are trying to bring to the attention of this government. We have our most vulnerable people in our society, our children, are facing something in a province like

Saskatchewan we shouldn't even have to think about. They shouldn't have to think about going to school hungry in Saskatchewan. If the things that your government opposite are saying is true, then why is the number of children on the street, the number of children that are hungry increasing?

There has to be somebody looking at the whole idea of saying what is government about? Government is about providing infrastructure and providing for the needy people of this province. They asked in very big letters, and they're asking not for themselves but for the children. The provincial government has been called upon to drastically increase its funding for the children nutrition and education program. This is something that every Saskatchewan citizen would probably be embarrassed if they knew that the number of children that need lunches at school is increasing.

There's been a direct cost for the already overloaded health care system as well as the future of our society. Hunger in Moose Jaw has been monitoring the impact of the new national child tax benefit and the changes to the provincial social services' package on a number of children who need our services. Now I hope the members listen to this statement because it's what the executive director talked about. What she said is:

Unfortunately we did not see a decrease in the number of children accessing lunches as they studied the new social assistance package."

I think that is the kind of statement that the members opposite must talk about or think about when they talk about their report card, about what they're doing for the people in this province. They're doing nothing for the people that are very, very needy.

I also would like to talk a minute about children that are . . . have special needs in this province when it comes to education and for having a chance to go forward and make their life, fulfill all the potential that they have. I think there's a statement first of all that we should talk about. It's a summary of a UN (United Nations) convention on the rights of children. And it stated:

The right of disabled children to special care and training designed to help achieve self-reliance. and a full and decent life in society is the right of every child.

Now we have in this province a government that is not looking at the special children, the children that are covered under this article 23 of the UN rights. We have to ask what systems the Department of Education and Health have in place for intellectually disabled young people in this province.

The Department of Education had to overall . . . the need to overhaul its mandate, the special education policies. And it's not good enough to have a task force committee on the project paid for by the government. It's in effect for two years and then they don't have to be obligated to put any of the recommendations into effect. All this is, is one more make-work project.

Teaching a child with Down syndrome is more difficult than teaching a autistic . . . is not more difficult, pardon me, is more different than teaching an autistic individual. They can't be

lumped into one strategy and then just left.

Individual education plans must be set in place to ensure that all intellectually disabled children get the best education possible. And it's one thing that we haven't seen the government working on in their capacity as the people . . . as the one who is looking after our children, our most prized possession.

We also have had many contacts from people in the Saskatchewan community home association who are trying to again work with disadvantaged youth in this province. Their mandate and their desire is to help get these young people back into society and to ensure that they aren't part of the crime statistics as they get older.

And there are so many needs out there that are not being addressed. And not only that, they haven't had the opportunity to even get together and discuss some of the things that they are learning through trial and error themselves. The government isn't providing the foundation that they need to help these people learn from each other. It's like reinventing the wheel every time they have to turn around.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other issue that I'm greatly concerned about is this government's idea that they are standing up for women in this province. In fact I've got a headline in a paper that says, "NDP listens to women." The minister offered a progress report on the work of the secretariat. The organization has set up a Web site for women's groups across Saskatchewan to help them share information, and that's a powerful tool. Well, is sharing information the most powerful tool that women in this province need?

It was interesting to look at the budget and see that the Women's Secretariat is one of the very few departments that actually had a decrease. They went down 22 per cent in funding. And I think what the government has really been doing for women in this province, or their big step forward for women was in the budget. It was very obvious that instead of saying the words "men and women", government's real big move forward was saying "women and men". I had 15 people tell me, did you notice that? The government is now saying "women and men", instead of "men and women". That's what they're actually doing for the women in this province — putting us first by saying it in words.

But are they doing it when it comes to actual help for the women that need real help? We had women . . . We saw in the budget there was going to be \$800,000 for women's health. Well we can say already that 350 of that came from the money that you cut out of Women's Secretariat. And then the rest of it came from putting items like fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects into the women's area and taking out of Health.

There's no additional funding for women. What there is, is moving money around so that they can say, look what I've done for women. We'll say "women" before "men". We'll take the money out of one account and put it in another and say, gee, look what we've done for women. What women really need is this government to recognize them as individuals, equal, and having the same rights as everybody else in this province, not to just give them a designation as "women" and then "men".

When my colleague talked today about the rate of sexual offence, and we said that the average in Canada was 101 for every 100,000; in Saskatchewan, it's 183, which is far, far above the national average, and it's something that I think you should all be embarrassed about. And also, if you want to talk about what we're doing for women, 8 out of 10 of those were females, and a third — a full one-third of them — were under the age of 12. Twelve years old.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a couple of the news releases that were put forward by the government — pardon me, Mr. Speaker — that were put forward by the government that I found quite amusing. One of them was from the municipal policing costs when it says that . . . announced that \$4.1 million is available in 1999-2000. That's great. We're happy.

But the next statement says, "The figure reflects a significant increase over the \$1 million spent last year", then: "for the three months the program was in effect." So for one full year we're going to get \$4 million. For one three-month period last year, we got \$1 million. Four times one is four. Guess what? There's no increase. Significant increase, we say.

I don't know how many wordsmiths we had looking at this kind of issue, but I would think that the people of Saskatchewan have a lot more intelligence than you're giving them credit for. Because when you look at this type of thing, it's an insult to the people of this province when they have to read this kind of garbage in a news release that's supposed to be telling them what government is doing with their money.

This one sentence is one that I find really amusing. It says, "Budget invests in Saskatchewan's cultural industries." Have no problem with the cultural industries. I think it's great people have an opportunity to show talents in very many areas of life. But this sentence is . . . somebody tell me what it means:

The investment will strengthen production capacity, encourage the development of culturally significant work, and support increased self-reliance for the industries.

Now listen, "support increased self-reliance." Wow. Now I don't know if that kind of jargon is something that people in this province think is . . . make them feel important, but that is one of the silliest statements I've heard in a long, long time.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of issues that I could be talking about but I think that it's important to probably get on with the budget and start talking about the details of it in each department and make sure the government recognizes there are other ways to spend our money. But I want to finish by talking about . . . by reading you a sentence that was written by George Bernard Shaw. It says:

Reasonable men and women adapt themselves to their environment. Unreasonable men and women try to adapt their environment to themselves. Thus all progress is the result of unreasonable men and women.

Got it?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we can talk about party policies and maybe that's the scary and sad part about government in

Saskatchewan is the politics part of it. When we ask a question to the other side of the House the only answer we ever get is rhetoric about individuals — as an individual.

And I think one of the first things that Mr. Speaker advised me when I became a member of this Assembly was that I was never called by my first name because in this Assembly I'm not an individual. I represent the 17,000 people of Kelvington-Wadena. And they have voted to say that I'm the person that they want to be here making their speeches and standing up for them.

And I think that they have the right to decide, and we'll wait and see. We will see what's happening. But in the meantime I think what they have a right to do is get questions answered from the people who decide how the money is spent, from the people who make the policies. And we'll let election day decide what's going to happen to the few of you that are left after that day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I have now been the ministers of Health for the province of Saskatchewan for about six months. Mr. Speaker, before I get into the text of my remarks I want to say thank you to the people that I represent, the constituents of Saskatoon Nutana that have elected me as a New Democratic Party member of the legislature since 1986.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected as a New Democratic Party candidate in 1986, 1991, and 1995. In all of those elections, Mr. Speaker, I've enjoyed the support of the majority of the people who have voted in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, I came to this legislature as a New Democrat. I'm here as a New Democrat, and when I leave this legislature, Mr. Speaker, I will be a New Democrat.

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I've said these have been challenging months as the Minister of Health. I have spent a great deal of time around this province and in the city of Regina. And, as is my practice, I've usually been available in my constituency office on Fridays in order to meet with the people that I represent.

I want to say to the constituents back home in Saskatoon Nutana that for the last several Fridays I've not been there, but I want them to know that Judy Gossen, who is my constituency assistant, has passed on their messages and remarks and I am aware of all of the contact that have been made to my constituency office.

(1215)

My point, Mr. Speaker, is I want the people back home to know, even though I've been the Minister of Health for six months, I've been away a lot, I still know what is going on back home and I send people there my very best wishes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that we've worked extremely hard in the last six months to ensure that health

remains a top priority for the people of this province and for our government. Our government has, of course, had to balance the many competing interests and many competing demands on a variety of issues and areas.

Health is not, Mr. Speaker, and should not be the only priority of this or any other government in this province or in this country. Areas like education and highways and social programs, economic development, and northern development are extremely important to the people that we serve as legislators.

Last year's unbudgeted expenditures, fire fighting in the North for instance, and farm aid have had a tremendous impact upon our government's decision-making process and the kinds of decisions that we've made for this fiscal year. These decisions have been taken in the context of our government's deliberate decision to balance program spending increases with debt reduction and tax reduction.

Mr. Speaker, despite all of these pressures, this budget marks a major investment in the health and well-being of our Saskatchewan people. Together, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we're continuing to build a world-class health system that serves the needs of our province. We're investing in individuals, we're investing in families, and we're investing in our collective future.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, provincial health funding grows to \$1.9 billion per year. This is an increase of more than 11 per cent over the 1998-1999 budget year. At \$195 million, this is the largest increase in the health budget that I've seen in my entire time in the provincial legislature. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's the largest dollar increase ever in the history of our province.

We believe that this is extremely good news for our health system. This is a good news budget for our citizens because we're making unprecedented investments in the health of our families now and into the future.

We've underlined in policy, Mr. Speaker, and practice, our commitment to a strong, coordinated, integrated, and responsive health system.

Mr. Speaker, health care is a passionate issue for the people of our province. It's been a passionate issue in the political discourse in the history of this province. Mr. Speaker, it has been and it is and it always will be this way.

It was a passionate issue in the 1930s when Matt Anderson organized the local health care co-operative around Bulyea. It was a passionate issue in the 1940s when the people around Swift Current organized a health district to provide medical coverage in their local region. It was a passionate issue, Mr. Speaker, in the '60s when community clinics were starting up in Regina, Prince Albert, Biggar, Lloydminster, Wynyard, and other towns and cities across our province.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, it was a passionate issue in the 1960s when medicare was born. The doctors went on strike and American money and the opposition parties tried to strangle medicare at birth.

Not since the introduction of medicare have there been so many questions and so many conflicting opinions about the kind of system that we want for the people of this province. It's an emotional debate. A debate that doesn't lend itself to a clear discussion of the facts. A debate that often generates more heat than light. And too often, Mr. Speaker, the opposition paint a picture of chaos rather than confidence, focusing on crisis rather than co-operation. And too often, Mr. Speaker, we see pointing fingers instead of helping hands. Rhetoric as opposed to solid debate.

Today the very face of health care is changing and it's changing rapidly. We're engaged in a real and fundamental debate about the kind of health system that we want for our children, for our children's children, and for ourselves. Mr. Speaker, I believe in the bottom of my heart that the people of this province want a health system that is fair, that is compassionate, and a health system that's available to all.

Like wolves in sheep clothing, the enemies of medicare are extremely deceptive. They create the illusion of having the best interests of our health system in mind. They talk about reducing stress on the public system by allowing people a private option. They play on public anxiety about waiting times, claiming a two-tier system would result in quicker service for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, it is an illusion and it hides a real menace. Two-tier medicine means Cadillac care for those who can afford it and the rest of us can go to health in a handbasket. Well I say no, Mr. Speaker, and our government says no. Health care is too important to go to the highest bidder. Health care is too important to be based on wealth rather than need. And health care is too important for us to value credit cards over care and compassion.

Mr. Speaker, the government that I represent believes in a single-payer, public medicare system providing high quality health services for everyone. Compared to the American system, Mr. Speaker, the gold standard if you like, they don't lack for money, they spend more than \$4,000 per person per year on health care — double what we spend. And what do they get, Mr. Speaker? The shortest life expectancy, the highest infant mortality rate, and the poorest health status of all the G7 (Group of Seven) countries. They spend on administration and competition not better care.

Mr. Speaker, today as I speak there are 40 million Americans without health insurance. And medical costs, Mr. Speaker, rank as the highest single cause of personal bankruptcy. How could anyone aspire to that, Mr. Speaker. Universal medicare is more cost effective and more efficient. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, universal medicare that is publicly funded and publicly administered reflects the very values of who we are as Canadians and the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, medicare — it is who we are as a country, a nation, and a province.

Mr. Speaker, Tommy Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd, former premiers of our great province, saw medicare as a natural and inevitable development of our public conscience. According to Woodrow Lloyd and I quote:

The extent of our sensitivity to the rights and needs of

others is a very excellent measurement of the maturity of the society in which we live.

These qualities of maturity and sensitivity go hand in hand with our continued and impassioned support for medicare. Being an advocate of medicare is not only about protecting and preserving it, Mr. Speaker, it's about changing it, strengthening it, improving it, evolving it, and making it better.

Tommy often spoke, Mr. Speaker, about the second phase of medicare — reorganizing and revamping the entire system. In Saskatchewan we've begun phase 2. Our critics have used the turmoil of change to camouflage their attack on universal medicare. They have spread fear and sown suspicion. Some of our friends, Mr. Speaker, unwittingly I believe have helped them. And others of our friends have disagreed with us about the details of phase 2.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we may not always agree on the details, we may not always agree on the path we've chosen for our health reforms, but Saskatchewan people agree on what we want to achieve.

We want improved health for Saskatchewan people by preventing the causes of illness and injury. We want quality health services provided in an appropriate and cost-effective way — health services that respond to local needs and a sustainable system of publicly funded health care.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, is listening to what Saskatchewan people are saying. And this budget is an investment in the kind of health system our people want and the kind of health system Saskatchewan people deserve.

Waiting times for surgery is an example. We listened to citizens across this province tell us in no uncertain terms that waits for surgeries, some surgeries, are too long. We commissioned a task team on waiting lists for surgeries and the task team presented its report on March 17, 1999. And we made a commitment that day to take immediate action to implement its recommendations.

And in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we have \$12 billion dedicated to improving the waiting times of our citizens for surgery. We're making changes so that all elective surgeries are done in a reasonable time. And there is spending to increase operating room hours in Saskatoon and Regina and add new surgical equipment.

We've also begun working with Regina and Saskatoon to improve the classification and scheduling systems for surgery. And we're also working with surrounding districts to ensure that we have 24-hour access to post-operative care in home districts.

Mr. Speaker, one of the top priorities of this budget is Saskatchewan's front-line health providers. Health care, Mr. Speaker, is more than simply bricks and mortar. It's not even about equipment and procedure. It's about people helping people. It's about health providers working together. These people, Mr. Speaker, are the backbone of our very system.

This budget provides a total of \$1.3 billion to health districts.

That's an increase of \$139 million or 12 percent from last year's budget. This increase will help cover increased labour costs arising from collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, the College of Medicine is receiving a total of \$20.6 million this year for training, retraining, and placement programs for Saskatchewan doctors. That's an increase, Mr. Speaker, of \$2.9 million. And, Mr. Speaker, we've set aside \$346 million for physician services and this will cover increased services and will improve our ability to recruit and retain physicians serving Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, we're putting more resources into the training, recruitment, and retention of health providers as part of a broader strategy to address potential recruitment problems in a range of health care positions. Mr. Speaker, this strategy will match training seats for nurses, for example, for future requirements. We'll see active recruitment assistance to districts for both nurses and other health care positions. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to engage in research and labour-market analysis to look at long-term skill requirements and training development to meet those needs.

Mr. Speaker, our best estimate is that more than \$1.3 billion of this budget will go directly to health providers in the form of payments, salaries, and benefits. Mr. Speaker, that's more than two-thirds of the entire provincial budget.

Mr. Speaker, we're improving hospital, surgical, diagnostic care for all of our citizens. Earlier diagnosis and early intervention are key to meeting our mandate of improving the health of each of our people. And by enhancing diagnosis and improving access to surgery, we'll be better able to help more citizens more quickly and more effectively.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget we will be providing operating funding for three MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging). There will be a new MRI service in Regina for southern Saskatchewan and an additional MRI in Saskatoon to improve access for northern citizens.

Mr. Speaker, a second bone density program will help in the early detection and treatment of osteoporosis. And there's funding for increased CT (computerized tomography) scanning testing with new, faster equipment and the addition of a mobile CT scanner for southern Saskatchewan. There will be additional capacity for cardiac catheterization to treat blocked arteries and we're continuing our efforts to help prevent diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to support the expanded kidney transplant program. Last year Saskatchewan had the highest number of kidney transplants per capita in the country and we're building on that. We're building on the success of the established satellite renal dialysis site which will give more rural patients an opportunity to be treated close to home.

Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to help Saskatchewan families deal with the cost of prescription drugs and other medical services. A total of \$77.8 million has been set aside for the Saskatchewan prescription drug plan, and that's an increase of 21.5 per cent from last year's budget. This very significant increase ensures families with high drug costs relative to their income can get the drugs they need.

In addition, \$5.9 million has been allocated for the family health benefits program. More than 22,000 low-income families, including more than 42,000 children, are able to get dental, drugs, optometric services to this program. And by extended health benefits, we can help low-income families improve their economic and social conditions.

(1230)

An area of importance to me, Mr. Speaker, is our fight against cancer. We're allocating \$25.6 million to support the work of Saskatchewan's cancer agency. That's an increase of \$3.2 million, or 14.2 per cent over last year's budget. As well, we're providing an additional \$1 million to attract oncologists to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, breast cancer can be a deadly, deadly disease. And as part of our war on breast cancer, we will have a new breast cancer assessment initiative which will complement the Saskatchewan breast cancer screening program. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we're increasing funding which will establish a stem cell transplant program for breast cancer patients, pending results of clinical trials. And there will be enhanced screening for cervical cancer, reaching more women in high-risk groups.

Mr. Speaker, we now have chemotherapy services and cancer treatment services in 15 health districts. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that we will expand the number of outreach cancer treatment centres. Services like these, Mr. Speaker, will cut travel time for rural residents, and we're ensuring that people can get the service they need as close to home as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this budget enhances services to rural Saskatchewan through hospitals, community health centres, primary health sites, emergency and other services.

The budget addresses the complex and unique health needs of Saskatchewan women. Our government recognizes the health challenges faced by women. And we're supporting a number of initiatives to help women stay healthy. I've already mentioned the second bone density program to serve southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to say that we're expanding our fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect programs in co-operation with the College of Medicine. Mr. Speaker, we will soon have a person in the College of Medicine in the Department of Pediatrics who is an expert in the area of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect.

I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that our commitment to addressing this problem is significant. And we will have money for the College of Medicine and the Saskatchewan Association for the Prevention of Handicaps in order to help address this very difficult issue with causes brain damage to children who are affected by this horrible, horrible damage.

Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to expand specialized services to make them more accessible to rural people. I've already mentioned the expanded satellite dialysis services, CT scans capacity, and outreach cancer treatment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in addition there is special funding in this budget to provide 10 new mental health counsellor positions. And one of the target groups to benefit from this funding will be youth living in rural Saskatchewan.

Home care funding is up as well, Mr. Speaker — up \$5.2 million — recognizing increased demand and giving districts increased capacity to meet the demand. Since we came to government, Mr. Speaker, the home care budget has been increased by 131.5 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the neonatal transport service improves our capacity to transport critically ill or injured infants to the services we need. We have established two pediatric transport teams based in Regina and Saskatoon.

And we're also improving and enhancing health services in northern Saskatchewan. New funding of 500,000 will be available to improve emergency and air ambulance services, mental health, and public health programs. And, Mr. Speaker, we're adding staff who will offer prevention and support and mental health programs in the North so northern residents can get faster access to the services they need.

The northern Telehealth project will be fully operational this year, Mr. Speaker, linking health providers in the North with specialists in major urban centres. And, Mr. Speaker, there will be progress on construction of new hospitals in Meadow Lake, La Ronge, and Stony Rapids to complement the services offered through the new hospital in La Ronge.

We will also be providing assistance to health districts to ensure that our health system continues to function smoothly as we enter the year 2000, and all health districts will benefit from a total of \$50 million to ensure that their systems are Y2K compatible.

Our Y2K plans are intact but as you can see everyday in the newspapers, the daily countdown to the new millennium is relentless so we have to ensure that our medical facilities and information systems are ready.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to give an overview of the health system in our province. The range of health services available to every citizen in Saskatchewan are vast. And the funding directly to health care in this budget means an increase in and better access to those services.

Mr. Speaker, it's often very easy for us and for our people to take health care for granted. There are issues in the system that no one denies. But let's not forget our many, many accomplishments and successes.

Every day in this province, Mr. Speaker, 35,000 people use our health system. That's about the same size as the entire population of Prince Albert or Moose Jaw. Every day. It would be like every citizen in Moose Jaw going to have some service in the health system. Our feedback shows that the vast majority of people who actually use the health system are pleased with the service they get.

Think about what this system can do for our citizens every year. Think about it — 91,000 surgeries; 9,200 nursing home beds;

three MRI sites — two in Saskatoon and one in Regina; 76,000 trips by road ambulance; 800 trips by air ambulance; 4.6 million visits to a family doctor; 925,000 visits to specialists; 1.45 million tests performed in the Provincial Lab right here in Regina; 400,000 immunizations to children and the citizens of our province; 100,000 families helped through the drug plan; and 22,000 families including 42,000 children helped through family health benefits.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have breast screening programs. We have prevention initiatives, we have counselling services for people who are facing mental health challenges. We have prenatal care for women who are pregnant. We have public health inspectors to make sure that our water and sewer is safe. We have health promotions. We have health research. And we have much, much more.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the important role so many people play in the success of our system.

Mr. Speaker, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, doctors, our many myriad of technicians, support staff, cleaning people, housekeeping, laundry, dieticians, nursing assistants, managers, and boards of health districts — all of these people, Mr. Speaker, working together make Saskatchewan's health system a world-class health system.

And I want to acknowledge and I want to take this opportunity in the House today to thank them for the many, many services that they provide to our citizens.

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, medicare is not a museum piece. Medicare is not a pedestal. Medicare is a living and evolving part of Saskatchewan public policy, Saskatchewan culture, and Saskatchewan life. Medical care is about strengthening the system, building for the future, adapting to changing conditions. The technology and delivery of health care will always be changing and moving ahead. The future of universal health care, the evolution of health care, depends upon our collective ability, Mr. Speaker, to adapt, to find new approaches, and to work together.

Accepting and leading change requires us to be firmly rooted in our principles. The road to success is dotted with many, many tempting parking places and many inviting detours that would lead us astray. We cannot afford to pull over to the side of the road, Mr. Speaker, and abandon the journey. We cannot afford to lose sight of our way on a twisting path to nowhere.

We have to press on, preserving, strengthening, adapting. Fulfilling the vision of our pioneers and our pioneer leaders like Woodrow Lloyd and Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Speaker, many people in this province — and it doesn't matter where I go — many people stop me and ask me how my dad is. My dad was the former president of the National Farmers Union and the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union.

Mr. Speaker, recently a friend was cleaning out his grandparents' basement and he sent me an old newspaper



clipping of a speech that my dad gave in 1963 to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

And at that time, Mr. Speaker, my dad recalled that the struggle for medicare had been a long struggle. It had been something that had been accomplished with the help of many, many people. The people in this province fundamentally believed in the need to have a universal publicly based health system that meant that you didn't go without care because you couldn't afford to pay for it.

Well my father said that it was a long battle. It was a battle to establish medicare. It was a struggle, Mr. Speaker. And it would be a struggle to keep it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that my father can take great pride in the victory that we've achieved together. But he warned us — he warned us in 1963 and it's now 36 years later, not only his audience of the day at the time but for everyone who believes in medicare — that the battle would not be won forever.

The next struggle, Mr. Speaker, I think the greatest struggle will be to preserve medicare, and he warned us to be ready.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell those assembled that I am my father's doctor . . . or daughter. I am my father's daughter. The victory of 1962 was not forever. Mr. Speaker, I remember being a 10-year-old child living on the farm near Springwater, Saskatchewan. and Woodrow Lloyd was the premier of Saskatchewan and he was our representative in the Biggar constituency. And my father along with other farmers and railroaders and teachers in Saskatoon went up and down the streets of Biggar and the farmyards of that area raising money to establish the first community clinic, where they were going to put a doctor on salary because they had heard that a strike was coming.

And, Mr. Speaker, in 1962 they raised \$35,000 to establish that clinic. People put their money where their mouth was. That's what people did. People like Marv Ledding a railroader whose sons are now doctors in Rosetown and Saskatoon. People like Alvin Hewitt.

It doesn't matter where I go, Mr. Speaker, there are the children of those farmers and teachers and railroaders that still believe. They believe in a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. They don't believe in private clinics and private health care and they don't believe that we need to go to a two-tier system. So we have to defend it and we will defend it.

The system is not perfect. It will never be perfect. It is evolving, Mr. Speaker. But we will defend medicare. We will not let the people who were the destroyers of medicare of 1962 ever come to power again in the province of Saskatchewan. And I am looking extremely forward to meeting these people on the campaign trail — which we will in the months ahead — and taking them on. Because every time they stand up in this legislature, they give misinformation. They fear-monger, Mr. Speaker. And every time they stand up, they give numbers that they can't back up. They give facts that they can't back up because they are playing on the fears of people, Mr. Speaker. That is not why we've been sent here.

We have been sent here to defend medicare, not to permit it to remain static. We've been sent here to stand still, not to retreat. We must continue phase two, Mr. Speaker, by making medicare — publicly funded, publicly administered medicare — better. A system that is better will be more proactive; it'll be more effective — the better we're able to turn aside those who would undermine medicare and universal access.

(1245)

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about investing in our collective future. It's about investing in our health system. It's about investing in and strengthening publicly funded, publicly administered medicare.

Yet even in the face of this significant investment in our health system, we have to contend with the fear-mongering of the Liberals and the Tories. Well, Mr. Speaker, they competed to see who could get a better job done of tricking the Saskatchewan people by posing as friends of medicare.

The very Liberals, the Liberals who fought tooth and nail to deny the people of this province their rightful history in the country of Canada by being the first province to introduce medicare in 1962. And, Mr. Speaker, the Tories who placed medicare on the critical list by undermining the fiscal integrity of the health care system in this province by racking up billions and billions and billions and billions and billions and billions . . . Have I got to 15 billion yet?

**An Hon. Member:** — Not yet.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — . . . billions and billions and billions of dollars in debt. Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province will not be tricked. They know which party believes in medicare and which parties do not.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a strong health system and in fact, Mr. Speaker, we even have people like Murray Mandryk from the Leader-Star indicating, "sure, we have problems in health care," he wrote, "but they may not be worse than anywhere else. In fact our problems may not even be as bad."

All in all he deemed our system to be above average. And from Mr. Mandryk, Mr. Speaker, I call that quite a compliment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have much more to say on this, but I'm going to adjourn my remarks for another time, next Wednesday. And I would move that we adjourn debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

**The Speaker:** — Before proceeding, would the Assembly provide leave to the Chair to introduce the guests who are in the Speaker's gallery?

Leave granted.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair appreciates your co-operation and

would like to introduce to you a group of young people, I think 14 in number, equally from the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If hon. members will listen to the end of the sentence, this will make a great deal of sense. Fourteen members each, from each of the provinces of Newfoundland and Saskatchewan. Perhaps I can ask those from Newfoundland to wave so you know who our guests from out of province are.

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

**The Speaker:** — I'm happy to advise the hon. members that these young people are members of a YMCA (Young Men's Christian Associates) exchange and the 14 students from Newfoundland accompanied by their chaperones, Christopher Pickard and Coleen Pickard . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now the hon. member from Kindersley will know that there's a long-standing rule not to engage visitors to the gallery in debate, particularly when the Speaker is trying to introduce them.

I will also ask you to acknowledge Christopher Pickard and Coleen Pickard, who are chaperones from Newfoundland, as well as Corey Tomczak and Jeff Deptuck from Regina, who are chaperones from the Saskatchewan delegation.

The Newfoundland delegation is visiting here until April 6, and then at that time the Saskatchewan delegation will return to Newfoundland from the 7th to the 13th of April for an exchange.

While they're here the Newfoundlanders will be joining their Saskatchewan hosts in visits to the IMAX, to the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) Museum, and Camp TA-WA-SI.

And I know as well that I will have an opportunity to meet them personally in about 40 minutes. They will leave shortly to take a tour of the building, and then I'm going to meet them on the floor of the Assembly and we'll spend a little time talking with them about parliamentary democracy and the relationship and the common practice of it between the provinces of Newfoundland and Saskatchewan.

Would you please show them a warm Saskatchewan welcome.

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

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce a motion with respect to the hours at which the House will convene.

Leave granted.

## MOTIONS

### Hours of Sitting

**Hon. Ms. MacKinnon:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Melfort-Tisdale:

That notwithstanding Rule 3(4) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* that when this Assembly adjourns on Thursday, April 1,

1999, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, April 7, 1999 at 1:30 p.m., unless the House is reconvened at a earlier date by Mr. Speaker at the request of the government.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — Before adjourning the House, may the Chair take just a moment to wish the best of this weekend to all hon. members as we know, in this province and certainly in the gallery, in the Chamber as well, we have many who are celebrating either Passover or Easter this weekend. And the Chair wishes to all of you, a joyous weekend and a meaningful time with your families. Please do take advantage of it.

Look forward to seeing you next week, when this House reconvenes on Wednesday afternoon at 1:30.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

